

EU-CONEXUS ENABLES Post-Doctoral Research Programme 2025–2026

*Call for Applications – Collaborative Research Grants for Early-Career Researchers from
EU-CONEXUS Widening Universities*

1. Introduction and Objectives

The EU-CONEXUS ENABLES Post-Doctoral Research Programme is an initiative designed to support early-career researchers in developing and leading a **1-year collaborative research** project carried out jointly between two universities of the EU-CONEXUS Alliance. During this project, the post-doctoral researcher will undertake a minimum three-month research mobility (consecutive or split) at the partner university.

This call is open only to post-doctoral researchers who are employed by or affiliated with EU-CONEXUS universities from “widening countries”¹.

Within EU-CONEXUS Alliance the widening universities are:

- Agricultural University of Athens (**AUA**), Frederick University (**FredU**), Klaipeda University (**KU**), University of Zadar (**UNIZD**), and Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (**UTCB**).

These post-doctoral researchers will develop and conduct the research programme in cooperation with “non-widening” partner universities, which have a stronger research infrastructure and extensive international networks:

- La Rochelle Université (**LRUniv**), South East Technological University (**SETU**), Catholic University of Valencia (**UCV**), and University of Rostock (**UROS**).

The programme represents a framework for collaborative research between widening and non-widening universities, promoting continuous exchange of knowledge, shared use of research infrastructures, and co-supervision throughout the project. Cooperation between

¹ widening countries are those countries which are *receiving targeted European support to strengthen research capacity and international collaboration through dedicated incentives from the European Union such as the Widera Programme*

the two institutions is expected to take place during all stages of the research — from project design and data collection to analysis, knowledge transfer, dissemination, and/or publication. This joint approach ensures lasting scientific links across the EU-CONEXUS Alliance and supports the emergence of new collaborative initiatives beyond the programme’s duration.

This configuration follows the **Horizon Europe “Widening Participation”** principle, which aims to strengthen the research capacity and international collaboration of widening institutions through joint work with more experienced partners.

Each selected post-doctoral researcher will work under the guidance of two academic mentors:

- one from their home widening university, and
- one from a non-widening university.



Each selected post-doctoral researcher will benefit from a dedicated research grant of up to €20,000, managed by their home widening university, to support project implementation and mobility.

The total duration of the research project is **12 months**. The post-doctoral researcher will spend a minimum of **3 months** at the non-widening university, which will host and support the researcher during these stay(s).

This period of international mobility can take place at any time during the one-year project and may be split into shorter visits (for instance, three one-month stays or one continuous three-month period). – one year.



The main objectives of the programme are to:

- Promote high-quality and interdisciplinary research aligned with Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) and Digital Twin technologies;
- Enhance the research capacity of widening universities through direct collaboration;
- Support future joint publications and project proposals across the EU-CONEXUS network.

2. Thematic

The EU-CONEXUS ENABLES Post-Doctoral Research Programme supports research that contributes to the [Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability \(SmUCS\)](#) framework — addressing the environmental, technological, and societal challenges of coastal regions through [Digital Twin and digital innovation approaches](#).

Projects are encouraged to build on the achievements and collaborative directions developed during the first reporting period of ENABLES, particularly the multidisciplinary challenges identified in Work Package 2 (Knowledge Transfer Framework) and the Priority Research Topics, ensuring continuity and reinforcing the joint research ecosystem.

Proposals may focus on, but are not limited to, the following thematic areas:

- Buildings and Infrastructure: digital twins for sustainable coastal construction, energy optimization, climate resilience, or smart urban design.
- Agriculture and Food Systems: precision agriculture, water management, and sustainable food production using digital monitoring and modelling tools.
- Life Sciences and Health: digital twin models for health, well-being, or environmental monitoring in coastal communities.
- Blue and Green Innovation: climate adaptation, coastal ecosystem protection, circular economy, and bio-inspired design.

Other innovative proposals are also welcome, provided they:

- Address challenges relevant to Smart Urban Coastal Cities (SmUCS), and
- Apply or advance Digital Twin or related digital technologies as part of their research approach.

3. Eligibility

To ensure equal and transparent access, applicants and mentors must meet the following eligibility requirements:

Applicants

- Must hold a PhD degree (obtained after 1 January 2018).
- Must be employed by or affiliated to a **widening partner university** (AUA, FredU, KU, UNIZD, UTCB).

Mentors

- Each project must have **two mentors**:
 - one from the widening home university
 - one from a non-widening host university

Host Institutions:

- Non-widening partners (LRUniv, SETU, UCV, UROS) must provide research facilities, workspace, and mentorship for the mobility period.

Applications must be jointly prepared and submitted by the widening applicant with the agreement of the widening and non-widening mentor

Applicants are responsible for obtaining necessary approvals (e.g., from their department or research office) before submitting the proposal.

4. Programme Duration and Mobility Requirements

Total duration of the Post doc programme: 12 months. The programme is expected to begin in February - March 2026:

- **Mobility:** Minimum 3 months at a non-widening host institution (may be split into shorter visits), with flexibility for mobility scheduling during the 12 months duration of each project.
- **Framework:** A Post-Doctoral Mobility Agreement between the two universities (widening and non-widening) shall be signed to define roles, resources, and expected outputs
- **Working language:** English or other language agreed by the team. The reporting language will be English

5. Expected results and outcomes:

- One conference participation or joint scientific publication (submitted or accepted, e.g. CoReS journal).
- A short final report (5–10 pages) summarizing objectives, activities, and outputs to be delivered one month after the end of the project.
- Presentation of results at an EU CONEXUS and/or ENABLES event (Summer School, Workshop, or Conference)
- The post-doc is also encouraged to contribute to local research seminars, workshops, or mentoring of PhD students.

