

Participation in International Conferences on Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability

1. Eligibility

Who: Researchers, PhD students and research managers from the nine EU-CONEXUS partner universities.

What: Conference participation involving contributions such as presentations, lectures, posters, session chairing, committee or panel membership, round table discussions, and consortium matchmaking events or research summer schools related to SmUCS topics.

- Events within or outside Europe are both eligible.
- Events held in the applicant's home country are also eligible.

Duration: Approximately 4 days (excluding travel time).

2. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

2.1. Relevance to SmUCS Topics (Max. 5 points)

Assesses how clearly the proposed activity relates to the Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) thematic areas. Proposals should demonstrate how the topic contributes to the education, research & innovation, or knowledge-sharing on defining, understanding and addressing societal challenges experienced by communities in urban and semi-urbanised coastal regions (rivers, seas and oceans).

5 – Strong and direct reference

- Clear and unambiguous link to one or more SmUCS thematic areas (e.g. sustainable coastal development, climate adaptation, blue economy, socio-ecological resilience, circular economy in a coastal context).
- Strong contribution to education, research & innovation or knowledge exchange related to challenges in urban and semi-urban coastal environments.
- The objectives are fully aligned with SmUCS priorities and the activity is likely to produce outputs relevant to the EU-CONEXUS Alliance or the SmUCS knowledge base (e.g. policy insights, educational content, interdisciplinary collaboration).
- The proposal shows a deep understanding of the SmUCS objectives and demonstrates how the activity will promote them.

4 – Clear but moderately strong relevance

- Activity fits well within SmUCS themes, but objectives or rationale are not fully developed.
- Relates to relevant areas (e.g. water management, coastal planning, urban sustainability) but lacks detail.
- Some outputs (e.g. in education or cooperation) are present but not well defined.
- Relevance is strong enough but stronger justification or depth would improve it.

3 – General or superficial relevance

- Topic overlaps with SmUCS themes but the connection is vague or underdeveloped.
- Relates to general sustainability or coastal issues, but fails to position itself clearly within the SmUCS framework.
- Relevance appears to be secondary or incidental, and the proposal does not demonstrate how it promotes SmUCS-specific goals or outcomes.
- Relevant keywords are used (e.g. “city”, “coast”, “environment”) without any substantive engagement with the SmUCS challenges.

2 – Weak or indirect reference

- Only vague references to the sustainability of coastal areas or cities, without attempt to link to SmUCS objectives.
- Connection to SmUCS is unclear, theoretical, or feels forced; the relevance appears superficial or detached from the practical challenges in urban coastal areas.
- Limited or no contribution to education, research, or knowledge sharing in this area.
- The coastal context is missing or the relevance to SmUCS requires significant interpretation.

1 – Very limited relevance

- Minimal or speculative link to SmUCS themes.
- No engagement with core concepts like interdisciplinarity, sustainability or regional coastal issues.
- No plausible educational or research link is made to the SmUCS framework.

0 – No alignment with SmUCS

- The proposal is not related to the SmUCS thematic areas.
- No mention of urban, coastal, environmental or sustainability aspects.
- Focus is entirely outside the SmUCS scope, with no justification.

2.2. Overall Objectives and Expected Impact of the Participation (Max. 5 points)

Evaluate the clarity and relevance of the applicant’s objectives in relation to the aims of the conference. Consider how well the activity aligns with the applicant’s research goals and the strategic priorities of EU-CONEXUS. Assess the potential short- and long-term impact, such as dissemination of results, strengthening of research excellence, or institutional visibility.

5 – Very relevant and strategic

- The objectives are clearly defined and closely linked to institutional or project priorities.
- Participation is expected to have significant and measurable impact (e.g. stronger research networks, international partnerships, visibility, contributions to cutting-edge research).
- Solid explanation of how the conference will support broader academic or strategic goals.

4 – Very relevant

- The objectives are mostly clear and relevant and have a high potential to contribute to strategic objectives.
- Impacts are likely and well justified, although some elements like dissemination or benefits) may lack detail.
- The link between the conference and the applicant's research or institutional objectives is evident, although minor improvements are needed.

3 – Moderately relevant

- Objectives show general alignment with strategic goals, but lack specificity or depth.
- The potential impacts are plausible, but not sufficiently detailed or only partially justified.
- Participation in conferences appears useful, but the strategic added value is not fully demonstrated.

2 – Limited relevance

- Objectives are vague or only weakly connected to strategic priorities.
- The impact is either minimal, unclear or insufficiently formulated.
- The rationale for participation is not coherent or does not demonstrate wider benefits.

1 – Very low relevance

- Objectives are poorly defined or not relevant to strategic goals.
- Lacks a clear purpose or expected outcome.
- Participation seems ad hoc or detached from long-term academic goals.

0 – No relevance or clarity

- No identifiable strategic goals are presented.
- The application shows no significant impact or value.
- Justification is missing or does not fulfil the basic purpose of the criteria.

2.3. Benefits for the Researcher's Career (Max. 5 points)

Emphasize how the mobility or participation supports individual career development. Assess the extent to which the activity contributes to the applicant's academic or professional development. This may include opportunities for networking, skill enhancement, gaining international exposure, or advancing their research profile.

5 – Strong and well-articulated advantages

- Objectives are clearly linked to the applicant's career goals. Specific and realistic career development outcomes are identified (e.g., building new collaborations, exposure to leading researchers, learning advanced methodologies).
- Demonstrates how the experience fits into a long-term development plan and supports future funding opportunities, publications, or institutional leadership roles.
- Evidence of willingness and clear intention to use the experience (e.g. detailed plans for follow-up, dissemination strategy, links to mentors).

