

« EU-DOCS for SmUCS » - MSCA COFUND

Guide for applicants

■ Call #2 deadline: December 12th 2025

univ-larochelle.fr

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1. Context and scientific orientation

La Rochelle Université has been awarded with an **MSCA COFUND** to develop a European interdisciplinary doctoral programme with a challenge driven approach related to **Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS)**. This doctoral programme is called "EU-DOCS for SmUCS" and will deliver 17 cotutelle thesis over 2-year groups of students.

This program has been launched in two stages:

- In the first phase, thesis topics were submitted by the research teams.
- In a second phase, the eligible thesis offers are now circulating. Candidates can apply for those existing subjects or propose a subject of their own.

The aim of this second call for applicants is to identify international candidates meeting the project's requirements. Their thesis, funded for a period of 36 months, will be co-supervised by a researcher from La Rochelle Université and a researcher from an associated or implementing partner institution.

THEMATICS

The concept of Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS) means focusing on education, research, innovation and knowledge sharing to better understand and address the challenges faced by communities in urban and semi-urban coastal areas. This includes issues related to rivers, seas and oceans.

The Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability is not simply a thematic topic, but rather a challenge-driven field of education and research. Coastal zones act as transition zones between inland areas and the deeper parts of the sea, where social and economic activities interact with valuable and unique coastal ecosystems. Activities along our coasts, whether direct or indirect, have an impact on these ecosystems by providing a variety of goods and services. The way in which urban coastal environments and societies function and evolve in the face of climate change and increasing human pressure is a major challenge addressed by Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS).

By proposing sustainable, intelligent and nature-friendly solutions, SmUCS aims to achieve important sustainability goals, limiting the impact on coastal ecosystems, responding to current challenges and anticipating future ones. Areas of research and education covered by the Joint Research Institutes include, for example:

- Coastal governance and coastal engineering (cultural heritage, ecological justice, fisheries policy, understanding coastal uses, onshore/offshore renewable energy - construction and operation of facilities, legislation...);
- Coastal ecosystems with their social and natural components and the social and economic players involved (protecting biodiversity, improving water quality, managing water resources, sustainable tourism, logistics, the water cycle, SMEs, the circular economy, etc.);
- The well-being of coastal communities and improving their quality of life (civic education and awareness of naturally available resources, prevention of physical and mental illness, healthy habits, etc.).

2. Cotutelle framework

The PhD student should spend at least **6 months** (consecutive or not) at the partner university. To be considered as a cotutelle, each thesis must comply with the following criteria:

- PhD student is **jointly enrolled at two universities** and is jointly supervised by academic staff at each institution.
- The **PhD/doctoral thesis is only defended once** and the candidate gets a **PhD or equivalent title from each university**.
- A **cotutelle bilateral agreement** will specify all the conditions required to deliver the two PhD degrees and legal diplomas.

3. Special requirement for the thesis

a. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

The student must get a minimum of 10 ECTS by attending the courses of the programme (1 ECTS = 25 hours of work) and 20 ECTS by following other courses or participating in other research activities (research reports, participation in EU-CONEXUS Summer School, etc.), i.e.. a total of **30 ECTS or 750 hours of work** over the period of the thesis.

b. Secondment

Each thesis needs to include a **three months secondment with a non-academic actor**, during which the PhD student will be able:

- To experience SmUCS challenges with a hands on perspective in a work environment related to his or her sector of activity.
- To present his/her research activity to the host structure thus sharing potential solutions and getting the opportunity to debate with stakeholders on how this can meet their future needs (impact and dissemination activities).
- To contribute to any reflection going on within the structure in relation to his or her research domain.

4. Career development, training, professionalisation

a. Individual follow-up & career guidance

The EU-DOCS program for SmUCS will provide a range of services for doctoral students, with a particular focus on **individual follow-up** and **career guidance**. These services have been designed in line with the **HRS4R principles**:

- Some (such as events for doctoral students or the Career Center) will be implemented at the **European University** level and will help consolidate the framework for joint doctoral actions within our alliance;
- Others will be based on specific contributions from **La Rochelle Université**, notably in terms of innovation and entrepreneurship, promoting employability and professional impact.

By offering personalized follow-up and career services, the EU-DOCS for SmUCS program aims to create a new generation of international researchers, ready to tackle the global challenges linked to the Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (SmUCS). This initiative will strengthen international scientific cooperation and make a significant contribution to the socio-economic ecosystems of Europe's coastal regions.

b. Training programme

Each PhD student will have a personalized approach of the training programme necessary for his/her thesis specified in a **cotutelle bilateral agreement** jointly defined with and by his/her co-supervisors.

