

EU CONEXUS
European University for Smart
Urban Coastal Sustainability



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Annual Student Board Report

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Executive summary/abstract:

The Student Board (SB) serves as the representative body for students across all EU-CONEXUS partner institutions. It actively participates in strategic decision-making processes at all levels and implements initiatives focused on student engagement. SB members contribute to the Governing Board, Executive Council, Academic Council, and Research Council, ensuring that student perspectives are included in key governance matters. The SB holds annually one meeting in person and holds online meetings once per month.

To support the Student Board in fulfilling the tasks outlined in its Statute, a Student Board Secretary has been appointed. The Secretary's role is to assist board members with administrative matters, including organizing meetings, managing documentation, facilitating internal and external communication, and overseeing the implementation of Student Board activities and projects. Additionally, the Secretary acts as a key contact and liaison between the Student Board and other EU-CONEXUS bodies and structures.

This report covers the operations of the Student Board (SB) during the year 2023/2024, highlighting the contributions and efforts of its members. SB members, besides their meetings, actively participated in governance meetings and WP12 meetings, dedicating their time and expertise to various responsibilities. Throughout the year, their work included calls for student projects, organizing project evaluations, and supporting the implementation of student-led initiatives.

Over the four years of duration EU-CONEXUS Plus Project, the Student Board and WP12 coordinators plan to launch four calls for student projects. Until now, two calls have been released, with one project cycle fully completed and closed.

I. Student Board functioning

Governance Bodies of EU-CONEXUS Plus include the Governing Board, Student Board, Executive Council, Research Council, and Academic Council. The Student Board has their representatives in all councils. The President of the Student Board participates in Governing Board and Executive Council meetings, while a PhD student representative is part of the Research Council. 2 SB members represent students in the Academic Council.

The Student Board, established during the Pilot phase, includes two representatives per university. They coordinate activities among student organizations at partner universities. In order to support the Student Board in fulfilling its tasks, a Student Board Secretary has been appointed. The Secretary assists Board members with administrative tasks related to meetings, documentation, internal and external communication, and the implementation of Student Board activities and projects. Additionally, the Secretary serves as a liaison between the Student Board and other EU-CONEXUS bodies and structures.

The Student Board launches a Call for Student Projects, which is published on the website and other relevant communication platforms. The Board oversees the implementation of these projects to ensure compliance with established rules. At the end of each year, the Student Board submits an annual report detailing the execution and outcomes of the Call for Student Projects.

Review of the SB Statute

Throughout the year, the SB held workshops to update its statute. By the end of the year, the statute was finalized to make it clearer and easier to follow.

Position of Joint Masters Programme

The position of JM representative is established to better acknowledgement of communication and needs of the EU-CONEXUS Joint Master's Programme. The JM Representative is responsible for representing the interests of students enrolled in Joint Masters and for proposing further action for improvement. He/she shall have full voting rights-election and mandate.

JMPMB Representative is elected among all joint Master Students throughout electronic Voting that guarantee the anonymity of vote. The mandate of the JM Representative is set for one year, renewable once. The mandate of the JMPMB

representative will end if the Member resigns voluntarily after informing the Student Board and the Erasmus Student Network (ESN).

Adjustments to the VP voting process

From now on the Vice president will be elected among SB Members not from SB President's decision. The VP will be elected through absolute majority (50%+1), eleven votes. In cases of insufficient number of votes, the President proposes another candidate and the procedure is the same again and may continue until the election is successful due to enough votes. The mandate is set for one year, renewable once.

Election of new members

In the event that a member of the Student Board (SB) must step down—whether due to the completion of their studies, an increased workload, or their inability to attend meetings and remain actively engaged—it is essential that the member is replaced as promptly as possible to maintain the board's functionality and continuity.

The latest update within the SB pertains to the position of president. Theobald Goltz, representing the University of Rostock, has assumed the role of President of Student Board. Previously, he served as vice president, a position now held by Malena Fuentes from UCV following this transition.

