

# International Student Competition

## Guimarães Green Infrastructure - *Bairro C* Couros Connecting Creating Culture

**(Briefing Paper, Status: 07.08.2025)**

**Competition working period: 15.09.2025 – 31.01.2026**

**Registration link:** <https://lnicollab.landscape-portal.org/goto.php/cat/2705>

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### Background

This International Student Competition is part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Landscape Forum of the LE:NOTRE Institute hosted by the LdP, the Landscape Laboratory of Guimarães and UTAD, the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Portugal, in cooperation with the Municipality of Guimarães and other partners. The 2026 Landscape Forum will take place from May 06 – 09. The forum is accompanied by the ERASMUS+ small-scale project CABULAND with a focus on transferring co-creation methods to the local community with a living lab approach.

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### About the Landscape Forum

The LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum is a four-day, discourse-oriented, interdisciplinary event. It focuses on local landscapes and the sustainability challenges they face, aiming to gather, disseminate, and activate landscape knowledge that can help local communities face them. Following the Council of Europe Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000), our definition of landscapes includes outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes in urban, peri-urban, and rural environments and calls for communities to have a say in their future. The LE:NOTRE Institute is a member of the New European Bauhaus and contributes with the annual forum to the knowledge building of the creative industries for a just and sustainable spatial transition in Europe.

The first Landscape Forum took place in Antalya, Turkey, in 2011. The event has continued annually since then, moving across various European locations. In 2015, we introduced this student competition to make the Landscape Forum more inclusive and relevant for the international student community. Since then, the outcomes of the student competition have greatly enhanced the quality and innovation potential of the discourse and visions that have emerged from the event.

## **The 15<sup>th</sup> LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum, the Guimarães Green Infrastructure Strategy and Bairro C**

The 15th edition of the Le:Notre Landscape Forum will take place in **Guimarães, Portugal**, a city internationally recognized for its cultural heritage, and now increasingly committed to shaping a sustainable future through innovative landscape strategies. This forum will explore the city's **urban and peri-urban green infrastructure**, with a particular focus on the *Costa-Couros* river corridor (figure below, in blue) and the **social-ecological challenges and transformative potential of Bairro C** (figure below in red), a central area facing both degradation and opportunity.