[Training courses open to EU-DOCS for SmUCS PhD Students](#)

Sub-category	Provided by	Title of the training
Managing research		
Mobilise resources (grant identification), manage projects, negotiate, evaluate research, promote open access publication	EU-CONEXUS	Training on funding proposal preparation and post-award management
	SETU	Research Planning and Project Management
	KU	Team Building and Creativity Development
	UNIZD	Data Management
Making an impact		
Participate in the publication process, disseminate results to the research community, teach in academic or vocational contexts, communicate to the broad public, increase the impact of science on Policy and Society, promote open innovation & knowledge transfer	UROS	Introduction to Academic Writing and Presentation Skills
	LRUniv	2nd year doctoral students conference: presenting research results to peers
	LRUniv	Innovative Teaching Methods in Higher Education
	Medialab	Media training
	CampusInnov	Innovation and Entrepreneurship: how to valorise your research work
	Medialab	Workshop: How to create adapted dissemination tools
Self-Management		
Manage personal professional development, show entrepreneurial spirit, plan self-organisation, cope with pressure	UCV	Building my Career Project
	LRUniv	Build your research method and manage your PhD
	CampusInnov	2nd year thesis pitch to entrepreneurs (Starthèse)
	EU-CONEXUS	Innovation contest (with workshop)
Cognitive abilities		
Abstract thinking, critical thinking, analytical thinking, strategic thinking, systemic thinking, problem solving, creativity	Specific	Research work
	Specific	Publication(s)
	KU	Team Building and Creativity Development
	Secondment	Contribute to non-academic reflection
	CampusInnov	Hackathon

Work with others		
Interact professionally, develop networks, work in teams, ensure wellbeing at work, build mentor-mentee relationships, promote inclusion and diversity	LRUniv	English 1 (refresher course), English 2 (scientific writing), English 3 (conversation)
	UCV	Building my Career Project
	ENABLES / SETU	Researcher Career development Training program
	ENABLES / UROS	Mentoring for female PhD students
	SETU	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion for Transformative Research
Managing research tools		
Manage research data, promote citizen science, manage intellectual property rights, operate open-sources software	FredU	Collection and Analysis of Research Data
	CampusInnov	Innovation and Entrepreneurship: how to valorise your research work
Doing research		
Have disciplinary expertise, perform scientific research, conduct interdisciplinary research, write research documents, apply research ethics and integrity principles	Specific	Research work and training
	UROS	Modern Lab Documentation with Electronic Lab Notebooks
	AUA	Introduction to Bioinformatics and Molecular Modelling using Modern Computational Methods
	LRUniv	Interdisciplinarity in sustainability sciences
	UROS	Introduction to Academic Writing and Presentation Skills
	LRUniv	Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) – ethics and politics of research in contemporary society
Specific SmUCS related contents	Secondment	Understanding SmUCS related challenges of a non-academic structure
	UTCB	Geographic Information Systems
	KU	Sustainable Business Development
	LRUniv	RESCUE (Climate change resilience and the European Union)
	LRUniv	Research Horizons at LRUniv and EU-CONEXUS: tackling SmUCS challenges
	LRUniv Thematic courses	World energy situation
		Energy and Climate
		New construction materials and processes
		Performing Automated Experiments
		Introduction to Data Science and AI
		Risk assessment and management

Our training programme has a strong European perspective, as it is based on [EU-CONEXUS joint doctoral activities](#) that go from PhD courses to PhD Summer schools and other services.

5. Eligibility criteria of the candidate

EU-DOCS for SmUCS aims at recruiting the best PhD candidates in all disciplinary fields contributing to addressing the challenge of sustainability in coastal environments and societies.

All applications will first go through an eligibility check based on:

- Compliance with the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie mobility rule**: applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in France for more than 12 months in the last three years before the call deadline. Compulsory national service, short stays such as holidays and time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugees status under the Geneva Convention (1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol) are not taken into account.
- **Ability to prove a master level**. Applicants already in possession of a PhD title are not eligible. Researchers who have successfully defended their doctoral thesis, but who have not yet formally been awarded the doctoral degree will not be eligible.

The EU-DOCS for SmUCS programme applies strict equal opportunity principles for candidates' selection and recruitment.

The EU-DOCS for SmUCS programme is open to any profile with special needs, as only academic excellence and motivation should matter and as LRUniv and partners have experience of tailoring solutions for visible or invisible handicaps, such as providing interpreters for interview and adapted work space.

