

UNITA – CALL FOR STARTING TECH TRANSFER GRANTS

Description and regulations

Task 4.1 - Interterritorial Interfaces for Innovation

April 2025

Article 1. Background

The UNITA Universitas Montium Alliance, comprising 12 universities across Europe, is dedicated to promoting innovation and the commercialization of research. Within the framework of Task 4.1 – Interterritorial Interfaces for Innovation, the alliance promotes structured support for innovation through Tech Transfer (TT) grants.

This call launches the Starting Tech Transfer Grants competition – aligned with the alliance’s mission to harmonize best practices in technology transfer, enhance regional innovation ecosystems, and stimulate the creation of joint research-to-market pathways across institutions. Starting TT Grants are designed to fund early-stage proof-of-concept initiatives (Technology Readiness Levels 2-3), developed collaboratively by teams from at least two UNITA partner universities. This initiative serves as a precursor to the Advanced TT Grants, which are envisioned to support further development and demonstration (TRL 4-6).

Article 2. Goals and Objectives

The objectives of this call are to:

- ~ Support early-stage proof-of-concept (TRL 2-3) innovations;
- ~ Encourage inter-university teams to valorize research results with tech transfer potential;
- ~ Contribute to the innovation capacity of the alliance by creating a pipeline for the maturation of advanced technologies;
- ~ Foster alignment with regional Smart Specialization Strategies (S3/S4).
- ~ Strengthen internationalization and collaboration across UNITA territories.

Expected outcomes include validated and marketable innovations, which may encompass technological advancements, as well as contributions to regional and European innovation ecosystems.

Article 3. Themes

Proposals must be aligned with regional Smart Specialization Strategies (S3/S4), with preference given to those addressing the thematic areas of the UNITA Research & Innovation Hubs:

- ~ Green energy
- ~ Circular economy and environment
- ~ Cultural heritage
- ~ Digital transitions
- ~ Global health
- ~ Inclusive societies

Projects must also demonstrate clear potential for internationalization and a sustainable long-term impact on the market.

Article 4. Glossary

- **UNITA Full Partner (UFP):** Academic institutions from UE countries that serve as either beneficiaries or coordinating institutions in the European project UNITA. The UNITA full partners are funded by the European Commission, acting as the Granting Authority (Grant Agreement Project 101124853 — UNITA, Annex 1, Description of Action, Part A, p. 4): UBI, IPG, UPNA, UNIZAR, UPPA, USMB, UNITO, UNIBS, UVT, UTBV.
- **UNITA Associated Partner (UAP):** Academic institutions from non-UE countries that have the role of “associated partner” in the European project UNITA and do not receive funding from the Granting Authority (Consortium agreement UNITA Universitas Montium – Grant agreement no. 101124853, 2024, p. 7): HES-SO, CHNU.
- **UNITA Partners (UP):** All institutions that are members of the UNITA Alliance, including UFP and UAP.
- **UNITA Geminae Partners (UGP):** Higher Education Institutions located outside the European Union that are members of the Geminae Program.
- **Principal Investigator (PI):** The Principal Investigator is the coordinator of the research project team, who must be a permanent member of the teaching staff or a researcher from one of the UNITA Partners. The Principal Investigator (PI) will be responsible for the scientific reporting of the project and will serve as the primary point of contact, representing the entire team.

- **Team Leader (TL):** is the local coordinator of each UNITA Partner team that composes the research project team.
- **Team Member (TM):** A member of the research project team other than the Principal Investigator (PI) or Team Lead (TL).
- **Beneficiaries:** Research project team members whose project has been selected for financing under this call or any other Starting Grant call.
- **Starting TT Grant:** A funding instrument supporting early-stage innovation through collaborative proof-of-concept research (TRL 2-3).
- **Eligible Participant:** Member of a team from a UNITA partner university.
- **BIP Programme:** Joint Entrepreneurship Training Programme of Task 4.1 – mandatory for eligibility;
- **Technology Readiness Level (TRL):** A standardized metric used to assess the maturity level of a particular technology. TRLs range from **TRL 1 (basic research and observation)** to **TRL 9 (fully operational system proven in real conditions)**. For the purposes of this call, **TRL 2–3** refers to the **early proof-of-concept stages**, where the technology is under conceptual formulation or initial experimental validation. These levels include:
 - **TRL 2:** Technology concept and/or application formulated;
 - **TRL 3:** Experimental proof of concept (typically through laboratory-based validation).

Article 5. Eligibility

To be considered eligible, a proposal must meet the following criteria:

- ~ Involve participation from at least two distinct UNITA partner universities (UNITA Associated and Geminae Partners are not considered eligible for this call and cannot receive funding);
- ~ Designate a Principal Investigator (PI) from one partner university and at least one Team Leader from the second;
- ~ Consist primarily of researchers and PhD candidates, while also welcoming the involvement of administrative innovation staff and master’s students.

