

Alfama, Lisbon

HUB-IN Lisboa - Colina do Castelo

Alfama is one of Lisbon's oldest and most historic neighbourhoods, spanning the hillside between São Jorge Castle and the Tagus riverfront. It boasts a rich history and traditional charm that attracts many tourists. Archaeological findings highlight the neighbourhood's development in Roman times and the influences of traditional Arab neighbourhoods. Alfama's distinctive sloping and narrow streets, as well as the demand for tourist accommodation and investment housing, have led to many residents being forced to leave the area. Nowadays, Alfama is renowned for its restaurants, Fado Houses, and "Popular Saints" festivities".

The competition in Lisbon has been developed by [HUB-IN Lisboa - Colina do Castelo](#), in partnership with Câmara Municipal de Lisboa and Lisboa E-Nova. HUB-IN Lisboa - Colina do Castelo is an innovation and entrepreneurship hub, that spans the

historic heart of Lisbon and encompasses six distinct neighbourhoods. Despite their unique identities, these areas collectively shape Lisbon's cultural essence. HUB-IN Colina do Castelo responds to the complex problems of these territories, envisioning itself as a "driver of transformation for the sustainability and well-being of communities, through the sharing and convergence of innovation and traditions" (HUB-IN Colina do Castelo Roadmap).

By participating in this competition, HUB-IN Colina do Castelo aims to engage international students in co-creating solutions for the "systemic" transformation of Alfama. The goal is to develop a climate-resilient neighbourhood with a focus on quality of life, local communities, and cultural value within a 15-minute neighbourhood concept.



Figure 1) Alfama Neighbourhood - Lisbon E-Nova

Approx. site area: 0.14 km²/14 hectares

Demographics:

2,575 inhabitants.

Alfama's population has declined by 20% in the last decade due to a process of gentrification, which has pushed vulnerable and elderly populations to other areas of Lisbon and other adjacent municipalities.

Priority areas & main expectations:

Students are challenged to use the territory of Alfama and its public spaces as a laboratory for trialling innovative solutions, focusing on one of the following priorities:

- Develop solutions in outdoor spaces (eg. urban furniture) to reduce the impact of the urban heat island and heat waves. Solutions should aim to boost community interactions and improve social dynamics.
- Develop renewable energy infrastructure that is seamlessly integrated into the historical urban landscape.
- Enhance the (re)use of local water resources and promote circular solutions to close the urban water cycle. Consider the tangible and intangible cultural aspects related to the 'invisible waters' of Alfama.

Presentation of the site and development expectations

Alfama is one of Lisbon's oldest and most traditional historic neighbourhoods, which due to its unique characteristics has been one of Lisbon's main tourist destinations. Alfama is distributed along the hillside between São Jorge Castle and the Tagus riverfront and is known for its morphology of sloping narrow and labyrinthine streets. As one of the few historical areas to survive the 1755 earthquake, it is a key relic of Islamic influence. These conditions, over the centuries, have created a neighbourhood life that is continuously socially heterogeneous.

In recent decades, Alfama has suffered a significant loss of residents. Alongside a demographic shift towards an ageing population, there has been a surge in demand for investment housing and tourist accommodation in the neighbourhood. While these urban dynamics have contributed to the restoration of buildings, they have also contributed to the gentrification and touristification of the neighbourhood.

Some studies have suggested that the name '*Alfama*' derives from the Arabic '*al-hamma*', which means "fountain of warm waters, good waters". Archaeological findings show that whilst the area has been significantly developed since Roman times, it still preserves the characteristics of a traditional Arab neighbourhood.

During Muslim rule (711 to 1147), Alfama was a prosperous, aristocratic suburb of Lisbon. Wealthy residents moved west in the Middle Ages and left the neighbourhood to a population of fishermen and sailors. In the 1980s, Alfama became one of the most problematic neighbourhoods in the city and was linked to drug trafficking. It was only in the mid-1990s that Alfama began to slowly, but not completely, recover. Nowadays, Alfama is renowned for its restaurants, Fado Houses, and "Popular Saints" festivities, for which it battles with the Mouraria neighbourhood for the title of "Cradle of Fado". Students are invited to discover Alfama through Hub-In's [GeoTool](#) for Lisbon.