6. Appointment conditions

a. Employment contract

Recruited fellows will be hired for a **36-month temporary research work contract** by La Rochelle Université in accordance with the French labour legislation in force, providing advantageous health and safety benefits as well as full social security. The employment conditions for fellows will be fully in line with the European Charter and Code. Fellows will be subject to similar employment conditions and entitlements as permanent researchers regarding working hours, paid annual leave, health care coverage, maternity/paternity leave, pension and unemployment insurance.

b. Remuneration

Each PhD student will get a monthly **gross salary of approximately 2725€** (2540€ salary and 185€ mobility grants), or approximately a **2180€ net salary**.

The PhD student will have to go to two of the network wide events (the EU-CONEXUS Summer School and the EU-CONEXUS Annual Research Conference). The programme will cover the costs of travels. In addition to that, **specific budget lines** will be allocated to the EU-DOCS for SmUCS PhD students to cover professional expenses in order to help them start their research (3000€ covering research costs), and to be used for any training cost that would be related to their specific field of expertise (3000€).

c. Other advantages

[Career Development Plan \(CDP\)](#)

EU-DOCS for SmUCS students will benefit from personalised assistance all along their thesis, based on a formalised Career Development Plan defining **short term objectives related to the thesis** (research results, research skills and techniques, communication skills, etc.) and **long-term career objectives** (over 5 years).

[Institutional administrative support](#)

The candidates will benefit from the institutional environment provided by LRUniv meaning they will be taken in charge by the **Doctoral School service** for all the administrative aspects related to their enrolment and education aspects (especially the drafting and signature of their cotutelle agreement including all the specificities related to their thesis subjects and requirements). They will also benefit from the help of the **HR for Research team** that is a **EURAXESS service point**; it helps all international researchers with administrative formalities and provides them with advice on local aspects such as transport, housing, etc.

[Access and use of La Rochelle Université facilities](#)

The PhD candidate will have access to a full range of services, including the **HR department**, the **Mobility and International relations Department**, the **University Medical Services**, the **University Library** (and its services in terms of Open science and publications), the **Students, Culture and Arts House**, the **Orientation and Career guidance Center**, the **Innovation Pedagogies Department** (especially if they want to do some teaching and need advice and training), the **Risk Prevention Department** (to assess and prevent risks related to research experiments), the **Medialab** (in charge of scientific media and communication), **CampusInnov** (innovation and entrepreneurship), and a wide range of sports with high standard facilities.

[Complementary services at an EU-CONEXUS level](#)

PhD candidates will benefit from very interesting and complementary services at an EU-CONEXUS level, especially the **Career Center**, the **Innovation Hub** and **Innovation contest**, and **Cultural and artistic activities** and **Student contests**. They will also have access to the **Project Development Support Office**, a joint EU-CONEXUS service that helps researchers (including PhD students) identify and answer calls for projects, and more generally to a broad research environment and community including the possibility to attend research conferences and online events offered by the four **Joint Research Institutes** (poster presentations, conferences on transversal subjects, etc.).

7. Recruitment process

a. Recruitment transparency

In line with the **European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**, recruitment and selection procedures will be open, transparent and merit-based, without penalization for career breaks or non-linear, multi-career and hybrid paths.

b. Eligibility check

The applicants will be informed of their eligibility (completeness of application file, adherence to mobility rule, research level, adherence to security requirements) by e-mail after the call closure. Only eligible applicants will be evaluated at the 1st selection round.

c. Peer review

Once the eligibility check is passed, each application will be reviewed by **three independent international reviewers** (identified by the European Science Foundation) with on-topic expertise, each doing an independent review leading to a final **mark over 100** following the programme evaluation criteria:

- **Scientific challenge** (in relation with SmUCS aspects) and **potential impact**.
- Novelty of the approach and proposed methodology (**research project**).
- Candidate's **academic pathway** (in addition to the elements in the CV, enhancing previous international mobility and career project).
- Candidate's **skills and competences** for this particular research project (in relation with his/her motivation as detailed in the cover letter).

The average of both evaluations will give a single score per applicant conducting to a single ranking of all candidates. The first twenty candidates will be invited by the Project Coordinator to an interview.

d. Interview

The selected candidates will be getting a **45 minutes interview** which will be held online. Before the interviews a **preparatory online meeting** will be held with the members of the Interview Committee to brief them on the selection process, criteria, gender bias, interview protocol and to go over the peer reviews. During the interview, candidates will give a **10 min presentation** of their research project, and then **answer questions** from the Committee.