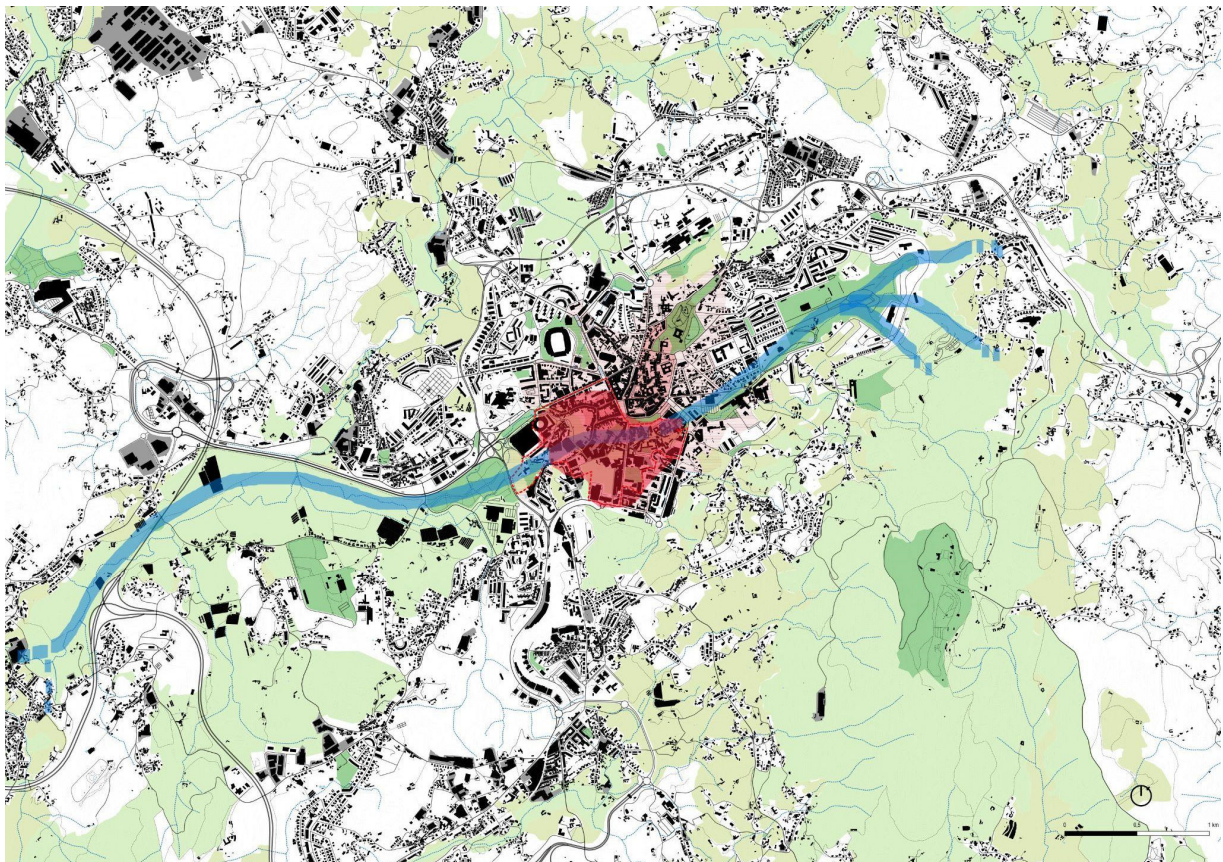


Fig. 1 - Localization of the Costa-Couros river corridor (blue line) and Bairro C (red area).

As in previous years, the Landscape Forum will act as a **transdisciplinary platform for dialogue, experimentation, and learning**, carrying a Europe-wide discourse from place to place. In 2026, Guimarães becomes the next node in this journey. Here, the forum will examine sustainability challenges unique to the Portuguese context while nurturing transferable insights for the broader European territory.

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## **Student Competition 2026: Rethinking Bairro C as a Catalyst for Green Transition**



This year's international student competition centers on **Bairro C**, a historically significant yet currently marginalized neighborhood within Guimarães. Once an industrial hub and home to a vibrant working-class community, the area now suffers from **physical decay, social exclusion, and disconnect from the city's ecological networks**.



Fig. 2 - UNESCO World Heritage sites (red shade), Bairro C and the challenging sites for place scale illustration (in orange).

Despite these challenges, Bairro C presents an extraordinary opportunity. Its strategic location, proximity to major green corridors, and strong cultural identity make it an ideal case to **imagine regenerative futures**. The student competition will serve as a laboratory for exploring how **green infrastructure planning, landscape design, and community-led transformation** can support social cohesion, ecological resilience, and spatial justice.

Through this competition, we invite student teams to propose **innovative landscape-based strategies** for Bairro C, with a broader aim of connecting it to Guimarães' evolving green infrastructure vision. We seek ideas that can **activate local capacities**, reveal hidden landscape values, and explore **new forms of urban living** that are both equitable and climate-resilient. At the place scale we also invite the teams to illustrate their vision in one out of three places picked from the Bairro C district (figure above, in orange).

## Guimarães in Transformation: From Heritage City to Sustainability Laboratory

Guimarães' identity is deeply rooted in its historic center—designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site—but the city is now expanding its ambition to become a **pioneer in sustainability and urban landscape innovation**. Current planning efforts focus on **integrating nature into the city**, promoting **inclusive public spaces**, and **revitalizing socially neglected areas** such as Bairro C.

In recent years, Guimarães has invested in **urban ecology, mobility reform, and civic participation**, and was named European Green Capital finalist. Nevertheless, the city continues to grapple with **spatial inequalities, post-industrial legacies**, and the need to **balance conservation with transformation**.

The student competition will dive into these tensions, asking: How can Bairro C become a testbed for **landscape-led regeneration**? How can it reconnect to broader **ecological and social networks**? And how can design processes become **co-creative, inclusive, and anchored in local realities**?