Each individual is permitted to participate in only one application per call.

Projects are strongly encouraged to include, within each participating institutional team, at least one member who has successfully completed the online module of the BIP Joint Entrepreneurship Training Programme (Task 4.1 – “One step beyond”). While not mandatory for eligibility, such participation is required to access the maximum score available under the entrepreneurial

engagement criterion detailed in Article 9. Proof of BIP completion must be submitted at the time of application, as specified in Article 7.

Upon request, matchmaking support with students who have completed the online module of the BIP programme may be facilitated.

Article 6. Funding and Budgeting

- **Total Budget Available: €130,200**
- **Number of Starting TT Grants: 18**
- **Maximum Funding per Grant: €7,233.33**

Eligible Expenses:

Grants may cover **the following categories of expenses:**

- Travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs, which may account for up to 60% of the total grant amount;
- Other eligible costs (maximum 40% of the total grant), which may include:
 - Joint dissemination and publication activities
 - Logistical expenses and events hosted by UNITA partner institutions
 - Research assistance
 - Consumables necessary for the project

Note:

1. The use of existing infrastructure is not considered an eligible expense, as it is already accounted for in institutional budgets. Doctoral students are strongly encouraged to apply for Erasmus+ mobility funding through their home institutions. Please be advised that grant-related expenses are not permitted in Switzerland. For any further clarifications, applicants are invited to contact the UNITA office at HES-SO.
2. For selected projects, the Principal Investigator and team leaders from each partner university will contact the UNITA OFFICE to utilize the budget in accordance with each university's internal regulations.

Article 7. Application

Applications will be open from May 6th, 2025, to June 6th, 2025, at midnight (CET).

Applications shall be submitted via the dedicated online portal (link to be provided by the UNITA Office).

Each application must include the following components:

- Project Description, detailing:
 - o Scientific relevance and alignment with the thematic priorities of the UNITA Research & Innovation Hubs;
 - o Correspondence with regional Smart Specialization Strategies (S3/S4);
 - o Innovation potential;
 - o Feasibility of implementation;
 - o Budget allocation and justification.
- Team Composition and Roles, clearly identifying the Principal Investigator (PI), Team Leaders (TLs), and Team Members (TMs);
- Curriculum Vitae (maximum three pages) for the PI and each TL, highlighting relevant experience, particularly in innovation-related activities;
- Signed Declaration from all team members confirming their participation in only one proposal under the current call;
- Proof of Affiliation to a UNITA partner university (student or employee status);
- Confirmation of Eligibility and Employment Status for the entire project duration;
- Proof of Engagement with Entrepreneurial or Knowledge Transfer Activities, required only if the team wishes to apply for the additional score under the "Entrepreneurial and Knowledge Transfer Engagement" evaluation criterion. Only one type of proof per team will be considered. See Article 9 and Annex 3 for details. Valid documentation may include:
 - o Certificate of successful completion of the online module of the BIP Joint Entrepreneurship Training Programme (Task 4.1);
 - o Certificate or transcript of an entrepreneurship-related training course offered by a UNITA partner university;
 - o Proof of authorship of a registered IP right (e.g. patent, utility model, etc.) along with a declaration of intent to license it to the team;
 - o Documentation of other relevant knowledge transfer activities (e.g. spin-offs, incubator participation, consultancy).

Article 8. Administrative Review of Applications

Following submission, the jury will review applications for:

- Team eligibility and training completion
- Institutional affiliation
- Completeness of documents
- Budget compliance
- Participation limits

A 1-day window will be offered to correct any administrative errors. Non-compliant applications will not be evaluated.

Article 9. Evaluation and Selection

A jury composed of Task 4.1 representatives and external experts will evaluate and select the highest-scoring proposals, taking into account both the evaluation scores and geographic diversity. Priority will be given to projects that promote cross-border collaboration and align with the thematic focus areas of the UNITA Research & Innovation Hubs.

The evaluation process will be conducted in **two distinct phases**:

1. **Administrative Eligibility Check** – to ensure compliance with the formal requirements of the call.
2. **Qualitative Assessment** – based on the following weighted criteria:
 - o **Innovation and Open Innovation Potential – 30%**
Assesses the originality of the proposed idea and its potential to introduce significant improvements or transformations within its field. Projects should clearly reflect a capacity for innovation, ideally integrating open innovation mechanisms and collaborative methodologies that transcend institutional boundaries.
 - o **Market Potential and Prospects for Implementation – 20%**
Evaluates the potential for the proposed outcomes to be implemented beyond the academic setting. This includes applicability in real-world scenarios, alignment with stakeholder needs, and viability in terms of scalability and long-term sustainability.
 - o **Relevance and Positioning within the Current State of the Art – 10%**
Considers the alignment of the project with the most recent scientific and technological developments in the field, and the extent to which it addresses existing gaps or unexplored opportunities.
 - o **Clarity, Coherence, and Feasibility of the Project Structure – 25%**
Reviews the internal logic and planning of the project: clarity of objectives, definition of activities and milestones, coherence between work packages and expected results, and the realism of the proposed timeline and resource allocation.

