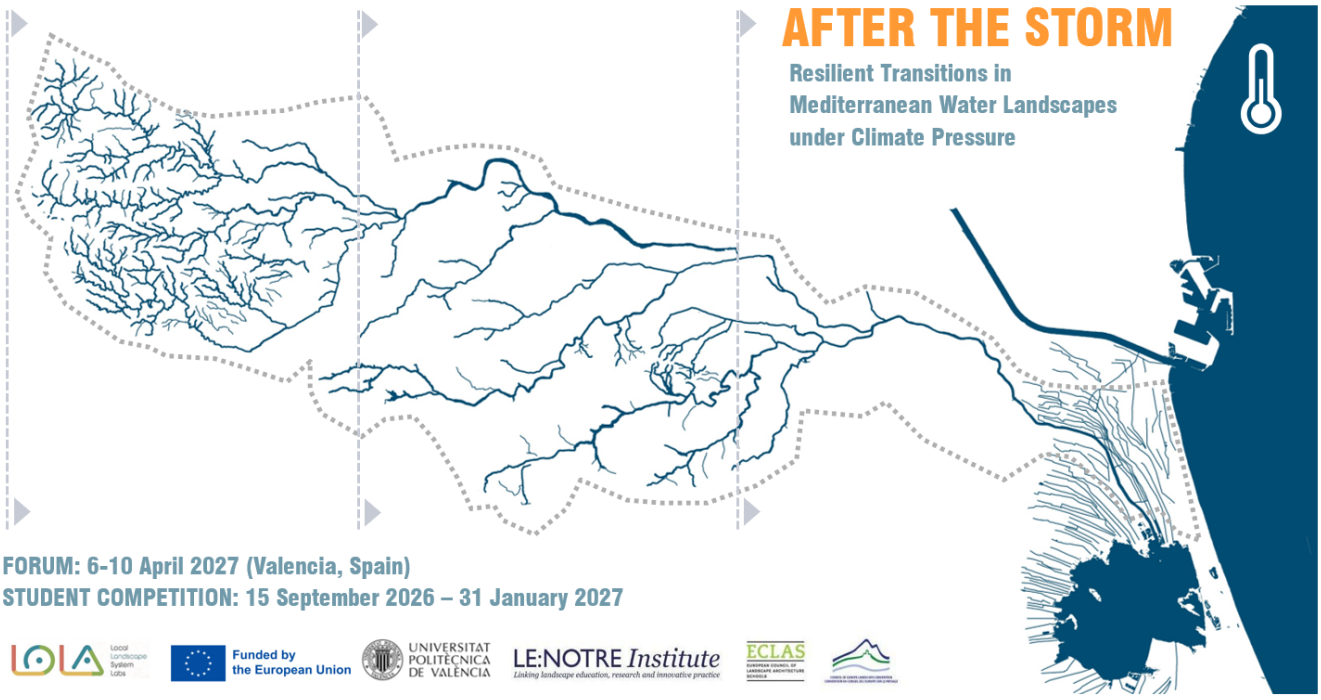
LANDSCAPE FORUM & INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMPETITION_VALENCIA



Competition working period: 15/09/2026-31/01/2027

Competition website and registration link:

https://forum.ln-institute.org/student-competition-2026-2027

Background

This International Student Competition is part of the 16th Landscape Forum of the LE:NOTRE Institute, hosted between the 6th and 10th of April by the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) in Valencia, Spain.

This year, the Forum and the Landscape Competition are both linked to LOLA, an educational project funded by the Erasmus+ programme to promote the development of system thinking skills amongst students, teachers and local communities.

By exploring the relationships and dynamics between the many components, actors and processes that interact in the landscape, system thinking provides an essential framework for understanding and addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of sustainable development and climate change. Therefore, all competition participants are invited to attend the accompanying LOLA seminar, during which they will be trained in landscape systems thinking competence. The LOLA Seminar starts on October 5 and meets regularly on Mondays from 16 00 – 18 00 CET (more information)

About the Landscape Forum Valencia 2027

After the Storm
Resilient Transitions in Mediterranean Water Landscapes under Climate Pressure

"After the Storm" addresses one of the most pressing challenges faced by many European regions today: the transformation of **landscapes under climate change**, increasing urbanisation and disconnected governance. The catchment area or basin of the Poyo ravine represents a paradigmatic **Mediterranean socio-ecological system**, where water has historically structured land uses, settlement patterns, agriculture, infrastructure and collective identity, and where high climatic variability – combining prolonged droughts with extreme rainfall events – intensifies territorial vulnerability.

