

## **IamSTUDENT – South East Technological University local pilot activity report**

### **1) Event overview**

**Event Name:** Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest

**Date:** 15 & 16 September 2025 (Connect Fest) 3 & 4 February 2026 (ReConnect Fest)

**Location / Platform:** SETU's Waterford, Carlow and Wexford Campuses.

**Type of Activity:** Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest were events designed to welcome new and returning students, as well as staff, back to campus at the beginning of the academic year and semester 2.

As part of Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest, a games day was organised to encourage engagement and to foster a sense of belonging and community. The games day provided an informal setting where attendees could connect with one another while also learning more about key initiatives such as EU-CONEXUS and I Am Student. Information stands and activities were incorporated to raise awareness, promote involvement, and highlight the opportunities available to students and staff.

**Objective of the Event:** The objective of the event was to promote and inform students and staff about EU-CONEXUS opportunities while fostering a sense of belonging and community.

#### **Target Audience:**

The target audience of the event is listed below, we maintained a flexible and inclusive approach to encourage participation.

- All students – bachelor, master and PhD students.
- Staff community – academic and non-academic.
- Other Stakeholder Groups Involved: Student services, Peer2Peer mentor group, Access Office, Disability Office, Clubs and Societies.

#### **Agenda / Programme:**

Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest's agenda was structured around a games day format to create a relaxed and engaging environment for students and staff. Activities were designed to encourage participation and interaction while also providing opportunities to share information about EU-CONEXUS and the initiatives available to students. The games-based approach helped break the ice, making it easier for attendees to engage with student ambassadors and organisers, ask questions, and learn more about EU-CONEXUS in an informal and enjoyable setting. Each event ran approximately from 10am-2pm.

Competition entries surpassed 120 participants, while footfall reached into the hundreds—reflecting a highly engaged audience and strong event turnout.

### **2) Implementation**

#### **Communication**

The event was promoted through multiple communication channels to ensure wide visibility and student engagement. These included direct email communication to students, posters displayed across campus, announcements in the student newsletter, and notifications shared via Moodle and Blackboard. This multi-channel approach helped reach students at different points of contact and increased overall awareness of the event.

### **Implementation Process**

The event was coordinated by Student Services and the EU-CONEXUS team in collaboration with key stakeholders. Preparation involved a series of planning meetings leading up to the event, during which responsibilities were shared, timelines were agreed upon, and logistical details were finalised. Feedback gathered from previous student events was carefully reviewed and used to adapt and improve the games offered as part of Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest, ensuring they aligned with student interests and encouraged high levels of participation. This collaborative and responsive approach contributed to the smooth delivery and success of the event.

Human Resources involved: 25+ staff members including 3-4 from the EU-CONEXUS team, team members from Student services, Peer2Peer mentor group, Access Office, Disability Office, Clubs and Societies. At one event, we had 4 student ambassadors for EU-CONEXUS to support.

### **Budget and Financial Resources**

Each event was supported by a modest budget of approximately €1,000 per campus, covering games, materials, and event logistics.

### **3) Impact and feedback**

#### **Visibility and Promotion of EU-CONEXUS**

The event increased the visibility of EU-CONEXUS by integrating its branding, information, and activities directly into Connect Fest and ReConnect Fest activities. At each event, EU-CONEXUS had a dedicated information stand in a prominent and high footfall area. The interactive games introduced students to EU-CONEXUS in an engaging and informal way, making the initiative more approachable and easier to understand.

By encouraging participation through games and social interaction, the event attracted a wide range of students who may not have engaged with EU-CONEXUS through traditional information sessions. Staff were available to explain the range of opportunities offered, including JobTeaser, micro-credentials and mobilities. This direct engagement allowed students to ask questions, build awareness, and see how EU-CONEXUS opportunities could align with their academic and personal interests.

Overall, the event created a welcoming environment that promoted awareness, sparked interest, and encouraged students to explore and participate in EU-CONEXUS initiatives.