- o **Team Composition and Complementarity – 5%**

Assesses the diversity, interdisciplinarity, and synergy within the team, including a balanced distribution of roles and the strategic inclusion of skills and expertise needed for successful implementation.

- o **Demonstrated Engagement with Entrepreneurial and Knowledge Transfer Ecosystems – up to 10%**

This criterion rewards teams that integrate entrepreneurial competencies or valorise prior innovation outcomes. Only the highest applicable score will be granted per project team under this criterion, not cumulative, as follows:

- o **10%** – If the project provides proof that at least one team member has successfully completed the online module of the BIP Joint Entrepreneurship Training Programme „One step beyond” (Task 4.1);
 - o **Up to 7%** – If at least one team member has successfully completed an Entrepreneurial Training Course provided by any of the UNITA partner universities;
 - o **Up to 5%** – If a team member is the author of a relevant intellectual property right (e.g. patent, utility model, trademark, registered community design) and commits to license it for free to the team members and their institutions as background IP for the submitted project;
 - o **Up to 3%** – If the team can demonstrate other relevant experience in the field of knowledge transfer (e.g. documented participation in tech transfer activities, incubation programs, spin-off creation, consultancy for innovation et al.).

Article 10. Obligations of the Beneficiaries

- ~ Implementation Timeline: Projects must be implemented between July 2025 and March 2026, with a maximum duration of 9 months.
- ~ Reporting: A final report, using the official template, must be submitted within one month after the project’s completion.
- ~ Visibility: All dissemination and communication materials must explicitly acknowledge the support of UNITA and the Erasmus+ programme.
- ~ Public Output: A project summary will be published on the UNITA Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) website.

Please note that Task 4.1 and/or UNITA Offices may request interim updates throughout the implementation period.

Article 11. Intellectual and Industrial Property

Applicants are required to certify the originality of their proposed work. If new intellectual property (IP) is generated during the project, an appropriate inter-institutional agreement must

be established to govern its ownership and use. The adoption of Creative Commons licenses for disseminating project outputs is strongly encouraged where applicable.

Article 12. Omissions and Additional Information

Any situations not explicitly addressed by this call will be reviewed and resolved by the Task 4.1 coordination team in collaboration with the relevant UNITA Offices.

For further information or clarifications, applicants are encouraged to contact their local UNITA contact points or reach out to the coordination team:

- UVT (Call Coordinator): unita@e-uvt.ro
- HES-SO (Co-Coordinator): unita@hes-so.ch
- UPNA and UBI (T4.1 Co-Leads): through their respective local UNITA offices

Article 13. Timeline

Activity	Deadline
Launch of Call	6th of May 2025
Application Period	Until 6 June 2025
Administrative Eligibility Check	Until 13 June 2025
Qualitative Assessment	Until 27 June 2025
Notification of Results	30 June 2025
Project Start	From 1 July 2025
Project Duration	Until March 2026
Final Report Submission	April 2026

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Application form

Annex 2 – Self-evaluation form

Annex 3 – Evaluation form

Annex 1 - APPLICATION FORM

UNITA – Starting Tech Transfer Grants (Task 4.1 – Interterritorial Interfaces for Innovation)

Submission Deadline: June 6, 2025 (midnight CET)

Submission Platform: <https://surveysbg.univ-unita.eu/index.php/377838?lang=en>

Section 1 – Project Information

1. **Project Title:**
2. **Thematic Area(s):**
 Green Energy Circular Economy Cultural Heritage Digital Transitions Global Health Inclusive Societies
3. **Smart Specialization Strategy (S3/S4) Alignment:**
(Please specify the relevant regional strategies addressed)
4. **Summary of the Project (max. 250 words):**

Section 2 – Principal Investigator and Team

Principal Investigator (PI):

- Full Name:
- Institution:
- Position:
- Email:

Team Leader (TL) 1:

- Full Name:
- Institution:

Team Leader (TL) 2 (if applicable):

- Full Name:

- Institution:

Team Members:

- List full name, institution, role (PhD/student/staff), and confirmation of BIP training completion per team member.

