EU CONEXUS

Co-funded by the European Union

6TH edition

The European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS) presents the 6th edition of it's International School Contest

'Think smart, create green'

CONTEST RULES AND REGULATIONS

Content

1. Overview of the Contest

EU-CONEXUS 'European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability, formed by 9 European partner universities, is a transnational European higher education and research institution that studies smart urban coastal sustainable development from a global point of view.

EU-CONEXUS European University is also developing workshops and seminars for high schools and as part of this outreach, we deliver the International EU-CONEXUS School Contest 'Think Smart, Create Green'.

The EU-CONEXUS European University consists of 9 partners:

- La Rochelle Université (LRUniv), France
- Agricultural University of Athens (AUA), Greece
- Catholic University of Valencia (UCV), Spain
- Klaipeda University (KU), Lithuania
- University of Zadar (UNIZD), Croatia
- Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest (UTCB), Romania
- South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland
- University of Rostock (UR), Germany.
- Frederick University (FredU), Cyprus

1.1 Main goals

The main goals of the contest are:

> to raise and promote awareness amongst school pupils about SmUCS (smart urban coastal sustainability) and promote marine environmental consciousness through a specific but also a pan-European approach.

> to bring university life closer to secondary education pupils, to encourage them to study STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) -related degrees and introduce future careers in related industries.

1.2 Expected impact

FOR PUPILS:

- To raise awareness about SmUCS topics, environmental sustainability, smart cities, and circular economy,
- To think critically and creatively,
- To develop team building skills,
- To develop the sense of accomplishment and empowerment,
- To provide an opportunity for public speaking in front of an international audience,
- To encourage young people to become active for social change,
- To develop youth entrepreneurship and social responsibility.

FOR TEACHERS:

- To raise awareness about SmUCS topics, environmental sustainability, smart cities, and circular economy,
- To develop interdisciplinary collaborations
- To explore different teaching methods,
- To develop team and project management skills,
- To open to set up/participate in Erasmus+ teaching/research projects.
- To promote and raise awareness of Erasmus+ teaching and research opportunities.

1.3 Target groups

There are two target groups:

> Pupils aged 12-14
> (born 2011 - 2013)

> Pupils aged 14-17
> (born in 2008- 2011)

Pupils who have reached the age of 14 at the time of team registration may choose to enter either of the two categories.

1.4 Topics' explanation

Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) is the focus of EU-CONEXUS's education, research and innovation, and knowledge-sharing activities, aiming to define, understand, and address societal challenges faced by communities in urban and semi-urbanised coastal regions (rivers, seas, and oceans).

Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) is not a subject-driven thematic framework, but a challenge-driven education and research domain. Coastal environments are interfaces between inland areas and marine offshore parts where social and economic activities interact with highly valuable and unique coastal ecosystems. Socio-economic activities along our coasts have a direct and indirect connectivity and impact on these ecosystems through the provision of goods and services. The functioning and evolution of urban coastal societies and environments in the context of climate change and increasing anthropogenic pressure are major challenges that are addressed in the framework of Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability.

Examples for domains for research and education are:

- Coastal governance and coastal engineering (cultural heritage, ecological justice, fisheries policy, understanding of coastal uses, on-/off-shore renewable energy – construction and operation of facilities, legislation…)
- Coastal ecosystems with its social and natural components and stakeholders (defence of biodiversity, improvement of water quality, water resources management, sustainable tourism, logistics, water lifecycle, SMEs, circular economy…)
- Wellbeing of coastal communities and improvement of the quality of life (civic education and awareness of naturally available resources, prevention of physical and mental diseases, healthy habits…)

Since ancient times, coastal areas have been popular sites for human settlements due to their abundant natural resources, transportation access, and communication with other communities. Indeed, according to the United Nations, nearly 40% of the world's population lives within 100 km of a coastline. However, the increasing urbanization and industrialization of these areas have led to significant environmental challenges.

Statistics related to coastal areas and the environmental challenges they face:

- The United Nations reports that coastal and marine ecosystems are estimated to be worth over $25 trillion annually, providing essential services such as food, water filtration, and climate regulation.
- The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) reports that coastal wetlands, which provide important habitat for birds, fish, and other wildlife, have declined by approximately 50% over the past century due to human activities.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that around 90% of the world's fish stocks are either fully exploited or overexploited. Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to overfishing, which can lead to the collapse of fish populations and have severe consequences for local economies and food security.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that global sea levels could rise by up to 1.1 meters by the end of the century if greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase at their current rate. This could lead to flooding, erosion, and displacement of millions of people living in coastal areas.
- A study published in the journal Nature in 2020 found that the world's oceans have become more acidic due to the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This can have serious consequences for marine ecosystems, including the loss of coral reefs, which provide important habitats for fish and other marine species.