The Student Board (SB) maintains representation across various Governance Councils. Currently, Philipp Schubert from Rostock University serves as the SB representative in the Academic Council. In the Research Council, the representative is PhD student Christina Zantioti. Meanwhile, the president of the SB, Theobald Goltz, represents the board in both the Executive Council and the Governing Board.

Contributions to other WPs and Projects

Given that the work of the EU-CONEXUS alliance directly impacts students from multiple perspectives, their opinions are frequently sought when developing new content. The Student Board plays a key role in this process. To facilitate this, special meetings are organized, featuring tailored packages where package representatives

present their work and seek feedback from the SB members. This input helps refine and adapt offerings to better meet students' needs.

This year, we held joint meetings with WP3, WP13, WP17, and representatives of the lamStudent project.

Conferences

Last year SB members attended the European Student Union conference and the European Student Assembly. SB members have registered for these conferences (Reports in the Annexes).

Each attendance of Student Board members opens new perspectives and enables students to connect with students of other alliances. Their return is always accompanied by good experience and new proposals for improving our alliance.

II. Student Projects

Over the past year, WP12 saw the successful completion of the first-ever student projects Call within our alliance. This initiative represents a significant step in fostering student collaboration and innovation across the community.

The total budget for student projects over the four-year period is €120.000,00. For the initial Call, a budget of €30.000,00 was allocated. However, only €15 467.59 was utilized, reflecting a prudent use of resources.

Of the 10 applications received involving seven Universities of EU-CONEXUS alliance, 6 projects were selected and funded following the approval of the Executive Council 15th January 2024.

The evaluation process was conducted by members of the Student Board (SB) who were not involved in student projects, ensuring impartiality. Any SB member associated with a project application abstained from the evaluation process and secured a replacement to maintain fairness. The evaluation was completed on schedule, with no complications or complaints reported.

The evaluation process was divided into two distinct parts, each with its own set of criteria. The first part focused on Innovativeness, Sustainability, Partners, Gender Equality, Feasibility, Impact, and Coherence. The second part assessed Stakeholder Involvement, Improvement of the EU-CONEXUS Community, Length of Effectiveness, and the Number of People Affected/Involved.

The Framework for Student Projects is a document that establishes a solid foundation for future student project initiatives within WP12, setting rules for efficiency and transparency.

Completed projects of the first Call

The initiative for student projects was launched as part of the new phase of our EU-CONEXUS alliance, within a package for Supporting student engagement. The initiative involves launching four calls over four years (approximately one per year), where students are required to form partnerships comprising at least three students from partner universities. For the first call, no specific topics were provided; instead, the coordinators of the work package allowed students to propose topics of their own choosing. This approach proved successful, resulting in 10 diverse applications. With a budget of EUR 30,000.00 allocated for the first call, it was decided to fund 6 projects

with EUR 5,000.00 each. Out of the 6 selected projects, 4 were successfully completed, while the remaining 2 cancelled their project plans.

European Augmented Reality Mural Project

Duration: January – March 2024 (3 months)

Leader: Ines Broquaire – LA Rochelle Universite

Participants: Marc Lacault, Amelie Lachambre (La Rochelle Universite), Antonija Mikulić (UNIZD), Raceanu Mihai Radu (UTCB)

Location: Marie Curie Building, Scientific University Campus, La Rochelle University

Objective: The aim of this project was to create an augmented reality mural, merging traditional art with modern technology to foster creativity and innovation on campus.

Implementation: The project was implemented in two phases over the course of three months. The mural itself was created in just 3 working days and now serves as an interactive feature of the university.

Cost: 4 241.83 €

Outcome: The project successfully completed its goals and the mural now engages students and visitors, enhancing the aesthetic of the campus.

Photo:



Coastal Conexus Project

Duration: 3 days (25-27 March 2024.)