Section 3 – Project Description (Max. 3 Pages)

Please provide a detailed project description including:

- Scientific and innovation relevance
- Relevance to the UNITA hub themes and S3/S4 strategies
- Innovation potential and TRL justification
- Feasibility and implementation plan
- Impact and market alignment

Section 4 – Budget and Justification

Total Requested Amount (€):

(Max. €7,233.33 per project)

Expense Category	Estimated Cost (€)	Justification
Travel, Accommodation, Subsistence		
Dissemination & Communication		
Event Logistics		
Research Assistance		
Consumables		
Other goods/services		

(Max. 60% for travel; 40% for other expenses)

Section 5 – Supporting Documents

Please upload the following documents to complete your application:

- **CVs of the Principal Investigator (PI) and each Team Leader (TL)** - Maximum 3 pages each. Must include relevant academic experience, major projects, and up to 10 key publications;
- **Signed Participation Declaration** - A joint statement signed by all PI and TLs confirming:
 - Participation in only one project proposal for this call;
 - Compliance with the eligibility conditions;
 - Commitment to remain affiliated with their institutions for the full duration of the project.
 - Proof of Affiliation to a UNITA Institution - An official document confirming the employment status of the PI and TLs at one of the UNITA partner universities;
 - Proof of Entrepreneurial or Knowledge Transfer Engagement - (Required only if the project seeks to obtain up to 10% extra points under the new evaluation criterion). Please upload one of the following supporting documents as applicable. Δ Only one proof per team will be considered under this criterion. If multiple types are submitted, only the one corresponding to the highest score will be evaluated.
 - (10%) Proof of BIP Joint Entrepreneurship Training (Task 4.1) - Certificate of successful completion of the online BIP module for at least one team member from each participating institution.
 - (Up to 7%) Proof of completion of an Entrepreneurial Training Course - Certificate or official transcript showing successful completion of an entrepreneurship-related training course provided by a UNITA partner university.
 - (Up to 5%) Intellectual Property Documentation - Proof of authorship of a registered IP right (e.g. patent, utility model, trademark, registered design) relevant to the project topic, accompanied by a signed declaration of intent to license it freely to all team members and their institutions as background IP for the project.
 - (Up to 3%) Evidence of Knowledge Transfer Experience - Documentation demonstrating experience in innovation and transfer activities (e.g. participation in incubation/acceleration programs, consultancy

contracts, tech transfer cases, start-up involvement).

Consent to Data Processing (GDPR)

By submitting this form, I confirm that I have read and understood the privacy notice below:

"Your personal data (e.g., name, institutional affiliation, contact details, and uploaded documents) will be collected and processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your application for the UNITA Starting Tech Transfer Grants (Task 4.1). Data will be processed by authorized personnel within the UNITA alliance and stored securely, in compliance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). You may request access, correction, or deletion of your data at any time by contacting unita@e-uvt.ro."

Do you consent to the processing of your personal data as described?

- Yes
- No

Annex 2 - SELF-EVALUATION FORM

To be completed by the applying team before submission.

Criterion	Yes / No	Comments / Justification
At least two different UNITA universities involved		
PI and at least one TL clearly designated		
BIP training completed by at least one member per team		
Project addresses one or more UNITA thematic areas		
Aligned with S3/S4 strategies		
Project is TRL 2–3 proof-of-concept stage		
Feasible implementation plan		



Budget complies with funding limits and categories		
All required documents attached		
All participants involved in only one proposal in this call		



Annex 3 - EVALUATION FORM

To be completed by the Evaluation Jury.

Project Title:

Evaluator Name:

Institution / Role:

Section A – Administrative Eligibility (Yes/No)

Requirement	Compliance (yes/no)	Comments
Involvement of ≥ 2 UNITA partners		
All documentation complete		
Budget limits respected		
Single-project participation per person		
Proof of Entrepreneurial or Knowledge Transfer Engagement (minimum 1 team member)		(Required only if the project seeks to obtain up to 10% extra points under the dedicated evaluation criterion)

Section B – Qualitative Assessment (Weighted Scoring)

Criterion	Max Points	Score	Comments
Innovation and Open Innovation Potential	30		
Market Potential and Implementation Prospects	20		
Relevance and Positioning in Current State of the Art	10		

Clarity, Coherence, and Feasibility of the Project Structure	25		
Team Composition and Complementarity	5		
<p>Demonstrated Engagement with Entrepreneurial and Knowledge Transfer Ecosystems (Max 10 points, non-cumulative). Please check only one option corresponding to the highest applicable score. If multiple documents are submitted, evaluate only the one that justifies the highest scoring category.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one team member has completed the BIP Joint Entrepreneurship Training Programme (minimum the online module – Task 4.1) 	10		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one team member completed an entrepreneurial training course offered by a UNITA partner university 	7		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A team member owns a relevant registered IP and commits to freely license it as background IP 	5		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented experience in innovation/tech transfer activities (e.g. incubation, consultancy, spin-offs) 	3		
TOTAL	100		