



**ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)**  
**SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION**

**BUILDING  
THE FUTURE**  
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## **SPAIN**

# **Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment**

## ECOSOC QUESTIONNAIRE

1 April 2014

### ***1. What has been the experience of your country in using urbanization as a tool for the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development?***

Contemporary Spanish urbanization has traditionally been developmentalist, committed to the creation of new cities. Although urban growth is still necessary, urbanization today should address the requirements for sustainable development, minimizing the impact of growth on the natural environment and opting for the regeneration of the existing city.

The chosen city model is compact, socially cohesive and economically efficient, thanks to energy savings, reducing the costs of building and infrastructure maintenance and providing services.

The content of the current Land Act (Revised Text of the Land Act 2008, TRLS08), which is in force throughout Spanish territory includes such precepts as the principle of sustainable territorial and urban development, according to which urban policy should foster the rational use of natural resources, harmonizing the requirements of the economy, employment, social cohesion, equal treatment and opportunities for women and men, people's health and safety and protecting the environment, contributing towards preventing and reducing pollution.

Another precept established under the Land Act, contributing to social cohesion, is the requirement in urbanization actions for a minimum percentage of planned residential building to be used to build housing subject to some form of public protection.

The Land Act also establishes the recovery by local authorities of capital gains on property generated by urbanization, with the assignment of 5–15% of the action's average weighted planned-building percentage, so that the community recovers some of the profits generated by the action.

The national-level Urban Rehabilitation, Regeneration and Renewal Act 2013 (8/13) has addressed action on the existing urban fabric, by means of integrated operations in degraded urban areas, where urbanization and building, social, environmental and economic measures are planned. These actions, besides the social benefits they bring, may also contribute towards the transformation of the property sector and therefore by extension to the recovery of the Spanish economy.

## ***2. What kind of investments have been made in your cities to make them hubs of sustainability?***

Since the enactment of the 1978 Constitution, Spain has been a decentralized state, where strictly urban-planning policy is transferred to the regional governments and local authorities. However, the state retains certain sector responsibilities that affect the urban environment, such as roads, railways, ports and airports, and develops other national policies such as housing (through public plans under which considerable funds are transferred to the regions), which have major impact on urban policies.

From this point of view, investment in Spanish cities has been very strong, both from the national government and from the regional governments, as well as a considerable injection of European funds. All of this has played a role in the major transformation of Spain's cities. In urban interventions, and generally linked to urban transport, resources from FEDER funds, charged to the last European funding period, have been used to improve accessibility and mobility in the country's cities and so contribute towards their competitiveness. The URBAN Programme, which began in 1994 (in two phases, 1994–2000 and 2000–2006), and the subsequent Urban Initiative (2007–2013), both financed with European FEDER funds plus municipal investment, have served to transform the degraded neighbourhoods of many Spanish cities suffering from major urbanization and building deficiencies and social problems, where integrate actions have been implemented to bring them to the same level as other, non-degraded parts of the cities.

## ***3. How have you addressed specific urbanization challenges in an integrated way?***

Integrated actions in cities require joint action by the public authorities involved and also sometimes private enterprise.

Mention should also be made again here of the URBAN Programme (1994–2006) and subsequent Urban Initiative (2007–2013), financed with European funds and municipal investment, for integrated actions in degraded neighbourhoods, those included in the latest State Housing Plans, and particularly the current one: the State Plan to Foster Rented Housing, Rehabilitation of Buildings and Urban Regeneration and Renewal (2013–2016).

Part of the content of this plan is devoted to urban regeneration and renewal programmed and developing sustainable cities, with integrated actions and economic, social and environmental content.

The Urban Rehabilitation, Regeneration and Renewal Act 2013, has also stressed the integrated nature of the actions to be undertaken.

**4. What kind of institutional structures are in place in your country for effective governance, policy-making and planning for sustainability urbanization?**

The decentralized structure of the Spanish state brings the public sector closer to the public but is complex because of the legislative diversity and dispersion involved and the distribution of responsibilities across three levels of government: local, regional and national.

Responsibility for the design of urban policy lies with the local authorities, although in the context of regional urbanization legislation and also basic national legislation.

Thus, the local authorities draw up urban planning, such as Master Plans (*Planes Generales de Ordenación Urbana*), which must be in line with the corresponding regional urbanization legislation and basic national legislation on land, building and urban rehabilitation, regeneration and renewal. The national and regional governments also have diverse responsibilities for such matters as roads, coastal areas, water, railways, ports, airports, etc. that have an impact on urban planning.

Effective governance for urbanization actions therefore calls for the involvement of all three levels of public administration, often resulting in problems of coordination and the scope of long-lasting agreements.

**5. What are some innovations and partnership that demonstrate the power of urbanization in the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in your country?**

Besides the innovations achieved by partnership between the regions and local authorities, mention should be made of the policies developed by the national government in this area.

For many years (since 1981) the state has developed successive pluri-annual housing plans. Traditionally these plans have focused on financial support for home-owning.

On the approval of the European Leipzig Letter on sustainable European cities in 2007, which recommended the drawing up of integrated urban-development policies and paying greater attention to underprivileged areas in the overall context of the city, and the economic and financial crisis that is currently

affecting Spain, have shown the need to reorient housing policy in another direction, favouring people's access to rented housing, which accounts for only 17% in Spain, as against 83% for owner occupation, the maintenance and conservation of the existing property stock, and urban regeneration and renewal.

The Toledo Declaration in 2010, which was approved during the Spanish presidency of the EU, also made manifest the suitability of an integrated approach to urbanization policy and the importance of integrated urban regeneration, for smarter, more sustainable and socially more inclusive urbanization in Europe.

For these reasons the current State Plan to Foster Rented Housing, Rehabilitation of Buildings and Urban Regeneration and Renewal (2013–2016), as its name suggests, provides support to encourage rented housing (there are no grants for home-ownership) and creates programmes focusing on the consolidated city, including the rehabilitation of buildings and energy efficiency, urban regeneration and renewal, and fostering sustainable, competitive cities. The result is an extensive framework to reactivate the construction sector, create jobs and improve energy savings and efficiency, in line with the relevant European directives, thereby also improving the economy.

In the field of the rehabilitation of buildings, fostering urban regeneration and renewal, and competitive sustainable cities, the State Plan proposes public-private partnerships, establishing a set of standard contracts for the management and implementation of such actions. The involvement of the business sector with its own funds is of particular interest with a view to assuring greater economic feasibility for the actions undertaken.