Key topics are therefore:

- Reweaving Green Infrastructures: From Fragmented Spaces to Connected Systems;
- Heritage in Transition: Industrial Memory and Landscape Narratives;
- Commons and Community: Participatory Futures for Bairro C (supported by the CABULAND ERASMUS+ project);
- Mobility, Access and Everyday Landscapes in Guimarães;
- Regenerative development and landscape economy

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## Transdisciplinary Landscape Thinking for Transformative Change

Echoing the Forum's overall vision, the student competition aims to use **landscape as a method**—not just as an object of design, but as a means to **navigate complexity, build knowledge across disciplines**, and **engage communities in envisioning sustainable futures**.

We welcome interdisciplinary student teams—comprising landscape architects, planners, ecologists, social scientists, artists, and more—who are ready to engage with the “**wicked problems**” of our time through the lens of landscape. Your proposals should not only address spatial form but also process, participation, and long-term resilience.

Ultimately, the goal is to **reimagine Bairro C not as a problem to be solved**, but as a **landscape of potential**—one that can inspire bold, grounded, and regenerative transitions for Guimarães and beyond.

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## Competition Organising Committee

*Concept, Organisation & Coordination:*

**Municipality of Guimarães, Landscape Laboratory of Guimarães, UTAD &**

**LE:NOTRE Institute:** Prof. Frederico Meireles; Dr. Carlos Ribeiro, MLA Sara Terroso, MLA Ana Sousa, MLA Catarina Silva; Chief-Arch. Ricardo Rodrigues, and Dr. Ellen Fetzer.

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## Competition Overview and Objectives

The central question of this competition is: How can the Costa-Couros river corridor become a regenerative green and blue infrastructure that meaningfully connects to Bairro C while respecting the city's layered cultural memory?

Within the broader framework of the Three Rings Strategy of Guimarães' green infrastructure—linking the city center to surrounding ecological systems—students will be asked to explore how urban green and blue networks can become tools for climate resilience, social inclusion, and landscape-based identity building.

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## Three-scales Competition Focus

### Poster 1: Vision for the Costa-Couros Green Corridor at the Landscape Scale

In the first stage, teams will zoom out and develop a **landscape vision** for the **Costa-Couros river corridor** as a vital component of Guimarães' wider green infrastructure. This includes situating the corridor within the **Three Rings Strategy**, connecting with **Penha mountain** and the **Creixomil floodplain**, and identifying opportunities for improving **connectivity to Bairro C**—a fragmented and vulnerable area defined by post-industrial decay, social challenges, and limited accessibility.

Key themes for exploration:

- How can the buried Costa-Couros river be re-integrated as a living system within the city fabric?
- What ecological and social functions should this corridor serve?
- Which barriers currently hinder green-blue connectivity, and how might these be overcome?
- How can green infrastructure act as a catalyst for revitalizing Bairro C?

This first poster should communicate the **diagnosis** and **strategic vision**, supported by spatial and conceptual clarity, showing **future connectivity scenarios** and identifying priority action zones. Representation scale is flexible (1:10000 suggested) but should effectively communicate ideas at the **landscape scale**.