Alfama is one of Colina do Castelo neighbourhoods, the territory which hosts **Colina do Castelo Hub (HUB-IN Lisboa)**, as part of the **H2020 Project HUB-IN** (*Hubs of Innovation and Entrepreneurship for the Transformation of Historic Urban Areas*), carried out in Lisbon by its Municipality and Lisboa E-Nova.

The main objective of HUB-IN Lisboa - Colina do Castelo is to promote the development of a more entrepreneurial, innovative, and creative local community, while simultaneously preserving the intrinsic characteristics and cultural identity of the area. The cultural-led urban regeneration of these seven neighbourhoods is vital for the sustainable development of Lisbon. However, the Students Reinventing Cities competition will focus specifically on the Alfama neighbourhood.

HUB-IN Lisboa - Colina do Castelo conducted an [extensive participatory diagnosis](#) process that led to the identification of the main challenges of the neighbourhoods of Colina do Castelo, including the neighbourhood of Alfama. As a result of this process, the following priorities were identified:

- Safeguarding and rehabilitation of immovable cultural heritage
- Safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage
- Promotion of the economic and creative fabric
- Sustainable tourism
- Environmental sustainability
- Retention of resident population

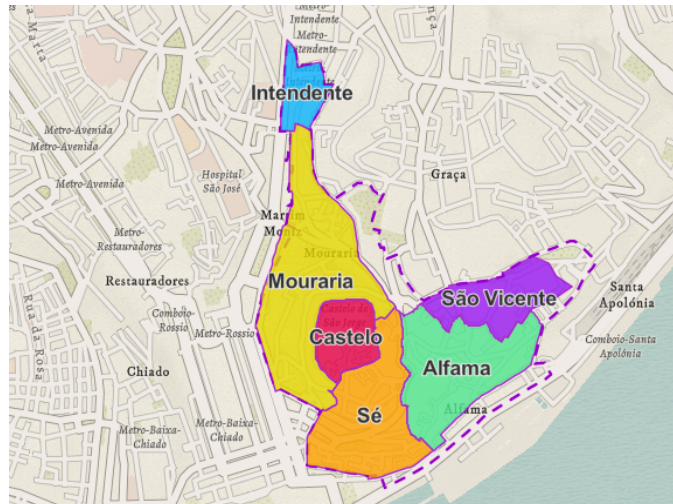


Figure 2) Leg.: Lisbon Colina do Castelo - main neighbourhoods (Source: HUB-IN GeoTool)

As part of the C40 Students Competition 2024, HUB-IN Colina do Castelo invites students to co-create ideas to transform the Alfama neighbourhood. The neighbourhood aspires to become more resilient to climate change, more focused on quality of life, local communities and their cultural value, and more connected in a 15-minute "neighbourhood" logic.





Figure 3) Leg.: Images of Alfama (credits: Lisbon Municipality / Lisboa E-Nova)

Missions and challenges

Through the [HUB-IN Project](#), a vision - that of becoming an engine of transformation for the sustainability and well-being of communities, through sharing innovative ideas and traditions - was established for Colina do Castelo Hub.

This vision has been reflected in an [Action Plan for the Colina do Castelo area](#) and adopted into a set of actions, highlighted below. These actions also incorporate the goals and the context of the Students Reinventing Cities Programme.

- **A Mission** to promote climate action, making it compatible with the cultural-led urban regeneration of Colina do Castelo and creating better living conditions for local communities;
- **An Action** to explore the “Sprout Tank” Programme: Experimentation for a circular and climate-neutral Colina do Castelo.

These actions aim to create a space for trialling creative, heritage-led ideas and solutions that will help build climate-neutral and circular economy initiatives in these neighbourhoods. Solutions should champion heritage-led innovation (both social and technological). This includes helping to overcome barriers to incorporating renewable energy in historic buildings and improving climate resilience in public spaces.