While coastal areas have long been considered ideal locations for human settlements, the increasing demand for natural resources and services has led to significant environmental challenges. It is crucial that we take steps to protect these fragile ecosystems and mitigate the impacts of climate change to ensure the long-term sustainability of our coastal communities.

Coastal sustainability is an essential aspect of responsible living, and it can be achieved by implementing the 9R framework. This framework emphasizes reducing waste and adopting a circular economy, which is crucial for coastal ecosystems' health and longevity. By practicing the 9R framework, we can reduce the amount of plastic waste and other pollutants that end up in the ocean, thereby protecting marine life and maintaining the delicate balance of the coastal ecosystem. Ultimately, coastal sustainability and responsible living go hand in hand, and it's our collective responsibility to protect our oceans and ensure their long-term viability.

The 9R framework is a set of principles that can help us transition to a circular

economy. In a linear economy, we take resources from the earth, use them to make products, and then dispose of them when we are finished. This creates a lot of waste and pollution, and it's not sustainable in the long run. In a circular economy, we aim to keep resources in use for as long as possible and minimize waste and pollution.

The 9Rs stand for:

- R0-Refuse: This means refusing products that are not sustainable or necessary. For example, we can say no to single-use plastic bags, straws, or bottles.
- R1-Rethink: This means rethinking our current system and looking for ways to make it more sustainable. For example, we can design products to be reusable, repairable, and recyclable.
- R2-Reduce: This means reducing the number of resources we use. For example, we can use energy-efficient appliances, take shorter showers, or turn off lights when we're not using them.
- R3-Reuse: This means finding new uses for products and materials that would otherwise be thrown away. For example, we can donate clothes, books, or furniture, or use old jars as containers.
- R4-Repair: This means fixing products that are broken instead of throwing them away. For example, we can mend clothes, fix bikes, or replace parts in appliances.
- R5-Refurbish: This means restoring products to their original condition or upgrading them to extend their lifespan. For example, we can refurbish phones, computers, or cars.
- R6-Remanufacture: This means using old products and materials to create new ones. For example, we can use recycled plastic to make new products or use old car parts to build new cars.
- R7-Repurpose: This means using discarded product in a new product with the same function.
- R8-Recycle: This means turning waste into new products or materials. For example, we can recycle paper, glass, or metal, and turn them into new products.
- R9-Recover: This means recovering energy or resources from waste that

cannot be recycled or reused. For example, we can use biogas from organic waste or extract metals from electronic waste.

By applying the 9R Framework, we can create a more sustainable and circular economy that benefits both people and the planet. We can reduce waste, save resources, and create new jobs and businesses that contribute to a healthier and more equitable world.

1.5 Projects' specifications

1.5.1. CATEGORY 1: pupils aged 12-14

All teachers must register their pupils first, before completing the next steps.

PHASE 1 – Preselection

Step 1: Following a video on sustainability, each team of pupils must answer an online **Quiz**, estimated time 3 minutes.

Step 2: Each team must collect recycled items and make any new object that will be creative, functional, and relevant to SmUCS topics.

Step 3: Each team will be required to submit a 1-minute TikTok style **video** showing the positive impact of their new object. The video should include a short description of the new object and evidence of creativity, functionality and relevance to smart urban coastal sustainability topics - SmUCS).

PHASE 2 – National final

Up to 5 teams in each country will proceed to their national final. Teams will be given 10 minutes to deliver their 10 slides presentation using the template provided by the organisers.

Teams are required to upload their presentation entry to the one drive, one week prior to the national final. There will be one national winner in each age category.

PHASE 3 – International EU-CONEXUS final

The winning team from each country will proceed to the International final and deliver the same slideshow presentation to the international jury.

There will be one international winner in each age category.

1.5.2. CATEGORY 2: pupils aged 14-17

All teachers must register their pupils first, before completing the next steps.

PHASE 1 – Preselection

Step 1: Following a video on sustainability, each team of pupils must answer an online **Quiz**, estimated time 3 minutes.

Step 2: The teams are required to identify a sustainability issue in their community, propose an innovative solution with relevance to SmUCS and STEM topics and describe the positive impact of their solution. Teams will present the above in a 5-page maximum written **report**, (including references and bibliography).

Step 3: Each team will be required to submit a 1-minute TikTok style **video** showing the positive impact of their solution and its relevance to SmUCS and STEM.