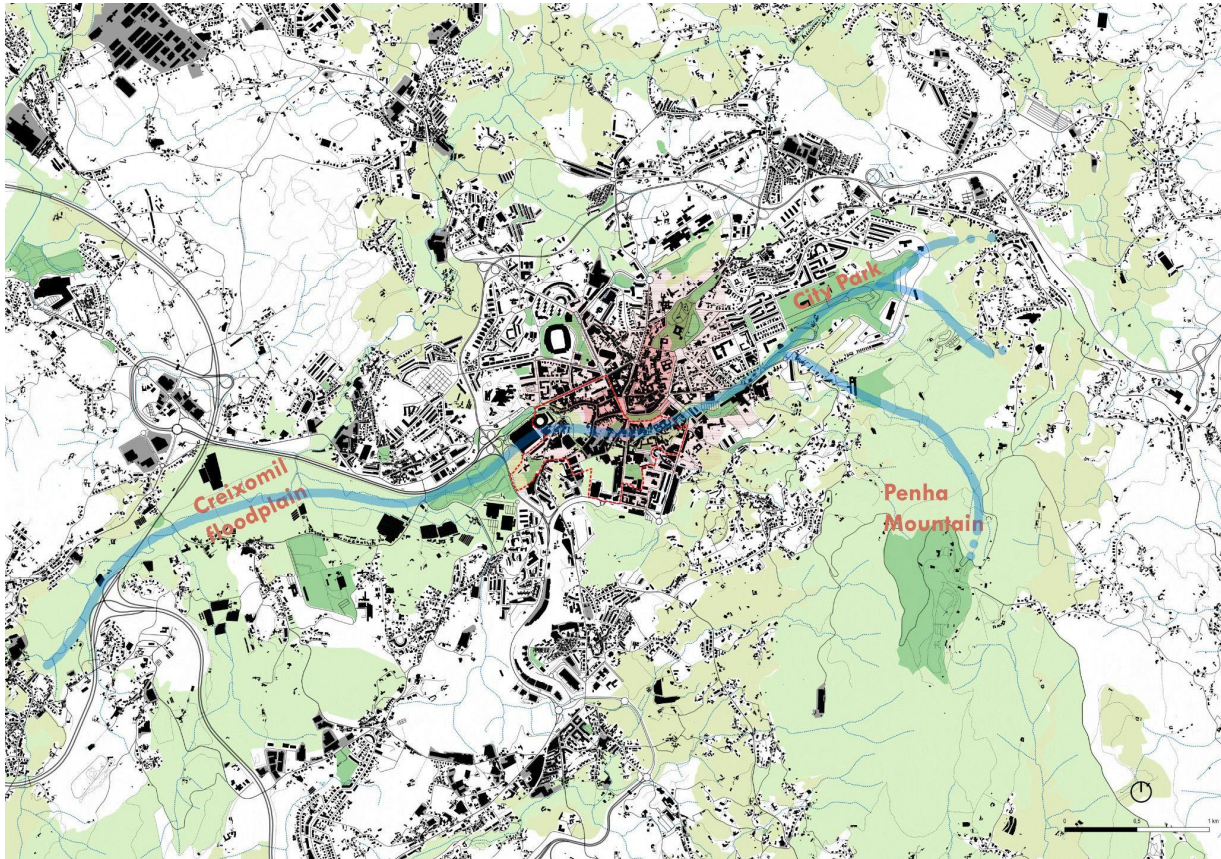


Fig. 3 - Overall localization of the city centre and Bairro C, related to Creixomil floodplain and Penha mountain.

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### **Posters 2 & 3: The Bairro C Interface – Designing for Regeneration and Connectivity**

The second and third posters bring the focus to Bairro C and its immediate surroundings, where students will develop **spatial strategies** and **design concepts** that respond to the area's complex realities.

**Poster 2:** At a scale of **1:5000**, teams will present an integrated **planning and design framework** for Bairro C's surroundings, translating their Poster 1 vision into actionable strategies. Proposals should address:

- Green-blue network continuity despite the river being mostly culverted or hidden
- Physical and symbolic reconnection of Bairro C with the historic center
- Challenges and opportunities posed by the area's **industrial heritage (UNESCO)** structures
- Community empowerment and placemaking
- Mobility transition





Fig. 4 - Map of the city of Guimarães, perimeter of Bairro C (red dotted line), UNESCO heritage sites (red stripped).

**Poster 3:** Zooming in further to a spatial scope of **1:2000**, teams will select a **site within Bairro C** to illustrate their vision at the **place scale 1:500**. This detailed intervention should reflect:

- Regenerative design principles (soil, water, biodiversity)
- Strategies for **green and blue connectivity**
- Tactics for **community engagement and co-creation**
- Respect for and reinterpretation of **industrial memory** and built heritage

The design should demonstrate **how small-scale actions can catalyze systemic transformation** within the larger landscape.

### **Background Context: Bairro C and the Buried River**

Bairro C represents both a **physical and symbolic gap** in Guimarães' urban structure. Historically shaped by industrial growth and later abandonment, it now faces environmental degradation, social marginalization, and physical disconnection. The **Costa-Couros river**, once a defining ecological feature of the area, now flows mostly underground—its absence both literal and figurative.



