



## Special Session Proposal

### Places left behind or places of opportunities?

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#### Abstract

In the light of EC Vice President Šuica call to investigate loneliness as relevant for social cohesion a new project focusing on the loneliness of places has been created. This project aims at introducing an original perspective to the study of places, instrumental in order to analyse territorial, demographic and socio economic disparities through new lenses. The final goal of the work is to inform policy in order to favor cohesion by avoiding that places continue to act as obstacle for individuals in the achievement of their full potential, by contributing to attenuate societal manifestation of loneliness and by enhancing cohesion also across territories. This is timely because inequalities still persist across EU countries, regions, and municipalities, because COVID pandemic is further exacerbating disadvantage and also because we are going to face several transitions in the years to come (inter alia the green and digital transitions) and we need to consider how these phenomena might develop or impact across the different territories.

In this context, the goal of this session is to cast light on two phenomena among the many investigated in the project and link them to related work performed by other researchers. The first is the access to the high-speed broadband in the EU territory, exploring the patterns of distribution of the infrastructure networks and highlighting the areas with uneven and unequal access to broadband. The analysis is carried out using extensive high-resolution data about fixed and mobile broadband connection networks in Europe. Digital access can influence multiple phenomena, in the session we will have a focus on teleworkability. In particular, one of the author of the Joint European Commission–Eurofound Report on teleworkability will discuss the extent of remote working in the EU before and during the COVID-19 outbreak based on quantification of the fraction of employees that are in teleworkable occupations across EU countries, sectors and socio-economic profiles. A potential evolution of these two projects might be to measure teleworkability also based on digital potential across territories.

The second focus will be on migrants' integration. In the EU, migrants represent 14.5% of the total population living in cities in contrast to 5.5% in rural areas. These aggregate figures indicate that migrants tend to be overrepresented in cities especially in worst off neighborhoods. Work from JRC experts will discuss the relation between strategies of urban and territorial development supported by cohesion policy and the integration of migrants in functional urban areas in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy and Sweden. However, economic and forced migration flows are also moving outside urban areas. So far, this has been perceived as a challenge for already struggling territories. Experts will deal with the integration of migrants in rural and mountain areas through the evidence of MATILDE that is a 3-year project funded by EU Horizon 2020.

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