6. Financial Support and Eligible Costs

Each post-doctoral project selected under this call will receive a **financial support package of up to €20,000**, managed by each widening partner university where the post-doctoral researcher is affiliated.

This amount represents the total funding available to cover all activities related to the one-year research project, including the mandatory mobility period to the non-widening partner institution. The funding is intended to be an institutional support used to implement the research plan, according to the national and internal regulations of each widening university. Payments, contracts, and expense reporting will therefore follow the host university's administrative and financial procedures. Costs will be reimbursed or paid according to the internal rules, procurement procedures and financial regulations of the widening university.

Eligible cost categories

The €20,000 grant may cover the following categories:

Category	Description
Mobility costs	Travel, accommodation, daily allowances, and, if the case, insurance during the stay(s) at the non-widening partner institution
Staff costs	Staff costs may represent up to 30% of the total project budget. A higher percentage is allowed only with strong justification linked to specific research needs and must comply with the financial rules of the widening university.

Research costs	Equipment, software licenses, laboratory materials, consumables, access to data and others (with justification)
Dissemination and communication	Publication fees, conference participation, dissemination, workshops.

All costs must be directly linked to the implementation of the research plan and duly justified through supporting documents according to the financial rules of the widening university.

The final financial report and supporting documents will be prepared by the widening university and included in the overall ENABLES financial reporting to the European Commission.

7. Application and Selection

Applications will be submitted online through the EU-CONEXUS website. All proposals will be reviewed for eligibility and scientific quality using a transparent evaluation procedure coordinated by the widening universities and validated by the ENABLES Steering Committee. Partner universities are invited to inform their researchers and research units about this call.

Application Package:

1. Application form (online template).
2. Short research proposal (max. 4 A4 pages) including:
 - objectives and methodology,
 - work plan and mobility schedule,
 - expected outputs and dissemination plan,
 - budget and justifications,
 - recommendation from the widening mentor.
3. CV (max. 2 A4 pages).
4. Confirmation letter².
5. Copy of PhD diploma.

² Preliminary agreement letters from widening and non-widening partners in the project, signed by the 2 mentors and the legal representatives, confirming that, if selected, the 2 partners agree to support the post-doctoral researcher to undertake the activities

Selection Process:

- Stage 1 - at widening universities using a common ENABLES grid – ranking of candidates and/or institutional endorsement
- Stage 2 - Evaluation by the ENABLES Steering Committee.

Evaluation criteria (max 5 points each):

1. Scientific relevance and excellence.
2. Objectives and innovation (emphasize on DT or digital technologies).
3. Methodology and feasibility.
4. Expected impact.
5. Quality of mentorship and availability of resources.

The selection will prioritize proposals demonstrating strong scientific relevance, innovation, and clear plans for collaboration between widening and non-widening partners.

Minimum threshold: **15/25 points**.

Applicants will receive notification of the evaluation outcome and short feedback after final selection.

8. Implementation and Reporting

- Selected post-doctoral researchers sign a *Post-Doctoral Mobility Agreement* defining roles, budget, and reporting requirements.
- Each host institution issues a Completion Certificate at the end of the mobility.
- Final reports and evidence of results will contribute to Deliverable D7.2 “Report on Post-Doc Mobilities”.

9. Timeline

Phase	Period	Description / Expected Outputs	Responsible Partners
1. Launch of the Call	24 Nov 2025	Official publication of the internal (or external. To discuss) ENABLES Post-Doc Call on partners' websites and EU-CONEXUS channels. Online info session for potential applicants. Partners circulate host profiles and research areas.	All partners, WP7 communication
2. Application Submission	24 Nov 2025 – 5 Jan 2026	Applicants prepare and submit full proposals (4-page project + attachments).	-
3. Eligibility & Evaluation	5 Jan – 20 Jan 2026	Eligibility screening by widening partners, scientific evaluation by independent reviewers (using common ENABLES grid), ranking and validation by WP7 Steering Committee.	AUA, SETU, UTCB
4. Final Selection & Results	20 Jan 2026	Official announcement of selected projects (max. 1–2 per widening partner), notification letters to successful candidates and hosts.	Steering Committee
5. Agreement & contracting	20 – 31 Jan 2026	Signing of Post-Doctoral Mobility Agreements	
6. Research Implementation	Feb/March 2026 – Jan/Feb 2027	Research conducted under collaborative framework, minimum 3-month mobility period at non-widening partner (can be split), mid-term progress report (Sept 2026).	Post-docs + host supervisors
7. Reporting & Dissemination	Feb/March 2027 – final report	Submission of final reports, completion certificates, and proof of results (papers, presentations, etc.), Presentation of outcomes during ENABLES event or WP7 meeting. Integration into Deliverable D7.2 – Report on Post-Doc Mobilities.	AUA (lead), UTCB (WP7 report)

This timeline is indicative and may be adjusted slightly to align with the project's overall reporting schedule and university administrative procedures.

For questions or clarifications, please contact the ENABLES WP7 coordination team at [bogdan.gheorghe@utcb.ro or kolettik@aia.gr].

Lead partner: Agricultural University of Athens (AUA)

WP7 coordination: Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (UTCB)