The following opportunities were communicated:

Micro-credentials and minor programmes

PhD summer school

Student Research Hub and Open Lab Hours

Mobility opportunities

JobTeaser, Kick-start your career and career related events

Arts and culture activities

### **Impact Assessment / Outcomes:**

Competition entries surpassed 120 participants, while footfall reached into the hundreds—reflecting a highly engaged audience and strong event turnout.

### **Contribution to Alliance Student Identity**

Several aspects of the event were particularly successful and contributed to Alliance Student Identity. The games day format provided an ideal set-up for attendees to connect with one another while also learning more about key initiatives such as EU-CONEXUS and I Am Student. The use of interactive games proved to be an effective way to attract students and encourage engagement in a relaxed and welcoming environment. The multi-channel communication strategy also worked well, as promoting the event through email, Moodle, posters, and newsletters helped reach a broad student audience. In addition, early collaboration with Student Services, EU-CONEXUS and stakeholders ensured clear roles, shared responsibility, and smooth event delivery.

### **Lessons Learned for Future Events**

An area for improvement identified is the potential to further involve student ambassadors from previous years. At the beginning of the year, when the first events took place, student ambassador recruitment is typically underway. We used this as an opportunity to recruit student ambassadors but, on reflection, it could also present an ideal opportunity to reconnect with experienced ambassadors from previous years. Their involvement could strengthen peer to peer engagement, enhance promotion efforts, and provide continuity by drawing on their prior knowledge of EU-CONEXUS and student activities. In semester 2 at Re-Connect Fest, student ambassadors generously gave of their time, and the peer to peer approach proved particularly effective in creating authentic engagement, encouraging conversations, and generating genuine interest among students.

For future events, it is recommended to engage with student ambassadors from previous years, particularly at the beginning of the academic year when recruitment activity is already underway. Reconnecting with experienced ambassadors at this stage would help maximise ambassador participation while also supporting new recruitment efforts. Their prior knowledge of EU-CONEXUS initiatives and student activities would provide valuable continuity, strengthen peer to peer engagement, and enhance promotional efforts. Drawing on their experience would also contribute to more authentic conversations with students, increasing awareness, encouraging participation, and ultimately enhancing the overall impact of EU-CONEXUS and I am student related activities.

### **4) Administrative information**

The preparation period for the activity ran from initial concept to final delivery over approximately 6–8 weeks. This timeframe included planning meetings, coordination with stakeholders, development of Games Day activities, promotional communications, and logistical arrangements.

Key staff involved:

- EU-CONEXUS: 3-5 representatives (project support, promotion of EU-CONEXUS initiatives and games day engagement)
- Student Services: 5 staff members (coordination, event management and stakeholder communication)

### **Execution format:**

The activity was delivered as an on-campus one-off events, designed to welcome students and staff back to campus at the start of the academic year and during semester 2. It took place at SETU's Waterford campus in semester 1 and SETU's Carlow and Wexford campuses in semester 2.

### Appendices

Appendix 1 : website information on event

<https://www.setu.ie/events/re-connect-fest-2026>

#### **About**

Student Services is delighted to invite students on the Carlow and Wexford campuses to Re-Connect Fest, our Semester 2 student engagement event in collaboration with Healthy Campus and EU-CONEXUS.

This carnival-themed celebration is a fun and welcoming opportunity with games and something for everyone, sporty or just competitive fun. Students can reconnect with friends, meet new people, and re-engage with the wide range of supports available to them at SETU - all in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

A quiet space will also be available to ensure the event is inclusive and accessible for students who may prefer a calmer environment.

Whether you're looking to get involved at SETU, learn something new, or simply take a break and have fun, Re-Connect Fest has something for everyone.

Appendix 2:

Poster examples:



Appendix 3:

Instagram stories from the event (on the day)



Appendix 4:

Instagram post about event:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DUWbw3tjCAn/?igsh=eno0bnVLOWRnbHAY>

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPOsEUdiJPq/?igsh=MXA3emQ3cmNhOWx0cA==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPBnjQ9CCmz/?igsh=MW8xemQyd2pqMDR4cA==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUYuNgzCD1i/?igsh=MTlrb3VqYzNhZXBxcA==>



Appendix 5: photographs from events



