PHASE 2 – National final

Up to 5 teams in each country will proceed to their national final. Teams will be given 10 minutes to deliver a 10 slides presentation using the template provided by the organisers.

Teams are required to upload the presentation onto the one drive folders, one week prior to the national final. There will be one national winner in each age category.

PHASE 3 – International EU-CONEXUS final

The winning team from each country will proceed to the International final and deliver the same slideshow presentation to the international jury.

There will be one international winner in each age category.

2. Eligibility

- Participants can be members of only one team, while teachers can lead more than one team within the same category.
- Teams of 3-4 pupils are accepted.
- Teams can be led by a maximum of two (2) teachers.
- Candidates must be school pupils from one of the EU-CONEXUS member countries.
- The project must be an original idea created by the participants.
- All entries to this competition, including the presentation, report and video MUST only be in English.
- All elements required by the organizers must be delivered to be considered eligible to enter the competition
- Parental consent forms for each team member must be uploaded in the folder to be considered eligible to enter the competition.

3. Timeline

- Registration – 28th of November (Friday) 2025, end of day 23:59 (CET)
- Submission of deliverables – 30th of January (Friday) 2026, CET23:59
- Announcement of the teams for each National Final – 27th of February (Friday) 2026
- National Finals – March - April 2026 (dates to be announced) – Physical or online
- EU-CONEXUS International Final – 27th of April 2026 – Online

4. How to participate

4.1 Information

The information about the Contest will be disseminated by the EU-CONEXUS school committee representatives. The rules will be published on https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/ and on member universities' websites.

4.2 Registration

Participants, via their leading teacher, should complete their registration. The link for both categories' registration will be available on EU-CONEXUS dedicated webpage for the School Contest under the Society tab.

Registration for the competition is through Microsoft Forms. After registration each teacher will receive an email from their local coordinator with the information:

- Contest rules and regulations.
- One Drive cloud folder link for uploading the documents required in Phase 1, including the authorization agreements for the pupils.
- Microsoft Forms link for the Sustainability Quiz.
- Details of the timeline and deadlines.

4.3 Authorization forms

The legal guardians of the pupils must:

- authorize the pupils' participation by signing the consent form. This consent form covers the copyright, image rights, etc. for EU-CONEXUS dissemination and public assessment of works in national and international competition.
- The files of each country will be accessible to download on the https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/ page.

4.4 Projects´submission

4.4.1. CATEGORY 1: pupils aged 12-14

After registration each team must submit by the project submission deadline: **January 30th, 2026, 23:59 CET**.

Sustainability Quiz will be received by the teacher by e-mail and answers to the Quiz need to be submitted by using the same e-mail as in the registration.

In the event of several submissions for the Quiz, only the 1st submission will be considered.

All digital files must be uploaded in a cloud folder provided by the organizers after registration. Teams selected for the national final must upload the PowerPoint presentation in the same folder.

4.4.2. CATEGORY 2: pupils aged 14-17

After registration each team must submit by the project submission deadline: **January 30th, 2026, 23:59 CET**.

Sustainability Quiz will be received by the teacher by e-mail and needs to be submitted by using the same e-mail as in the registration.

Only the 1st submission of the quiz will be considered.

The teams are required to identify a sustainability issue in their community, propose an innovative solution with relevance to SmUCS and STEM topics, describe the positive impact of their solution, detail an implementation plan and create a strategy to promote their solution. Teams will present the above in a maximum 5-page report (including references and bibliography).

All digital files must be uploaded in a cloud folder provided by the organisers after registration. Teams selected for the national final must upload the PowerPoint presentation in the same folder.

5. Jury Composition

5.1 National jury

Eight (8) national juries will be formed (one (1) in each EU-CONEXUS country (except for Germany which is not participating in this edition of this contest). The national jury will be composed of 3 or 5 members in total:

- 1-3 staff members of the university involved in the EU-CONEXUS Plus Universities to School program.
- 1 stakeholder
- 1 local student

5.2 International jury

One (1) international jury will be composed of 9 members in total: 1 representative from each university of 8 partners involved in the organization of the School Contest and one neutral jury member. To ensure the fairness of the judging process, the national jury members cannot evaluate their own teams.

6. Winners´ selection

6.1 National winners´ selection procedure

- Only the works submitted on time will be considered for the national (and later international) selection process.
- Incomplete files will be disqualified
- Pre-selection: A maximum of five (5) per age category projects will be selected to participate in the National Final, where pupils will present their projects to the National Jury. This event is organized by the host university

— The contestants will present their projects orally in English. 10 minutes will be given for each project presentation, and the jury will have a maximum of 5 minutes for questions.