Yet within this neglected condition lies potential. Bairro C is adjacent to the historical core, intersected by heritage sites, and sits along a river corridor that could be reimagined as a **landscape infrastructure spine**—an ecological, cultural, and civic connector.

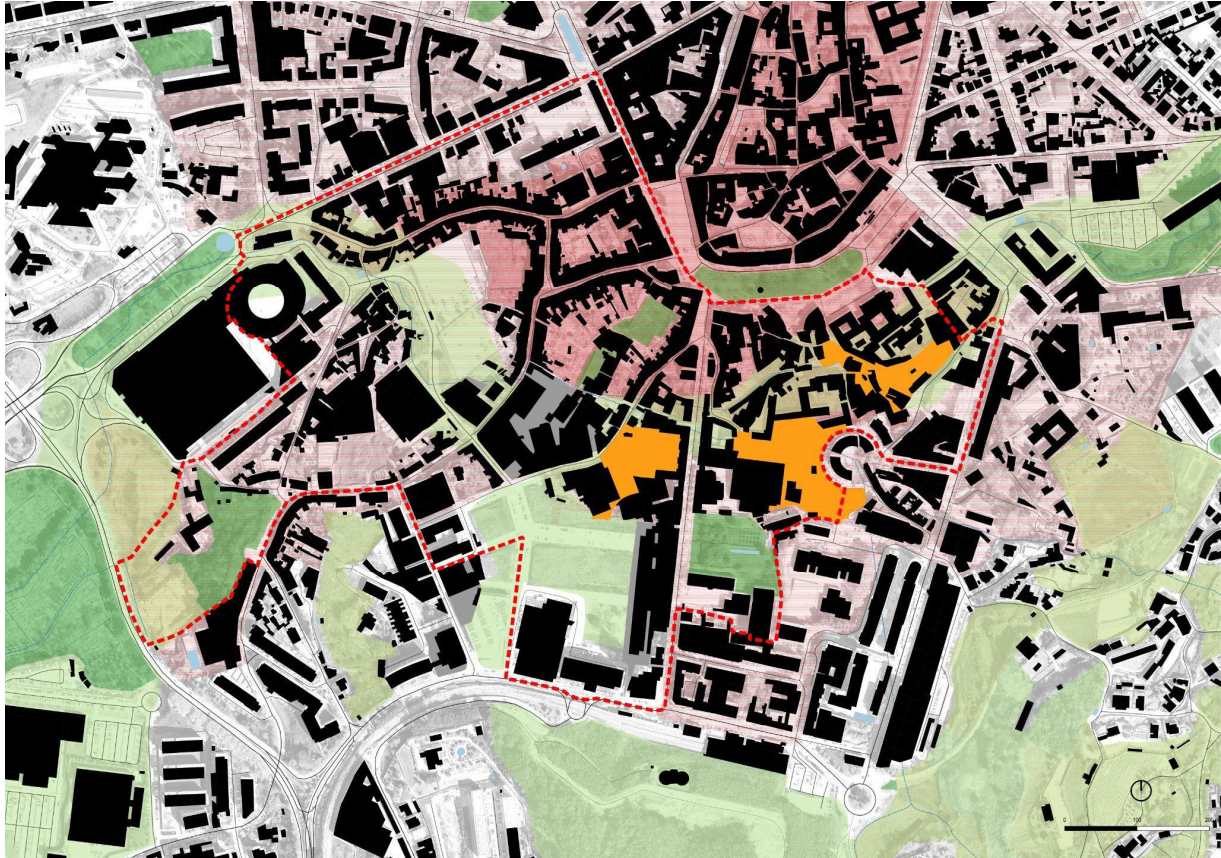


Fig. 5 - Zoom to Bairro C perimeter (red dotted line) and the proposed three areas of focus (in orange).

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#### **Part Four: Making It Work – Models of Landscape Transition (Poster 4)**

On the final poster, teams are invited to articulate **how their proposed landscape vision will function over time**. This may include:

- Governance and participation models (co-creation, urban co-production, place-making)
- Innovative collaboration models
- Implementation strategies and transition pathways
- Landscape economy ideas and funding models
- Stewardship and maintenance frameworks

Consider the **role of local communities, institutions, and civic organizations** in co-developing and sustaining these landscapes. How will your proposal live, adapt, and evolve?