Leader: University of Zadar – Luka Lešić

Participants: Anita Čipak, Anja Glavinić, Roberta Tomičić, Tin Meštrović (UNIZD), Leo-Onam Otieno (La Rochelle Universite), Dragos Diaconu, Oxani Maria-Corina (UTCB), Myrsini-Anastasia Stagaki-Barlou, Iliana Papada, Konstantinos Kavakakis (AUA), Patricia Escorteli Crespo (UCV)

Other Beneficiaries (if any): (7) Vera Graovac Matassi, Jadranka Brkić Vejmelka, Tamara Glušić, Anica Čuka, tomlav Klarin, Gabrijela Vidić, Borna Buljan (UNIZD)

Location: Zadar

Objective: To enhance understanding and stimulate discourse on the environmental, cultural, and economic challenges posed by unsustainable tourism practices in coastal regions, with a specific focus on Zadar County. This initiative involved a series of expert-led lectures addressing critical tourism topics, including: 'Population decline and housing expansion in Zadar County-What's tourism got to do with it', 'Sustainable development of tourism in the city of Zadar – can it be greener?', 'Transforming brownfields into functional spaces for higher education', 'Tourism development on Zadar islands and its spatial impact', 'Path to sustainable tourism: Case of the city of Zadar'.

As well as a workshop aimed at engaging students in identifying pathways toward sustainable tourism practices. To raise awareness about the environmental, cultural, and economic challenges in coastal regions due to unsustainable tourism practices. Lectures were held in the premises of the University of Zadar about popular tourism topics: 'Population decline and housing expansion in Zadar County-What's tourism got to do with it', 'Sustainable development of tourism in the city of Zadar – can it be greener?', 'Transforming brownfields into functional spaces for higher education', 'Tourism development on Zadar islands and its spatial impact', 'Path to sustainable tourism: Case of the city of Zadar'. Also, one Workshop for students were held.

Implementation: The project was conducted in Zadar during a SB visit and Meeting, with professors and experts engaging with participants. A platform I live was provided for discussions and workshops focused on sustainable tourism.

Cost: 4 317.32 €

Outcome: The project successfully raised awareness among participants and fostered discussions on how to tackle the issues identified in coastal tourism with 30 participants.

Photo :



A) Football Championship Project

Duration:

Leader: Ionita Alexandru-Ionel (UTCB)

Participants: Naciu Andra Gabriela (UTCB), Chudnickij Viktor (KU), Ivana Kolovrat, Paula Bačić, Mihaela Klanac, (UNIZD)

Location: Bucharest, Zadar

Objective: To inspire EU-CONEXUS students to participate in sports and promote healthy living through an international football championship.

Implementation: The championship was organized simultaneously with a partner university, providing a competitive and collaborative environment for students.

Cost: 2 131.92 € (plus participation fees)

Outcome: The project helped identify key areas for improvement in future events. It successfully engaged students in sport, building community and enhancing university experience.

Photo:



B) Taste EU-CONEXUS Project

Duration: March 2024 ?

Leader: Malte Cornelius Niendorf (UROS)

Participants : Ayomikun Chukwukadibia Okenwa (KU), Alexia-Maria Radu (UTCB), Manon Dore (LRU), Erik Johannes Lodes (UROS), Lea Cesarec (UNIZD)

Location: Cyprus

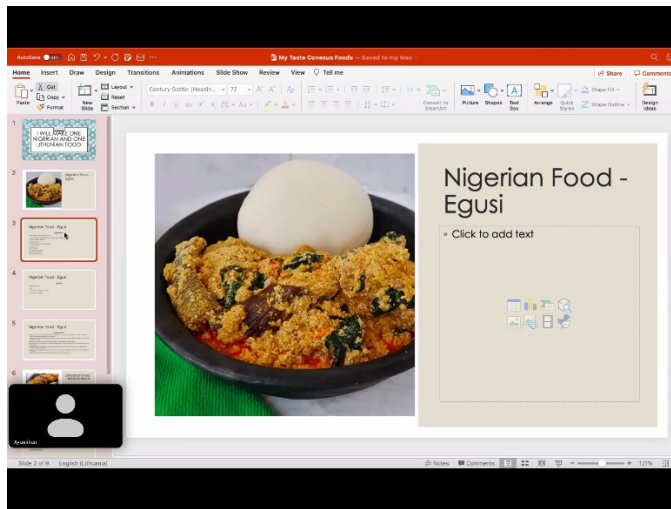
Objective: To foster intercultural understanding through the sharing of European and Nigerian cooking cultures.