— The National juries will decide the winners, one per category, on the day of the national final.

6.2 International winners´ selection procedure

— Each EU-CONEXUS University will submit the work of the national winners (one (1) per category) to the international jury.

— The international contestants will present their works in English (virtually).

— Each finalist will have 10 minutes to present their projects. The international jury will have a maximum of 5 minutes to ask questions/ make comments. The jury will announce the winners on the same day. There will be a podium of three (3) places, and the first, second and third place projects will be announced.

— The winners will be informed by email.

6.3 Contest winner assessment

6.3.1. SPECIFIC CRITERIA CATEGORY 1: pupils aged 12-14

<table>
<tr><th>Score</th><th colspan="2">Criteria</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Preselection (maximum of 50 points)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quiz</td><td colspan="2">One point per correct answer in the sustainability quiz. Teams who do not take the quiz are disqualified.</td><td>up to 10 points</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Object</td><td colspan="2">Creativity: originality and uniqueness of the object.
The object should be original and unique, showcasing innovation and distinctiveness. This means the project should stand out from others by presenting a fresh perspective or a novel approach.</td><td>up to 10 points</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Functionality: practicality, usefulness and replicability of the object
The object should be practical, useful, and easily replicable, addressing real-life needs. This involves creating something that can be used effectively in everyday situations and can be reproduced by others.</td><td>up to 15 points</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Relevance: the object aligns with SmUCs topics.
The object must align with Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) topics, demonstrating a positive impact on coastal urban environments. This means the project should contribute to the sustainability and improvement of coastal urban areas</td><td>up to 15 points</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">National and international finals (maximum of 50 points)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="11">Slide presentation</td><td>2</td><td rowspan="3">10 slides describe a problem in the community and a solution/idea is presented by the team.</td><td rowspan="11">up to 20 points</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td rowspan="3">10 slides describe a problem in the community and a solution/idea is presented. Slides are visually appealing and engaging, easy to follow and the project is well presented.</td></tr>
<tr><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>14</td><td rowspan="4">10 slides presented, are easy to follow, timed appropriately, are visually appealing, are well designed, interesting and engaging. A high-quality presentation with relevance and reference to SmUCs evident.</td></tr>
<tr><td>16</td></tr>
<tr><td>18</td></tr>
<tr><td>20</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="11">Team presentation</td><td>2</td><td rowspan="3">The presentation explains the object and its usefulness.</td><td rowspan="11">up to 20 points</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>8</td><td rowspan="3">The presentation is interesting, the team display a good rapport and passover.</td></tr>
<tr><td>10</td></tr>
<tr><td>12</td></tr>
<tr><td>14</td><td rowspan="4">The presentation is interesting, with smooth transitions. There is a good report within team and the object is clearly explained and aligned to SmUCs and the contest requirements outlined in the Rules and Regulations. The team members address jury.</td></tr>
<tr><td>16</td></tr>
<tr><td>18</td></tr>
<tr><td>20</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time</td><td colspan="2">Teams receive one point for each minute of presentation up to 10 minutes (maximum 10 points); for presentations exceeding 10 minutes, the score decreases by one point per additional minute (e.g., up to 11 minutes = 9 points, up to12 minutes = 8 points, etc.).</td><td>up to 10 points</td></tr>
</table>