Possible formats include:

- Power mapping
  - Theory of change diagrams
  - Collaborative governance models
  - Visual storytelling, timelines, or conceptual narratives
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### Guiding Questions

- How can Guimarães' green infrastructure strategies become engines of **urban regeneration**, not just sustainable preservation?
  - How can the community contribute to a **landscape of care**, restoring ecological flows and community trust in forgotten spaces?
  - How can **industrial memory** be honored in a forward-looking green transformation?
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### Invitation to Participate

We invite **interdisciplinary student teams**—from landscape architecture, planning, urban design, heritage studies, environmental engineering, social sciences, and beyond—to engage with this complex site, its stories, and its possibilities.

By working in the **intersection of ecology, memory, equity**, and the **beauty of urban landscape**, this competition aims to inspire a new generation of professionals to approach urban regeneration through the lens of landscape thinking—layered, inclusive, and systemic.

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### Registration

The full background documents, plans, and links are accessible after online registration. Registered participants will receive a neutral login ID, which will also be used to submit the proposals anonymously. You need to add this ID to all submitted posters. Please register at the following link:

<https://lnicollab.landscape-portal.org/goto.php/cat/2705>

### Competition Participants

The competition is open to students of all landscape-related disciplines, in particular landscape architecture/planning, the arts, urban/regional planning, ecology, agroecology, and real estate, as well as related disciplines such as geography, agricultural sciences, dendrology, economics, environmental psychology, forestry, hydrology and water management, IT, archaeology, social anthropology, sociology or tourism. We do not limit the scope of disciplines with this list.

Participants should be students at bachelor, master, or PhD levels. Both individual and group submissions will be accepted. Each student or group is allowed only one entry. The maximum group size is limited to eight contributors. We encourage interdisciplinary submissions.

### Site visits and accompanying online lectures

There is no specific time frame for an organised site visit planned. Feel free to reach out to the organising team if you want to visit the place.

There will be a series of online input lectures concerning the competition area. Lectures are planned to be on Wednesdays from 18 00 – 19 30 CET starting mid-October and finishing mid-November. The lectures will be recorded and made available to registered entrants. We will publish the final programme with the next update of this competition brief.

### Submission requirements

**Poster size and format:** The submitted project must comprise four (4) A0 posters (84,1mm x 118,9 mm) plus one (1) A4 project description. The posters should be in landscape format.

The submission format is PDF. The submission is only online and includes:

- 4 PDF files - 1 for each of the A0 posters
- 1 PDF file with the Project Description (1 A4 text)
- 1 PDF file with the Declaration Form

Individual PDF files should not exceed 60 MB, minimum resolution is 200 DPI.

The participants' responsibility is to guarantee that the final images and files are in the size and resolution adequate for their reading. Entrants must ensure that all images, photographs, and other material taken from other sources are correctly credited. All files must be completed in English. Registered participants will receive further information concerning the electronic submission.

### Submission ID

Upon registration, each participant or participating team will receive a unique and anonymous ID. This ID must be put into the top left corner of each submitted poster (size and format of ID: Arial, font 72). The posters must be numbered to be seen in the right order during the selection. (1-4, left to right)

### Written information

Entrants must also submit a brief description (250 words maximum) in a separate PDF file, identified only by the anonymous ID (DO NOT include the students' names or the university's name). This description must comprise clear and concise text explaining the key aspects shown in the concept design proposal. The text is to be left-aligned (right unjustified) and double-spaced, in Arial, font 12.



## Anonymity and Protocol

All plans should bear the anonymous ID number given to each registered participant in the top left corner (Arial, font 72).

The naming convention applies to all submitted files: Your ID\_1.pdf, Your ID\_2.pdf, etc. An additional PDF file with the complete declaration form, must be included. This must be fully completed. The declaration form will be submitted separately from the project PDF files and will only be consulted by the jury once the final deliberations are completed.

