



Alicante, Spain & Virtual event

## Urban Challenges and Sustainable Technological Revolution



### Special Session Proposal

#### **Economic development of coastal towns: challenges and opportunities.**

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#### **Abstract**

Some coastal towns are among the most deprived areas in Europe, and as such are an important part of the narrative on “left-behind” geographies. This is due to a combination of loss of traditional industries (such as fishing and tourism), and the exacerbation of poor economic and social outcomes as public services decline, and there is an outflow of young, healthy, and skilled residents. However, coastal towns vary considerably in their history, economic structure, demographics, climate, and local housing and labour markets.

Coastal areas also display a series of common challenges to their socio-economic regeneration. When allocating regional development funds, funders are often faced with clashing interests, choosing between regeneration goals and other priorities such as land remediation or addressing flooding risks. Seasonal employment and residence flows can affect tax intakes and governance; limited local opportunities have caused a “poverty of aspirations”, a low educational attainment and the exodus of economic activities, resulting in a large stock of vacant or derelict buildings such as industrial warehouses or hotels. These issues came to light quite clearly during the Covid-19 emergency, with coastal regions featuring prominently on the news, for reasons such as an influx of city dwellers, higher Covid mortality rates among permanent residents, and poor access to health care services.

Coastal regions face several overlapping and particular challenges, and this session aims to analyse and understand the regional development opportunities unique to coastal towns.

We would welcome submissions covering one or more of the following themes:

- Impact of climate change and environmental risks such as coastal erosion and flooding;
- In- and out-migration from coastal areas, and the resulting impacts on the property and housing markets;
- Decline and/or seasonality of coastal economies based on sea-related activities, industrial and freight ports, or tourism and leisure.
- Local identity, and its connections to the landscape, history, heritage, and local economy;
- Challenges of governance and regeneration.