

Terms of Reference

Call for Coaches

Vulcanus Market Research Initiative 2026-2027

Issued by	EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation
Launch date	15 June 2026
Application deadline	15 July 2026
Honorarium	JPY 250,000 per project, before withholding tax / excluding consumption tax
Programme period	September 2026 – March 2027
Language	All coaching, communication, and deliverables must be conducted in English
Contact	vinj@eu-japan.or.jp

1. Background

The EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation announces the launch of the 2026–2027 edition of the **Vulcanus Market Research Initiative**.

The initiative connects European SMEs with STEM students participating in the **Vulcanus in Japan Programme** (VinJ), undertaking eight-month industrial placements from August 2026 to March 2027 at leading companies and research institutions across Japan.

Selected SMEs receive tailored market intelligence reports assessing the Japanese market potential of their product, technology, or service.

Research is conducted by the 2026–2027 cohort of the Vulcanus in Japan Programme. First launched in 1997, the programme marks its 30th anniversary in 2027 and has built an extensive alumni network of nearly 800 professionals, researchers, and academics across Europe and Japan.

Students are selected through a highly competitive application process coordinated by the EU-Japan Centre.

2. Objective of the Assignment

This is a call to recruit business coaches for the 2026–2027 edition of the Vulcanus Market Research Initiative. Selected coaches support VinJ student teams in carrying out high-quality market research and producing a final report and presentation for their assigned SME client, by offering expert guidance throughout the research and drafting process.

Coaches will work with students selected through a highly competitive application process from across Europe, with academic backgrounds in STEM fields. Projects span sectors including artificial intelligence, advanced electronics, smart mobility, sustainable technologies, biotechnology, and cybersecurity, among others.

3. Scope of Work

The Centre will select business coaches with proven expertise in market research, international business, and cross-cultural analysis. Coaches will support student teams as they conduct research tailored to the specific needs of their assigned SME client.

Throughout the initiative, coaches are expected to provide ongoing guidance, respond to student enquiries, and help steer the research process. Their responsibilities include team coordination, facilitating twice-monthly meetings, ensuring adherence to key deadlines, guiding the drafting process, and supporting preparation for the final presentation. This includes supervision, presentation coaching, and attendance at the final presentation session. Coaches will be assessed based on the quality of their support and their overall contribution to the success of the project.

The initiative is designed to provide market intelligence and exploratory research. It does not constitute commercial consultancy, legal advice, or direct market representation.

The selected coaches will:

- Guide and support a team of students conducting market research for a European SME
- Provide strategic direction on how to structure and execute the research
- Offer feedback on methodology, market analysis, and business insight
- Respond to research-related queries from students
- Review and provide feedback on research drafts (midterm and final rounds)
- Participate in all scheduled coaching sessions throughout the initiative, as outlined in Section 5.

Each coach is assigned to up to two SME projects.

4. Coach Profile

Ideal candidates should meet the following requirements:

- Experience in market research, international business development, management consulting, or related fields
- Strong understanding of Japanese market structures, industry trends, and cross-cultural business dynamics
- Familiarity with supporting students, interns, or junior professionals
- Fluent in English; knowledge of Japanese is an advantage but not mandatory

5. Timeframe and Commitment

The Vulcanus Market Research Initiative period runs from September 2026 to March 2027. Coaching is delivered through a combination of structured sessions and ongoing email-based guidance.

The schedule is structured as follows:

- One introductory session with the student team and assigned SME (September 2026)
- Twice-monthly progress meetings with the student team (October 2026 – January 2027)
- Market Research presentation to the client SME (January 2027)
- Post-presentation fine-tuning sessions (January/February 2027)
- Follow-up presentation to the client SME, if requested (March 2027)

Progress meetings are structured online sessions between the coach and the student team, held via video conference, in which the coach reviews research progress, provides feedback and direction, and ensures the project remains on track. Each progress meeting should last between one and two hours. Coaches will be asked to submit a brief meeting record following each session.

Coaches are expected to hold two progress meetings per month with their assigned student team throughout the research phase. Compliance with this requirement will be monitored by the EU-Japan Centre. The Centre reserves the right to withhold part of the honorarium in cases where the required meetings have not been conducted.

Prior to the start of the initiative, selected coaches will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect any confidential information shared during the initiative.

The honorarium will be paid following delivery of the final report in March 2027.

Note: The introductory session and presentations are scheduled during the evening (19:00 JST) to accommodate the daytime availability of participating EU SMEs.

6. Compensation

Coaches assigned to one project will receive an honorarium of JPY 250,000. Coaches assigned to two projects will receive JPY 500,000. All amounts are before withholding income tax and excluding consumption tax.

7. Selection Criteria

Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience in market research, international business development, management consulting, or related fields

- Strong understanding of Japanese market structures, industry trends, and cross-cultural business dynamics
- Experience supporting students, interns, or junior professionals
- Fluency in English; knowledge of Japanese is an advantage but not mandatory

8. Tentative Timeline

Milestone	Timing
Launch of coaches' recruitment call	15 June 2026
Submission deadline	15 July 2026
Coach selection	14 August 2026
Introductory session with student team and assigned SME	September 2026
Research phase — twice-monthly online team meetings	October 2026 – January 2027
Submission of first draft	December 2026
Market Research presentation (60 minutes)	January 2027
SME confirmation: final report and updated slide deck only, or follow-up presentation	January/February 2027
Post-presentation fine-tuning sessions	February 2027
Final market intelligence report, updated slide deck, and follow-up presentation (if requested)	March 2027

A more detailed operational timeline will be provided to selected participants following confirmation of participation.

9. Application and Contact Information

Interested professionals are invited to submit a CV and a short statement of interest highlighting relevant experience to vinj@eu-japan.or.jp

Please review this document carefully before submitting an enquiry. For any remaining questions, contact the Centre at the same address.

Application deadline: 15 July 2026

Early submission is encouraged.