The identities of the upper, middle and lower sectors of the Poyo ravine basin are rooted in a complex water-management system that has supported productive agricultural landscapes, cultural heritage, and urban development for centuries. Today, this territory faces multiple and interconnected challenges, including flood risk, water scarcity, climate change, landscape fragmentation, continuous urbanisation, biodiversity loss, and increasing pressures on peri-urban agricultural systems. These challenges cannot be addressed through isolated technical solutions. Instead, they require integrated, landscape-based, and democratic transitions that recognise the interdependencies between different landscape layers and institutional frameworks.

The International Student Competition and the Landscape Forum 2027 position water-sensitive landscapes as complex socio-ecological systems that demand systems thinking, multiscale governance, and active community participation. By framing the Poyo ravine basin as a complex and dynamic system, the Forum moves beyond the catastrophic floods of October 2024 to focus on what comes after the storm: how Mediterranean water-sensitive landscapes can be re-imagined and transformed to enhance long-term resilience, sustainability and social equity. This reconceptualization takes place in the context of the LOLA project and in direct collaboration with the HORTALAB since this Local Landscape Laboratory operates in the lower and critical course of the Poyo ravine.

Objective, Study Area and the System-based Approach

The fundamental objective of this student competition is to create, through a systemic landscape thinking approach, a guided transition toward a more resilient future in the selected area in a context of climate change.

The competition focuses on the Poyo Ravine Basin as an interconnected socio-ecological landscape extending from the inland sources to the Mediterranean coast. Within this framework, participants are invited to develop their **system-based analyses and proposals** through **three interconnected scales**: the whole ravine basin, the ravine sector or transect (upper, middle and lower course), and one pilot site within each sector or transect. In all those 3 scales the water system is expected to articulate a multidimensional analysis of the landscape and the development of integrative proposals either at a strategic level (at the ravine and sector scales) or at a design level (at the pilot site scale).

1. The Basin (1:100.000-1:50.000): At this scale, participants analyse the whole catchment area of the Poyo ravine and shall define landscape strategies that address the whole basin and that articulate relationships between upstream, central, and downstream territories.

2. The Sector or Transect (1:30.000-1:10.000): Based on the previous scale, participants explore the landscape systems in each sector of the Poyo ravine (upper, middle and lower course), defining sector-specific strategies to promote their resilient transition.

3. The Pilot Sites (1:2.000-1:500): Strategic objectives from the previous scales shall be translated to site-specific landscape interventions through selected pilot areas. These pilot areas should demonstrate how local actions can generate wider territorial benefits and contribute to the resilience of the river basin landscape system as a whole. Teams are encouraged to select pilot areas representing different landscape conditions, such as agricultural and natural environments, industrial

areas, and residential or urban contexts, adapting the scale and level of detail to the specific challenges and opportunities of each site.

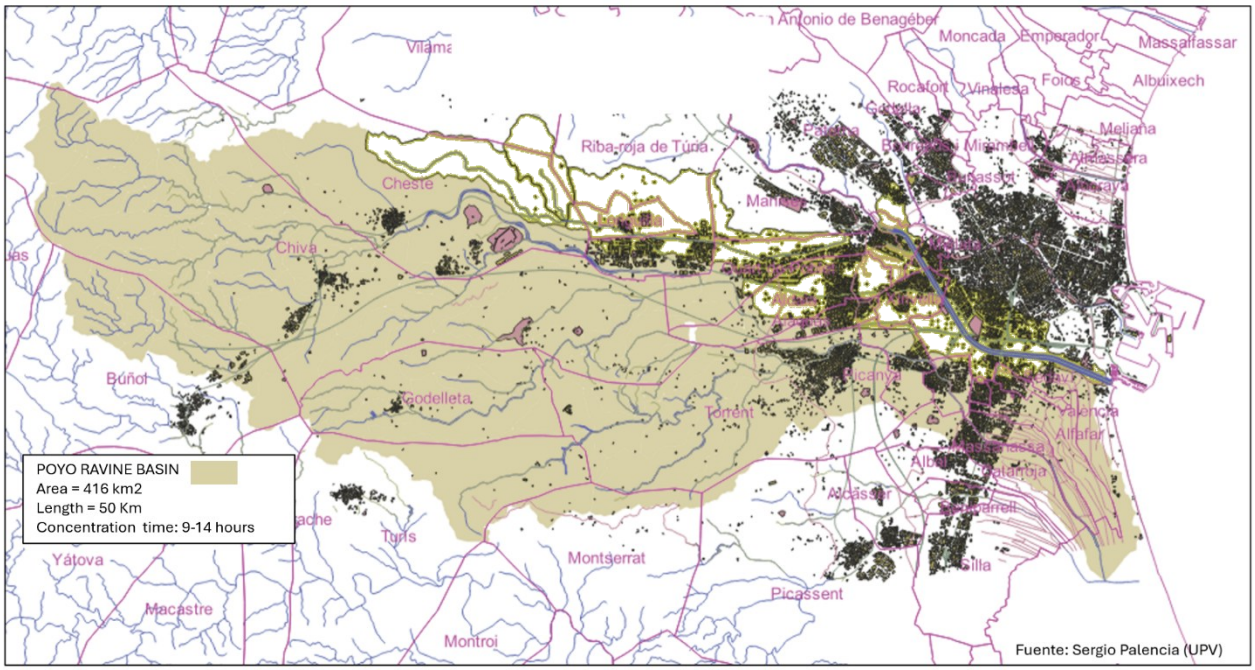
In this competition, the basin, watershed or catchment area of the Poyo ravine are considered as the fundamental unit of analysis and design, using water as the entry system through which broader landscape relationships and dynamics can be understood. This basin covers an area of 416 km2 and has an average length of 50 km from the mountains on the West to the Mediterranean Sea on the East. The basin includes (totally or partially) 21 municipalities and has an approximate population of more than 280000 people.