6.3.2. SPECIFIC CRITERIA CATEGORY 2: pupils aged 14-17

Score		Criteria	Marks
Preselection (maximum of 50 points)			
Quiz		One point per correct answer in the sustainability quiz. Teams who do not take the quiz are disqualified.	up to 10 points
Project idea		**Creativity:** originality and uniqueness of the idea. The idea should be original and unique, showcasing innovation and distinctiveness. This means the project should stand out from others by presenting a fresh perspective or a novel approach.	up to 5 points
		Functionality: practicality, usefulness and replicability of the idea The object should be practical, useful, and easily replicable, addressing real-life needs. This involves creating something that can be used effectively in everyday situations and can be reproduced by others.	up to 5 points
		Relevance: idea aligns with SmUCs topics. The idea must align with Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) topics, demonstrating a positive impact on coastal urban environments. This means the project should contribute to the sustainability and improvement of coastal urban areas	up to 10 points
Report		Report states the problem, identifies a solution and provides information.	up to 5 points
		Clarity and coherence: the problem is clearly identified, solution is clearly outlined in the report, the object/ idea / service is replicable, and implementation potential is described or implied.	up to 5 points
		Quality: the report states the problem, identifies the solution, shows the idea or objects functionality and potential replicability and implementation potential is obvious or expressed. Report is high quality, easy to follow and evidence (references) is provided for the problem, the solution, and its potential usefulness or commercial viability.	up to 10 points
National and international finals (maximum of 50 points)			
Slide presentation	2	10 slides describe a problem in the community and a solution / idea is presented by the team.	up to 20 points
	4		
	6		
	8	10 slides describe a problem in the community and a solution / idea is presented. Slides are visually appealing and engaging, easy to follow and the project is well presented.	
	10		
	12		
	14	10 slides presented, are easy to follow, timed appropriately, are visually appealing, are well designed, interesting and engaging. A high-quality presentation with relevance and reference to SmUCs evident.	
	16		
	18		
	20		
Team presentation	2	The presentation explains the object and its usefulness.	up to 20 points
	4		
	6		
	8	The presentation is interesting, the team display a good rapport and passover.	
	10		
	12		
	14	The presentation is interesting with smooth transitions, there is a good rapport within team and idea/object is clearly explained and aligned to SmUCs and the contest requirements outlined in the Rules and Regulations. Team members, address jury.	
	16		
	18		
	20		
Time		Teams receive one point for each minute of presentation up to 10 minutes (maximum 10 points); for presentations exceeding 10 minutes, the score decreases by one point per additional minute (e.g., up to 11 minutes = 9 points, up to12 minutes = 8 points, etc.).	up to 10 points

6.3.3. Scoring method

PHASE 1 –Pre-selection

During the pre-selection phase of the contest, pupils score up to 50 points based on the delivery of the following: quiz, object/idea (based on the video) and report for category 14-17. This scoring system is used to designate the five national winners, and points from this phase are not considered in the national final.

PHASE 2 – National Final

During the national phase of the contest, pupils score up to 50 points based on the following criteria: slide presentation, team presentation and time management. From the five teams selected in each age category based on this scoring, the top teams will advance to the international phase. Points from the national phase will not be considered in the international phase.

PHASE 3 – International EU-CONEXUS Final

In this final phase, 9 jury members score the teams using the same criteria established in National phase, with up to 50 points available. However, jury members do not score on the team from their own country. In case of a tie, jury members (excluding those from the countries of the tied teams) will cast a vote to decide the winner.

7. Prize

Disclaimer – The certificates and money prizes will be sent to the winning teams in a month's time following the end of the international phase of the contest. This is due to the procedures that must be followed by our Alliance.

7.4 General rules

- All the teams will receive a certificate of participation.
- One (1) winner per category will be selected from among the participating teams in each EU-CONEXUS country (national winner).
- Then, each national winning team will compete at the international level.

7.5 National prize

EU-CONEXUS certificates will be given to all the national and international participants. The National Winners (one per age category) will be awarded a prize by the host university.

7.6 International prize

- Prizes for a total value of approximately 1000 Euros will be shared among all the members of the team who achieve the 1st place in the international competition, leading teacher(s) included.
- Prizes for a total value of approximately 750 Euros will be shared among all the members of the team who achieve the 2nd place in the international competition, leading teacher(s) included.
- Prizes for a total value of approximately 500 Euros will be shared among all the members of the team who achieve the 3rd place in the international competition, leading teacher(s) included.

8. Contacts of EU-CONEXUS Universities' representatives

Country	University´s name	Contact person	Contact e-mail
Greece	Agricultural University of Athens (AUA)	Antonios Vlassopoulos	avlassopoulos@aua.gr
Lithuania	Klaipeda University (KU)	Milda Borisovienė	milda.borisoviene@ku.lt
France	La Rochelle Université (LRU)	Christelle Tallon	schoolcontest-eu-conexus@univ-lr.fr
Spain	Catholic University of Valencia (UCV)	Raquel Blave	euconexus@ucv.es
Croatia	University of Zadar (UNIZD)	Ivana Zubak Čižmek	izubak@unizd.hr
Romania	Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest (UTCB)	Lavinia Turcu	lavinia.turcu@utcb.ro
Ireland	South East Technological University (SETU)	Sheila Donegan	sheila.donegan@setu.ie
Cyprus	Frederick University (FredU)	Christina Chattalas	c.chattalas@frederick.ac.cy

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Annex 1 – TEACHER SHORT DOCUMENT CATEGORY 1: pupils aged 12-14

One page that includes:

- short description of EU-CONEXUS
- phases
- registration
- project submission formats.

Annex 2 – TEACHER SHORT DOCUMENT CATEGORY 2: pupils aged 14-17

One page that includes:

- short description of EU-CONEXUS
- phases
- registration
- project submission formats.

External documents:

- Contest poster on page
- Power point with presentation format
- Report template format