4 – Good use, some areas to elaborate on

- demonstrates relevant benefits like networking or visibility, but lack depth or long-term context.
- The link to professional development is generally clear, although some statements are too broad or underdeveloped.
- The potential is obvious, but the impact pathways (how the experience leads to tangible growth) are not fully spelled out.
- Missing a few elements like specific outcomes or plans for follow-up.

3 – Moderate or generalised benefits

- General reasoning is given (e.g., “improved knowledge” or “presentation of work”), but without a strong link to structured career development.
- Benefits are plausible but vague, with limited future outlook.
- Unclear how the experience fits into academic goals or broader career plans.
- Misses key opportunities to explain to values for of promoting research, visibility or building collaborations.

2 – Limited or weakly articulated benefits

- Minimal justification of how the activity will support the applicant’s career.
- Descriptions are superficial, generic or have no reference to personal or institutional development pathways.
- The proposal may mention vague benefits (e.g. “helpful for my CV”) without clear mechanisms or expected outcomes.
- There is no clear plan or intention beyond simple participation.

1 – Very limited benefits

- No significant impact on the applicant’s development.
- Claims may be contradictory, weak, off-topic, or don’t fit the conference context.
- Participation appears passive, lacking initiative or strategic intent.

0 – No clear benefit present

- No explanation of professional development.
- No link is made to skills, goals or future academic progress.
- Lacks relevance to the criteria and appears unmotivated or unfocused.

2.4. Partnerships, Collaborative Efforts, and Added Value for the EU-CONEXUS Consortium (Max. 5 points)

Clarify how the activity contributes to strengthening the consortium. Evaluate the extent to which the participation fosters or strengthens partnerships, joint projects, or future collaborations. Consider whether the activity increases the visibility of EU-CONEXUS, promotes interdisciplinary

cooperation, facilitates the sharing of knowledge back to the EU-CONEXUS community, or leads to long-term value creation for the alliance.

5 – High cross-consortium impact and strategic value

- Clear, intended contribution to strengthening the EU-CONEXUS alliance through active networking, visibility or strategic engagement.
- Clearly defined plan for the dissemination of knowledge and outcomes among the EU-CONEXUS partners (e.g. via workshops, reports, joint teaching/research initiatives).
- Expected to lead to sustainable and interdisciplinary partnerships, including possible future joint projects, staff or student exchanges or joint publications.
- Strong alignment with objectives of EU-CONEXUS (e.g. Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability) and long-term capacity building.

4 – Strong local or thematic cooperation with new strategic links

- shows a relevant potential for cooperation, even if the immediate impact is rather localized (e.g. with one or two partner institutions and not with the whole Alliance).
- plan for knowledge transfer, but this needs further elaboration (e.g. general intention to report, but no specific mechanism or addressee).
- Promotes interdisciplinary dialog or joint activities within a specific area or EU-CONEXUS work package, but may lack broader integration.
- Long-term strategic benefits are implied but not yet fully developed.

3 – Initial or potential value with limited depth

- Cooperation or relevance to EU-CONEXUS is mentioned, but in general terms.
- impact of the collaboration is unclear and knowledge exchange may be limited to personal benefits.
- passive link to the objectives of the consortium (e.g. participation in a conference where a partner is present) without a clear intention to use this for the benefit of the consortium.
- No structured follow-up or strategic direction beyond the individual level.

2 – Minimal or superficial relevance of the consortium

- Mentions EU-CONEXUS briefly or vaguely.
- No concrete partnerships, joint activities or results at consortium level.
- Knowledge sharing is mentioned only vaguely or not at all, and no plan to engage the EU-CONEXUS community.
- Activity appears mainly personal, with indirect benefit to the consortium.

1 – Very limited or non-strategic engagement

- No real effort to involve EU-CONEXUS or support its goals.
- No sign of joint outcomes or shared benefits.
- Activity is isolated and self-contained, with no follow-up or community impact.

0 – No benefit to the consortium or collaborative element

- The activity has no relation to the consortium — either directly or indirectly.
- No collaboration with EU-CONEXUS institutions, no visibility or branding and no consideration of knowledge feedback or alliance building.
- Does not fulfill the basic criterion to support the consortium.

3. Minimum Score and Automatic Rejection

Applications with a final score below 12 will be automatically rejected.

If more than half of the review panel members recommend rejection, the application will also be automatically rejected.

4. Repeat Applicants

Applicants who have already received EU-CONEXUS mobility or conference funding before 12 months remain eligible to apply. However, in cases of equally ranked applications or limited funding, preference will be given to applicants who have not yet benefited from this funding scheme.

5. Applications to the Same Event

Applications to the same conference or event will be evaluated individually based on merit and not as group submissions. A maximum of two applications per university can be accepted for the same event.

6. Tie-breaking Rule

In the event of equal total scores, priority will be given to:

Early-career researchers (e.g., PhD students, postdocs within 8 years of PhD award),

Applicants who haven't received the funding before,

Applicants from underrepresented research areas within EU-CONEXUS thematic priorities,

Applicants of underrepresented gender identities in the respective field.

7. Knowledge Sharing Requirement

To maximize the impact of the mobility funding and benefit the wider EU-CONEXUS community, selected applicants will be invited for post-mobility knowledge sharing activities (e.g., Joint Research Institutes' Seminars) to disseminate insights, experiences, and outcomes gained during the mobility. Participation in the programme comes with the expectation to contribute to post-mobility knowledge sharing within the EU-CONEXUS community.

8. Appeals Procedure

If an applicant wishes to contest the outcome of the selection process, they may file a written appeal to the EU-CONEXUS Coordination Committee within 5 working days of receiving the decision. The Committee will review the case and provide a final, reasoned decision within 15 working days.