Within the whole basin, it will be assumed that the study area comprises 3 main sectors: (1) The upper and mountainous course, (2) the middle and transitional course, and (3) the lower course or flood plain, where a complex mix of land uses coexist with protected areas of high environmental, visual and cultural value including also coastal and wetland environments linked to the Albufera lagoon and the sea.

Throughout the entire competition process, the system-based approach should provide an operational framework in which the components, actors, flows, processes, and drivers of change interacting in the ravine landscape system should be explicitly used to understand its current condition and to envision desirable transitions. For this purpose, it is suggested to start with the water subsystem and explore its connections with other environmental, social, cultural and productive

dimensions of the landscape. Besides, and as summarized in the points below, the conceptualization of the ravine basin as a complex socio-ecological system should imply that some complex system properties such as non-linear causal-effect connections, emergence, spontaneous order, hierarchies, and the existence of feedback loops leading to adaptability are considered.

1. Systems thinking emphasizes understanding the complex interconnections and feedback loops within socio-ecological systems. On this basis, we can anticipate unintended consequences and design interventions that promote a systemic transition towards sustainability and resilience.
2. Systems thinking helps identify leverage points within systems, where small adjustments can lead to significant transformations.
3. Systems thinking encourages a holistic perspective and recognizes interdependencies. This helps avoid partial solutions that address one aspect of sustainability at the expense of others.
4. Systems thinking, in our case based on local landscape systems, provides a common language and framework for communities to understand and address complex challenges together. By encouraging collaboration, systems thinking can build collective capacity for change.
5. By understanding system dynamics, we can develop adaptive strategies that account for uncertainty and promote resilience.
6. Systems thinking encourages long-term vision. By looking beyond short-term gains, we can prioritize actions that contribute to long-term sustainable development.



Proposals

Proposals shall be developed through a multi-scalar approach that, using the water as an entry point in the landscape system, should include analyses and proposals tailored to each scale, from territorial strategies at the basin and sector/transect level to site-specific interventions developed through three pilot areas, each of them located in each sector or transect (upper course, middle course and lower course).

The following panels DINA0 are required for your submission:

- **Panel 01 (DINA0). The Basin**
  Territorial Scale (approx. 1:100.000–1:50.000)
  Content: The first panel addresses the entire Poyo Ravine Basin as the strategic framework of the project. Participants shall analyse the basin as an interconnected socio-ecological system and develop an overall vision, objectives, and territorial strategies based on a comprehensive understanding of hydrological, ecological, cultural, and spatial relationships.
- **Panels 02, 03, 04. Ravine Sectors/transect and Pilot Areas**
  The remaining three panels focus on three sectors/transects of the ravine basin:
  - Panel 02: Upper course
  - Panel 03: Middle course
  - Panel 04: Lower course

Each panel shall combine two complementary scales:

Sector/Transect Scale (approx. 1:30,000–1:10,000)