## Competition Rules

### Participation in the competition implies acceptance of the competition rules.

- Proposals received after the deadline of January 31, 2026, will not be accepted.
- Presentations must include the author declaration form to be accepted.
- Submissions shall only be accepted if submitted online in the way described above.
- A selection of the works submitted will be shown in an exhibition during the 15th LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum 2025 in Portugal and may also be exhibited elsewhere at the discretion of the Local Organising Committee.
- The Local Organising Committee retains the right of duplication or publication of any or all the material submitted to the competition, and there shall be no obligation whatsoever to the entrants beyond acknowledging the authorship of the works exhibited or published.
- Submissions that have been published in any way before the notification of the jury's final decision will not be considered.
- The jury shall preside over the competition and is the sole arbiter at all levels until the final awarding of prizes. All decisions of the jury are final.
- The Chair of the 14th LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum in Budapest will announce the winners of the prizes and honorable mentions upon the jury's recommendation.
- All inquiries must be directed to the Competition organising committee. Please read the brief and instructions carefully, as all required information should be contained there. Jury members are not to be addressed in any way about the competition.
- Entrants must submit a declaration confirming that competition data and background information will not be used for other purposes.
- Entrants must include a declaration either that generative AI tools were not used in the preparation of the entry or explain in detail to what extent they were used (for example, editing text or creating images).

## Competition Language

All submissions must be entirely in English, the official language of the LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum. Local names and specific conditions of each country may be included in the local language. This is to ensure that the jury, who conduct their reviews in English, can understand all material.

## Evaluation Criteria

The jury will evaluate your projects according to the following set of criteria. Please always check your project against these criteria during your work process and in particular before submission:

Criteria	Details
<b>The degree of connection of the proposed vision to the actual landscape context</b>	The authors show that they have studied and analysed the characteristics of the study area landscape from various perspectives. They know the specific spatial, ecological, social, cultural, and economic factors. The analysis takes current trends, threats, and challenges into account.
<b>Methodological clarity and consistency</b>	The step from analysis to concept development is clearly structured. The analysis logically and coherently derived challenges, potentials, and threats for the periurban river landscape. Planning and design objectives are clearly articulated based on this.
<b>Conceptual expression and clarity</b>	The concept clearly links to the objectives derived from the landscape analysis and evaluation and responds to the local landscape context.
<b>Landscape Ecology</b>	The project builds on a holistic understanding of the landscape's natural foundation and ecological sensitivity. Authors provide innovative biodiversity strategies supported by design.
<b>Landscape Economy</b>	The project includes alternative models of value generation based on an innovative re-invention of the productive periurban landscape. Teams have succeeded in working with representation forms beyond classical landscape planning and design, such as system models, theories of change, and business model canvas.
<b>Landscape Democracy</b>	The team has envisioned processes of landscape democratic, participatory decision-making, co-creation, co-design, and bottom-up place-keeping management strategies across a short-, medium-, and long-term timeframe.
<b>Visual communication</b>	The posters are readable. The authors have illustrated the complexity of the landscape and landscape-related processes by successfully integrating process models and holistic visions that build on the specific character of the place.



### Jury members

The competition jury will consist of local and international experts in landscape architecture, spatial planning, urban design and infrastructure planning, and regional development.

### Awards

The LE:NOTRE Institute and its partner organisations will award three prizes and select another three submissions for honourable mention. The award winners will be able to present their project at the LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum 2026 to a group of international professionals and local stakeholders.

### Schedule and Key Dates

- Official start of the working period: **September 1, 2025**
- Online lectures: **October – November 2025**
- Submission deadline: **31st January 2026**, at midnight EET
- Jury selection results: by **1st April 2026**
- Awards Ceremony in **Guimarães** during the **Landscape Forum on May 5, 2026**

### Contact Information

For more information about the 15th LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum Guimarães and participation at the student competition, please visit the website:  
<https://forum.ln-institute.org/student-competition-2025-2026/>

### Registration Link

<https://lnicollab.landscape-portal.org/goto.php/cat/2705>

Registered participants will receive access to the internal working area and the forum for upcoming questions to be discussed.

Basic maps and background materials will be accessible after registration.

### Landscape Economy Seminar

In parallel to the competition, you can follow the Landscape Economy online seminar lectures on Monday afternoons. More information:  
<https://telos.hfwu.de>

**GOOD LUCK!**