Implementation: Cooking tutorials were conducted, culminating in a gathering of participants at the end of March.

Cost: 4 771.27 €

Outcome: This project successfully achieved its goal of fostering intercultural exchange through food. It enhanced participants' understanding of diverse cultures and traditions.

Photo:



Declined projects

Food as a Vessel of Culture, Tradition, and Sustainability

Leader: Vasiliki Desponiadi, AUA

Participants: Alexandra-Foteini Soumala, Konstantina Kalogeropoulou (AUA), Anja Glavinić (UNIZD), Antheanne Dolivet, Nil Jaunier (LRO), Patricia Escortell Crespo (UCV), Carlo Enrico Dernini, Jan Laszowski (Associated member)

Status: Declined

This project was declined because of limited support from Universities. Also, the unexpected closure of AUA for two months last year significantly disrupted our workflow and planning process. The limited size of our local team also posed challenges in effectively distributing tasks. They did not reach out to partners.

Objective: To explore how food serves as a cultural vessel and contributes to sustainable practices.

Application of Machine Learning for Sustainable Algae Pollution Management in the Baltic Sea

Leader: Hyscient Iyevhe, Klaipeda University

Participants: Ourania Kisti (AUA), Garazi Minguez Montero, Hector Torres Munoz (UCV)

Status: Declined

This project work primarily focused on gathering and summarizing relevant bibliographic sources. Participants were unable to proceed to the stage of applying machine learning methods to analyse existing data and achieve the intended results, as outlined in project objectives.

This limitation arose largely due to unforeseen challenges with team coordination. Team leader, Hyscient, initially played an active role but subsequently became unresponsive in group communications. In spring, he briefly informed us of a personal issue that required time away from the project. After this brief communication, he ceased all further contact.

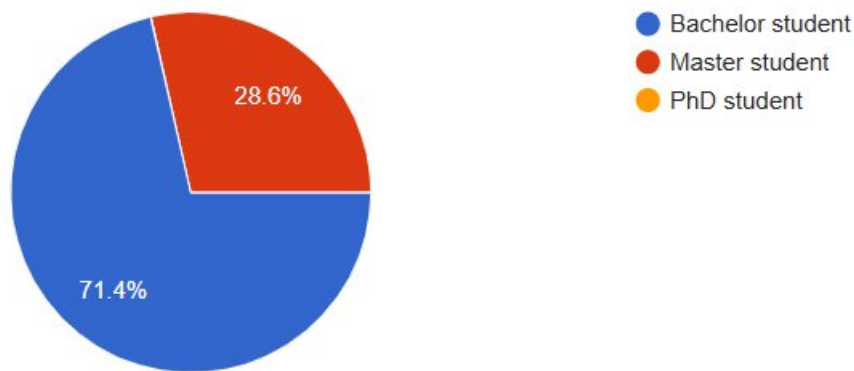
Objective: To apply machine learning approaches to manage algae pollution in the Baltic Sea sustainably.

III. Feedback of the first Call of Student Projects

Survey analysis

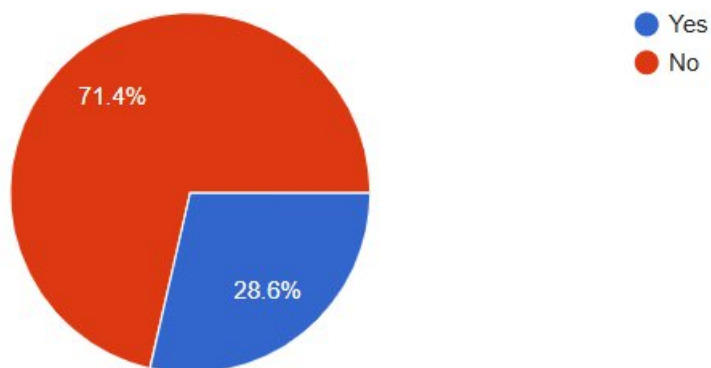
At the end of the project, a survey was distributed to the participants of student projects. The feedback collected provided valuable insights into their experiences, which will inform and guide improvements for future calls. The survey was conducted with 7 respondents.