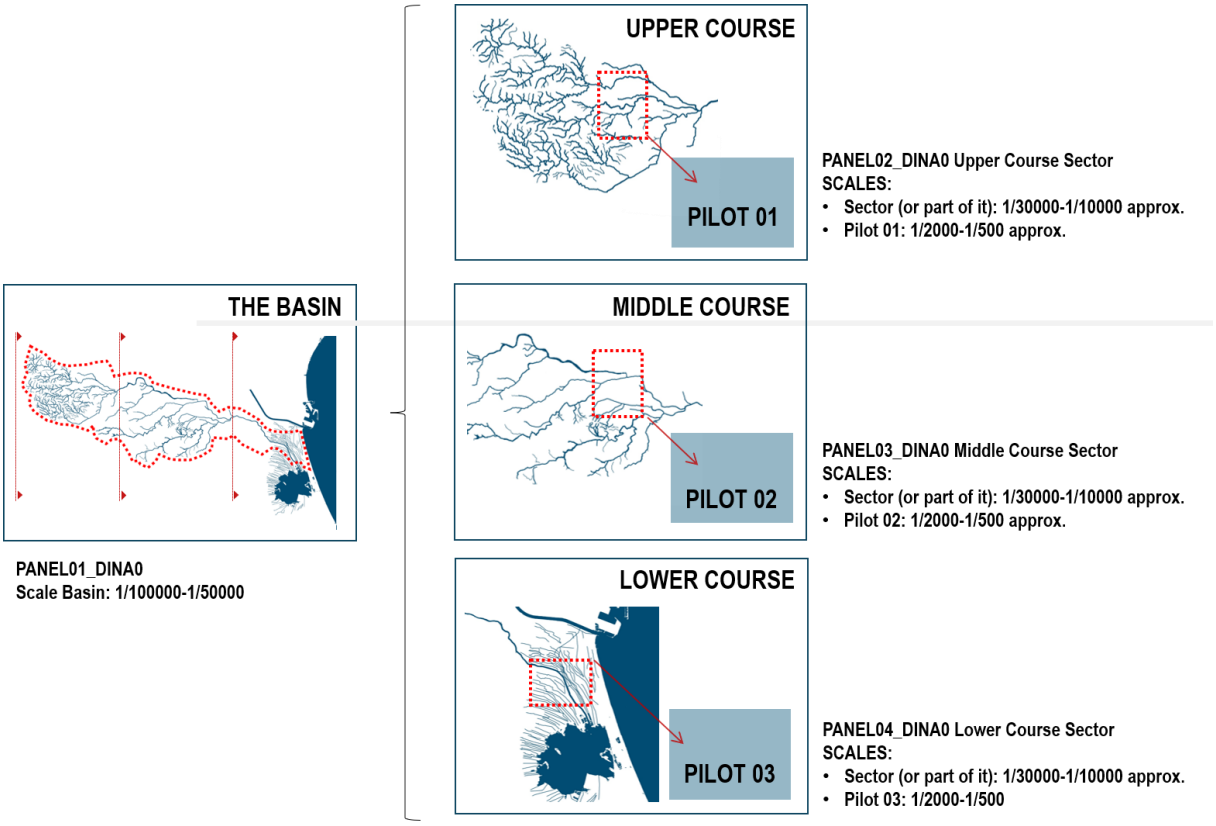
- **Content:** Participants shall develop strategies for each ravine sector, addressing landscape structure, water management, ecological connectivity, urban-rural relationships, mobility networks, and landscape resilience.

Pilot Area Scale (approx. 1:2,000–1:500)

- **Content:** Within each ravine sector, participants shall identify and develop a pilot area where strategic objectives are translated into detailed spatial proposals. The pilot areas should demonstrate how local interventions can contribute to broader territorial transformations and strengthen the overall performance of the basin system. The location, extent, and working scale of each pilot area shall be selected by the participating teams.

- **Summary of Panels**
  - **Panel 01:** The Basin (territorial vision and strategy)
  - **Panel 02:** Upper sector/transect + Pilot Area 01
  - **Panel 03:** Middle sector/transect + Pilot Area 02
  - **Panel 04:** Lower sector/transect + Pilot Area 03

As indicated in the **Deliverables** section of this brief, each submission will need to include the 4 A0 panels mentioned above, a Project Description and a Declaration Form.



Competition Participants

The competition is open to students of all landscape-related disciplines, in particular landscape architecture/planning, architecture, the arts, urban/regional planning, ecology, agroecology, and real estate, as well as related disciplines such as geography, agricultural sciences, 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.

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 panels. Please register at the following link:

https://lnicollab.landscape-portal.org/goto.php/cat/2750

Submission of Deliverables

The submitted project must comprise four (4) A0 panels (84,1mm x 118,9 mm) plus one (1) A4 project description. All the panels from one team should have the same layout (either “landscape” or “portrait”)

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

- 4 PDF files - 1 for each of the A0 panels (contents of each panel have been explained before)
- 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 in Panels

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 panel** (size and format of ID: Arial, font 72). The panels must be numbered to be seen in the right order during the selection. (1-4, left to right).