The “Sprout Tank” Programme will promote a knowledge-sharing community that pools different opportunities, sources a variety of partnerships, and boosts access to experts who can provide support as mentors for pilots. The challenges for students participating in the competition are integrated within the scope of the HUB-IN “Sprout Tank” Action. In summary, the goal is to create innovative solutions, using the territory of Alfama and its public spaces as a laboratory, for action and experimentation.

Students should showcase a portfolio of solutions with original ideas and prototypes. Where feasible, they should also establish connections with cutting-edge technologies either currently available on the market or in the launching phase. It is encouraged that students explore opportunities for intervention in Alfama, aligning their ideas and solutions with the latest advancements in the field whenever applicable.

Projects should consider aesthetic, artistic and heritage characteristics, and concentrate **on one of the following objectives:**

- a. Develop innovative solutions in outdoor spaces (eg. urban furniture) to reduce the impact of the urban heat island and heat waves. Simultaneously use these solutions to boost community interactions and improve social dynamics.
- b. Incorporate renewable energy infrastructure that is seamlessly integrated into the historical urban landscape.
- c. Enhance the (re)use of local water resources and promote circular solutions to close the urban water cycle. Consider the tangible and intangible cultural aspects related to the ‘invisible waters’ of Alfama.

City climate priorities and specific environmental challenges

The most relevant environmental strategies that Lisbon is undertaking are the following:

- [LISBON CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2030](#): is focused on integrated strategies towards resilience and Carbon Neutrality by 2050. It aims to be an instrument of integration and management of city policies and instruments in mitigation, adaptation, energy poverty eradication and promotion of quality of life and well-being.
- [MUNICIPAL STRATEGY FOR ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE \(EMAAC\)](#): EMAAC focuses on identifying adaptation options and actions aimed at promoting the minimization of the effects of climate change.
- [LISBON SOLAR STRATEGY](#): the Lisbon solar strategy is one of the main axes of the Lisbon Climate Action Plan 2030 and is one of the main strategic axes for achieving climate neutrality and eradicating energy poverty by 2050.
- [GREEN ECOLOGICAL STRUCTURE - PRIORITIES](#): the Municipality of Lisbon promotes a set of programs and measures aimed at developing and preserving the ecological structure of the city. Lisbon's ecological structure is composed of three types of articulated and complementary infrastructures: green corridors, green and leisure spaces and horticultural parks. Indeed, Lisbon has a strong focus on green infrastructure, promoting the creation of green spaces near urban areas (maximum 10 minutes walking distance) and green corridors.

The main concerns in terms of climate change risks for Lisbon are:

- The increase in extreme weather events, in particular, intense precipitation and winter storms followed by heavy rain and wind.
- The increase in the frequency and intensity of heat waves and droughts, as well as the increase of days with high temperature ($\geq 35^{\circ}\text{C}$) and tropical nights ($\geq 20^{\circ}\text{C}$).
- The increase in mean sea level rise is also a concern, especially when combined with storm surge events. These concerns have always been a threat to Lisbon's resilience and are expected to be aggravated by climate change (*Pagani et al., 2018*).

Specific planning rules and regulations

The [DETAILED PLAN OF URBAN REHABILITATION OF COLINA DO CASTELO](#) defines a system of incentives and financing for the implementation of urban planning operations of municipal interest provided in the Master Plan. As a way to increase the synergies between the Detailed Plan and the Missions for HUB-IN in Lisbon, there is an approximate correspondence between the geographical boundaries of the Plan and the intervention area of the HUB-IN Lisboa. The main objectives of the Detailed Plan are the following:

- Rehabilitation of buildings;
- Integration of renewable energy technologies into urban planning operations and improvement of energy performance;
- Safeguarding cultural heritage values of special architectural, historical and landscape interest;
- Increase of permeable and wooded areas in interventions in outdoor spaces;
- Rehabilitation of water structures and reuse of rain and grey water;
- Introduction of water elements in the public space.

For further information on the Colina do Castelo HUB-IN Vision and Missions, please visit [HUB-IN Lisbon Roadmap](#) (September 2022):

Language requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English

City-specific awards

Winners will have the opportunity to present their project to the city and leading sectoral experts. Details to be defined.