A) Academic level/Student Profile



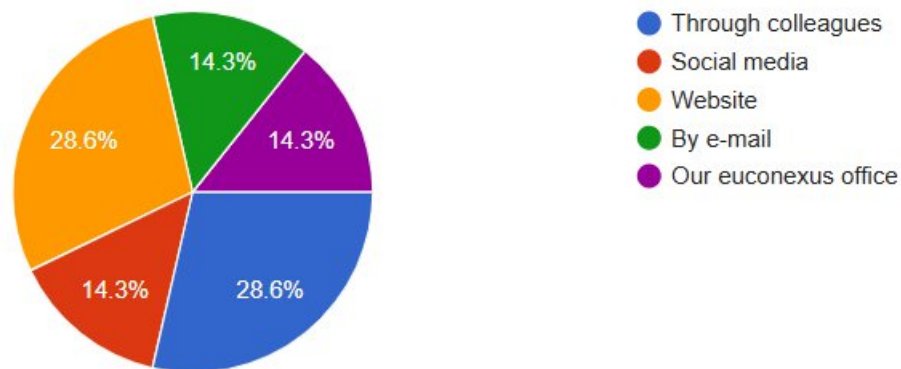
In terms of student participation, a higher response rate was observed among Bachelor's students compared to Master's students, while PhD students did not respond to the call, despite being eligible to participate.

B) Previous involvement in the projects



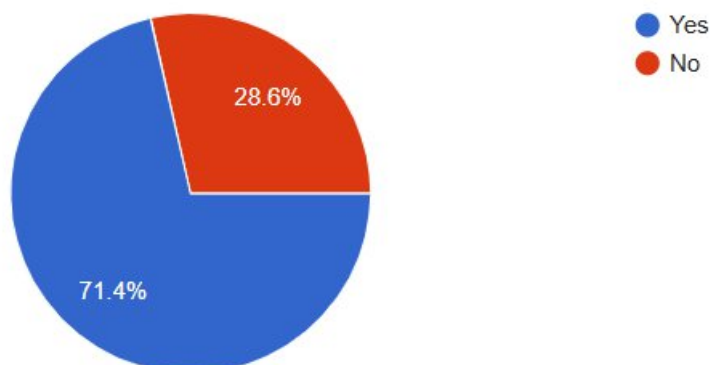
When asked about their prior involvement in some projects, it was evident that the initiative had significant value, as most of the students reported having no previous experience. This highlights the importance of the initiative, as it aims to encourage students to participate, gain new knowledge, and acquire valuable experience through these opportunities.

C) Finding out about projects



The displayed graph did not provide concrete information regarding the specific channels through which participants learned about the call. However, it can be observed that all channels played a role in serving the community and were equally effective in disseminating information about the call.

D) Assistance with writing projects



When asked if they received assistance in writing the project application, the students reported that most had help from their institutional staff members and coordinators of the WP12 which significantly influenced the preparation and implementation of the project.

C) Finding partners

Since according to the Call Framework for student projects the project team should consist of students from at least three partner universities, it was challenging for some participants to find partners at other institutions. Students reported that they found partners through connections established in EU-CONEXUS courses, as well as during conferences such as ESA and ESU or other mobility programmes facilitated by the partnership. Additionally, collaborations were formed between former and current Student Board members, often through mutual friends or colleagues.