Project Description

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 posters or panels 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 31st, 2027, 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 16th LE: NOTRE Landscape Forum 2027 in Valencia and may also be exhibited elsewhere at the discretion of the Local Organising Committee.
- The Local Organising Committee and the LE:NOTRE Institute retain 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 16th LE: NOTRE Landscape Forum in Valencia will announce the winners of the prizes and honourable 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.
- Upon registration, 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 materials.

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 before submission

- EC01. WATER SENSITIVE LANDSCAPES AT DIFFERENT SCALES. Understanding water as the entry point for analysing and designing landscape systems. Ability to identify hydrological processes and their relationships with ecological, cultural, productive, and urban systems across multiple scales. Proposals should demonstrate how water-sensitive approaches contribute to landscape resilience, connectivity, and adaptation to climate change.
- EC02. DYNAMIC DIMENSION OF THE PROPOSAL. TIME SCENARIOS. Capacity to incorporate temporal dynamics into the proposal through the definition of possible scenarios, transitions, and implementation pathways. Consideration of uncertainty, risks, climate adaptation, and long-term landscape transformation processes. Proposals should articulate desirable and realistic futures grounded in the specific landscape context.
- EC03. SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT. Consideration of social and economic processes, stakeholders' needs and aspirations, and governance mechanisms. Ability to integrate participation, collaboration, and democratic decision-making processes in the design and management of landscape change.
- EC04. SYSTEMIC IMPACT OF THE SELECTED PILOTS. Assessment of the strategic role of the selected pilots within the wider territory (scalability, replicability, etc). Ability to generate ecological, cultural, social, and spatial benefits beyond the project boundaries. Pilots should strengthen interconnected networks of open spaces and demonstrate a positive systemic impact at local and regional scales.

- EC05. NARRATIVE AND GRAPHIC QUALITY. Clarity, coherence, and innovation in the communication of analyses, concepts, strategies, and proposals. Quality of graphic representation, storytelling, visual language, and the ability to effectively communicate complex landscape processes and future visions.
- EC06. SYSTEMS THINKING. A consistent and multidimensional systems-based approach throughout the project. Development of systemic analyses, objectives, strategies, and proposals grounded in a truthful understanding of the existing landscape context and its ecological, cultural, social, and spatial dynamics. Ability to reveal relationships, feedback loops, interdependencies, and synergies between landscape systems and scales.

Competition Organising Committee

- Technical University of Valencia (UPV): Ignacio Díez Torrijos, Juan José Galán Vivas, Elisabet Quintana Seguí and Julia Deltoro Soto.
- LE:NOTRE Institute: Ellen Fetzer

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 2027 Valencia to a group of international professionals and local stakeholders.

Registration Link

Please register here: https://lnicollab.landscape-portal.org/goto.php/cat/2750

You need only one registration per team. 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.

Other activities

- Field work visit: Friday, 23rd October 2026 (9:00-20:00). Registered participants should confirm their attendance via the digital competition working area.
- Webinar study area context: online seminar with several sessions on different landscape dimensions relevant for the competition: Intro to the competition + R&A, Systems Thinking, Dialogue with local experts and actors.
- OPTIONAL (if you are more interested in Systems Thinking): LOLA Webinar Systems Thinking from October 5, 2026 to January 25, 2027, 16 00 – 18 00 pm CET.

Schedule and Key Dates

- Official start of the working period: **September 15th, 2026**
- Field work visit: **Friday, 23rd October 2026** (9:00-20:00)
- **Accompanying online lectures** (recordings will be shared):
    - Session 1: Introduction to the Competition and Site + Q&A (Tuesday 20.10.2026 16:00-18:00)
    - Session 2: Systems Thinking and Landscape (Thursday 22.10.2026 16:00-18:00)
    - Session 3: Online Meeting with Local Actors (Tuesday 27.10.2026, 17:00-19:00)
    - Session 4: Miscellanea lecture about issues raised by the teams of participants (to be confirmed)
    - Session 5 : Connections with the future System of Metropolitan Parks of Valencia (to be confirmed)
- Submission deadline: **31st January 2027**, at midnight CET
- Jury selection results: by **15 March 2027**
- Awards Ceremony in **Valencia** during the **Landscape Forum on April 6-10, 2027**

Contact Information

For more information about the 16th LE: NOTRE Landscape Forum Valencia and participation at the student competition, please visit the website:

https://forum.ln-institute.org/student-competition-2026-2027