After each interview, and after having listened to the observations of the HR for Research manager, each member of the interview committee will provide an assessment based on a 100 with four other criteria (each being on 25):

- Quality of the **presentation** and **communication skills**.
- **Motivation**.
- **Interest** and **relevance** of the SmUCS challenges addressed.
- Quality of the **research project**.

A table will be established with the average mark by applicant (50% for the mark from the Peer Review, and 50% for the mark from the Interview Committee). The best candidates will be selected from this table.

e. Funding decision

The list of the selected PhD students will be transmitted to the **Steering Committee** for formal approval (addressing potential ethical concerns if relevant).

Besides, just as for any PhD recruitment in France, the candidate will need to be formally validated by the supervisor, research lab director and PhD School director to be registered as a PhD student. In parallel the list will be transmitted to Human Resources to establish the employment contract. A reserve list will also be established in case of withdrawals. All other candidates will receive feedback.

8. Open science

As part of the **France 2030** framework managed by the ANR, and the **Horizon Europe** programme, the project must comply with the following open science requirements. Based on **FAIR** principles, data should be findable and accessible on the Internet, interoperable with other computer systems and reusable both for people and computers.

- Obligation to **submit peer-reviewed publications in open access**: in all cases, submission in **HAL-La Rochelle**.
- Obligation of **open access for research data** under the condition: 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'.
- Obligation of a **Data Management Plan (DMP)** for all projects that generate or re-use data to be carried out within 3 months of the start of the project.
- Open access recommended for all outputs other than publications and data (software, modelling, applications, etc.).

9. Dissemination and exploitation of results

Responding to socio-environmental issues, the project will have to position itself in terms of its impact on society and the dissemination of results. Particular attention will be paid to the **transmission of knowledge to the general public** through actions to disseminate scientific culture and/or the transfer of results to socio-economic players by describing its potential for innovation. The impact of the project may also be considered in terms of support for public policies in coastal areas.

10. Holder's commitment

The beneficiary undertakes to:

- Display on all media:
 - The reference of the projects financing this action "**ANR-21-EXES-0010**", "**ANR-19-GURE-0007**" and "**101179124 — EU-DOCS for SmUCS**"
 - The mention of **France 2030** and the **European Union**
 - The France 2030 and the European Union logos



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The words *"This work has benefited from 2 projects State aid managed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche under the Plan France 2030, bearing the reference ANR-21-EXES-0010 and ANR-19-GURE-0007 EU-CONEXUS Plus and is co-funded by the European Union as part of the Horizon Europe programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions call COFUND 2023 and under the Grant Agreement N°101179124"* should be added to any presentation or publication.

- Comply with **Open Science** obligations (see above)
- Provide a detailed account of the project and a statement of expenditure in line with the funder's requirements
- Make themselves available to present their project and initial results at the Rencontres LUDI and/or any other event.

11. Guidelines: how to apply?

The application should be completed in English and submitted along with the mandatory supporting documents.

You must provide a file named as follows "**ProjectName_NameApplicant**" with:

- Your **resume** (giving a detailed account on your marks, and assessment of your level of English) – max 5 pages.
- A **cover letter** explaining your motivation – max 2 pages.
- A **proof of identity** (passport or ID card)
- Copy of **Master's diploma** (or equivalent)
- Filled **application form** (fully dated and signed)
- In case you want to propose your own thesis subject: filled **subject proposal form** (fully dated and signed)

Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applications must be sent no later than **12th December 2025** at eudocs_cofund@univ-lr.fr

For any question, please refer to the [FAQ](#) or contact the following email address eudocs_cofund@univ-lr.fr

12. Provisional timetable

13 October – 12 December 2025: Call for applicants

January – April 2026: External evaluation by ESF

May 2026: Interviews by the Interview committee

July 2026: Final decision

From September 2026: Beginning of the thesis

For further information please contact

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The EU-DOCS for SmUCS project is co-funded by:

- The European Union as part of the Horizon Europe programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions call COFUND 2023 and under the Grant Agreement N°101179124.



Co-funded by
the European Union

- The ExcellR - Excellences sous toutes ses formes – project. The project has received government funding managed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche under the Plan France 2030, reference ANR-21-EXES-0010.
- The 'EU-CONEXUS Plus' project under the Contract ANR-19-GURE-0007 EU-CONEXUS Plus. Funding to support La Rochelle University's involvement in the 'EU-CONEXUS Plus' operation selected by the European Commission as part of the 'European Universities' pilot call and confirmed in the 2022 Erasmus+ call for proposals



Scientific partners of ExcellR project



Public partners of ExcellR project





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