Issues in the preparing the project

When asked what problems they encountered during the preparatory phase of the project, the students answered that the difficulties were caused by changing requirements in budget rules (daily allowance, buying ingredients, accommodation) and the lost time in the beginning (without that it could be cheaper), and changing procurement instructions. They also had problems with communication and finding partners. Creating a programme that should have been followed by everyone and not being able to help project partners do their part of the work on the project was also reported among difficulties.

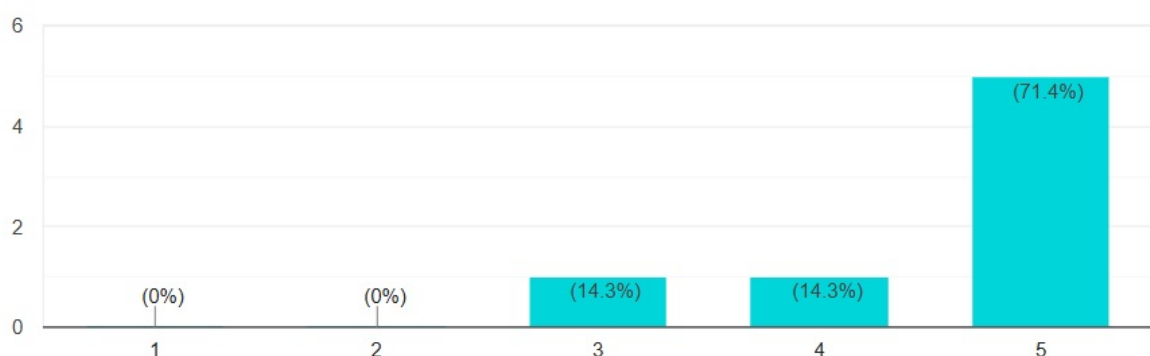
Suggestions for Future Improvement

Students offered several recommendations to enhance future calls.

- They emphasized the need for faster publication of project results by streamlining the evaluation and approval process.
- Transparency in rules and easy accessibility throughout the project were also highlighted as critical improvements.
- Additionally, students suggested simplifying the process of finding partners and organizing more workshops focused on project writing.

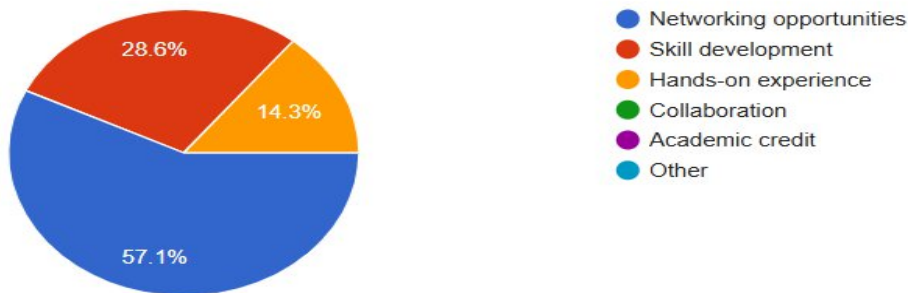
- They recommended reducing bureaucracy in student projects and proposed creating a "red line" system — designated daily intervals and platforms (e.g., a Q&A section on the website and social media) where students could ask questions and receive prompt responses.
- Students also suggested that institutional coordinators provide guidance to participants on project writing and formalities.
- Monthly online meetings dedicated to student projects, featuring testimonials from previous teams, were seen as a motivational tool to encourage wider participation.
- Engaging EU-CONEXUS representatives from each country to support students was another valuable recommendation.
- Timely Reporting: It is recommended that project leaders provide regular updates on the status of their projects to ensure better communication and oversight.
- Documentation and Feedback: Upon project completion, leaders should submit detailed reports on outcomes and lessons learned, which can be used to improve future calls for projects.
- Finally, an optional element could be the creation of a PowerPoint summary showcasing the key outcomes of the project, along with photos of participants during their stay in the project's host country.

Satisfaction of the initiative EU-CONEXUS student projects



The graph illustrates respondents' satisfaction with the initiative. A significant majority, 71.4%, gave the initiative the highest rating, while a small percentage rated it with scores of 3 and 4.

Valuable aspects



When asked about the most valuable aspects of student projects, students highlighted networking opportunities, skill development, and hands-on experience as the top benefits.

IV. Analysis of Impact

To evaluate the impact of this initiative on students, it was essential to analyse the extent of both direct and indirect student involvement in the projects. This required gathering data on the number of students who were actively engaged in the projects (direct involvement) as well as those who were influenced by the projects through secondary means, such as attending related events, utilizing resources, or participating in discussions sparked by the initiatives (indirect involvement).

The analysis is presented in two tables. The first table provides data, categorized by university, on the number of students who had direct participation in the projects, reflecting their active contribution and engagement. The second table illustrates the number of students who were indirectly affected by the projects, offering insights into the broader reach and influence of the initiatives across the student community. These figures provide a comprehensive cross-section of the initiative's overall impact on the academic population.

1st Call involved students directly in the projects	
LRUNIV	12
AUA	6
UCV	3
KU	4
UNIZD	16
UTCB	8
SETU	1
UROS	4
FREDU	2
TOTAL	48

The table presents the number of students who directly participated as team members in one of the funded projects.

1st Call indirectly impacted students	
Coastal Conexus	15
Taste Conexus	0
Football Championship	2160
European Augmented Mural	15
TOTAL	2190

The table displays the number of students outside the project team who were indirectly involved in the project's implementation.

Qualitative Insights

The projects had a significant impact on the participating students by fostering their skills, increasing their engagement, and opening up new opportunities for personal and professional growth. Students were actively involved in various aspects of the projects, which included:

- Workshops: Students attended workshops that provided hands-on learning experiences, enhancing their technical and creative skills.
- Championship: Participation in competitions offered students experience to be involved in big event with other students and participants.
- Collaborative Creation of a Mural: Students had the opportunity to be directly involved with peers who were actively designing and creating a mural. This proximity enabled them to gain insights into the creative process, develop teamwork skills, and engage with artistic endeavours.

New Collaborations and Networks Formed

These projects also served as a catalyst for building new collaborations and networks. Workshops and championship brought together students from diverse backgrounds, encouraging fostering connections that could lead to future partnerships. The mural project, in particular, involved collaboration among students, mentors, strengthening the sense of community and teamwork.

V. Conclusion

Many students expressed high satisfaction with the initiative, emphasizing its usefulness in fostering student connections. The suggestions for improvements aim to enhance the overall experience and encourage broader student engagement in future projects.

Publishing Results and Transparency:

Accelerate the evaluation and approval process to ensure project results are published more promptly.

Make the rules governing the projects more transparent and accessible throughout the project cycle.

Improved Partner Matching and Workshops:

Simplify the process of finding project partners.

Organize more structured workshops focused on project writing.

Bureaucratic Simplification:

Reduce bureaucracy associated with student projects.

Communication and Support:

Establish a clear communication channel, such as a daily scheduled interval or dedicated Q&A platform, where students can ask questions and receive prompt answers. Alternatively, a Q&A section could be added to the website and promoted on social media.

Engage institutional coordinators to guide students in the project-writing process and help them navigate formalities.

Motivational Activities and Information Sharing:

Hold monthly online meetings dedicated to student projects, featuring presentations from previously participating teams to inspire and motivate future participants.

Encourage collaboration with EU-CONEXUS representatives from each country to provide tailored support to students.

Optional Project Summary PPT:

Consider the optional creation of a PowerPoint presentation summarizing key project outcomes and including photos of participants during their stay in the host country.

Annexes: Reports

Annex 1 – Student Project Report European Augmented Reality Mural

Annex 2 – Student Project Report Coastal Conexus

Annex 3 – Student Project Report EU-CONEXUS Minifootball Championship

Annex 4 – Student Project Report Taste EU Conexus

Annex 5 – Report from ESA Conference

Annex 6 – Report from ESU Conference