

Declaration for an Urban Agenda for Catalonia

**AGENDA URBANA
DE CATALUNYA**

1. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly approved the resolution 'Transforming Our World': the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda has 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**, with 169 related targets for progressing towards global sustainable development and it takes the baton from the global Millennium Development Goals, valid until 2015. Within the 17 goals, SDG number 11 centres on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
2. On 30 May 2016, in the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for urban development held in the Netherlands, the **Pact of Amsterdam** was adopted. A commitment by the European Union member states whose objectives included planning the strengthening of the urban factor in public policies, both national and European, with the aim of assuring compliance with the sustainability goals and maximising the development of urban potential. To this end, the European Union focuses on the tools to improve the regulation, financing and exchange of knowledge of EU public policies, defining 12 priority goals to be implemented by a group of interdisciplinary experts at different levels.
3. On 20 October 2016, the UN General Assembly approved the final document from the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) held in Ecuador. The **New Urban Agenda** was included as an annex to the document, also known as the Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All.
4. On 4 April 2017, the Executive Council of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan Autonomous Government) adopted Agreement GOV/42/2107, for drafting the **Urban Agenda for Catalonia**, which was modified by Agreement GOV/126/2017 of 12 September, which establishes the formal start of the works to design and write the Urban Agenda for Catalonia, and the creation of the associated body that will be entrusted with formulating and validating the work, named the Urban Assembly of Catalonia.

Context

5. Catalonia has densely interwoven nodes of intermediate cities that, added to the powerful and large Barcelona metropolitan area, shapes the country's urban whole. It is a **dense territory**,¹ **highly urbanised** (> 7% of the territory²), in which over half the population (54%) lives in cities with over 50,000 inhabitants. This figure increases to 81% if we consider the residents living in municipalities with over 10,000 inhabitants.³
6. In parallel, the influence of the urban and metropolitan regions stretch much beyond the physical or administrative boundaries of our cities and, indeed, encompass almost the entire Catalan territory. Beyond the environmental impacts and economic consequences produced by cities, the citizens of Catalonia are conditioned by urban needs and values, a hegemonic trait in the societies of developed countries.
7. Catalan cities, metropolitan areas and urban environments generate wealth,⁴ create jobs and prosperity and are providers of basic services. They are also generators of opportunities, have the capacity to transform social relationships and interactions and are shaped as powerful catalysts in the cultural and knowledge spheres, without neglecting the interrelation with the rest of the *comarques* (counties) with economies based on farming, forestry and tourism. The drive, energy and leadership of cities in areas such as services, knowledge, research, innovation, technology, creativity, culture and education can be promoted as privileged players in the called-for change of paradigm towards sustainability.
8. However, cities and urban regions can also outsource their ecological footprint, create spaces of inequality through gentrification and the asymmetrical services and quality of urban development and architecture, increase the risk of pollution due to traffic jams, unnecessarily pillage or despoil territory and ruin the ecological connectivity of natural spaces.

1 Catalonia has an area equivalent to 0.7% of the European Union territory and is home to 1.5% of its inhabitants. Its population density is almost double the European average, as Catalonia has 234 people/km², while the EU has 116 people/km².

2 According to the Territory Observatory, the degree of artificialisation in Catalonia (land allocated to urban uses and infrastructures) is 7.1%. In coastal areas, this number jumps, on average, to above 20%.

3 2016 Census Data.

4 According to figures from the Statistics Institute of Catalonia (data on GDP, 2013), the eight counties with non-farming economies in Catalonia (Barcelonès, Vallès Oriental, Vallès Occidental, Baix Llobregat, Maresme, Tarragonès, Gironès and Segrià) generate 77% of the Catalan GDP.

The need for an Urban Agenda

9. In the proposal for the New Urban Agenda, there is implicit trust in the immense transformative capacity the **global urbanisation process** can have when creating a fairer, more democratic, more participative and more sustainable world. This trend, which is irreversible when bearing in mind that forecasts estimate that the world's urban population will double by 2050, needs to be organised more urgently than ever by consensual and long-term strategies. In this regard, it is blatantly clear that the population, economic opportunities, cultural richness and environmental impacts are concentrated progressively more in cities, although their effects extend to the entire territory and to all of society, a circumstance that poses numerous challenges for equality and sustainability for housing, homelessness, poverty, social services, infrastructures, basic services, food sovereignty, health, education, culture, employment, safety and natural resources.
10. The New Urban Agenda aims to achieve an **urban sustainable development model** in threefold areas: social, environmental and economic. Due to all of this, the Quito Declaration on sustainable cities and human settlements for all reconfirms the world-wide commitment to sustainable urban development as a decisive step forward for integrated and coordinated sustainable development at all levels: regional, national, subnational and local, in a framework of shared governance in which all players and agents are involved.
11. The **social factor of sustainability** must be handled urgently in Catalan urban habitats:
 - a) In our cities, situations are flourishing—among others—of vulnerability (social exclusion, homelessness, poverty, etc.), discrimination due to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and religion, urban segregation for income-based reasons, a lack of social cohesion, inadequate handling of migratory crises and growing inequality. Social and economic inequality are increasingly larger in cities, given that precarious and temporary jobs are increasing and the number of poor workers is growing, while in parallel the number of people in vulnerable situations is also on the rise. Consequently, the management of the city's social and intercultural dimensions is essential for ensuring its balance and sustainability.
 - b) The United Nations estimates that, in quantitative terms, housing represents an overall level of over 70% of the use of land in the majority of cities.⁵ Irrefutable proof of the tight link between city and housing is the appearance of growing urban dysfunctions in some Catalan cities, such as territorial separation of residential housing estates, gentrification, rising housing prices

⁵ UN-Habitat World Cities Report, 2016. Page 47.

due to property speculation, the migration of centres towards the suburbs, the existence of people in vulnerable situations, homelessness, ageing residential housing and the proliferation of substandard housing. The source of all of these issues is the difficulty in accessing and permanence of housing. These dysfunctions entail the appearance of socially and physically separated urban habitats, vulgarised and characterless collective spaces and specialised urban areas that contravene the sustainable urban and territorial model proposed by the United Nations.⁶

- c) The democratising role of public spaces is essential to ensure the implementation of ‘the right to the city’,⁷ given that these spaces can contribute not only to improving environmental sustainability (green infrastructures, naturalisation of the public space, absorption of air pollutants by plants, mitigation of the island heat effect, improvement of soil permeability, etc.), but also the improvement of harmonious coexistence in our cities. The inclusive value of the public space favours social cohesion and reduces exclusion. Likewise and in strictly quantitative terms, only 57% of the Catalan population has access to the open spaces recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO), established as an area between 15-20 m²/8 inhabitants. Further, only nine of the 28 municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants (that is, the most urban areas of Catalonia) have an area greater than or equal to the rate recommended by the WHO.

12. It is vital to confront the immense challenge of **environmental sustainability** in our urban environments:

- a) The urban explosion in the 20th century has caused cities and their urban environments to be both responsible for and recipients of environmental impacts linked to urbanising processes and urban infrastructures and the associated territories. The paired spreading of the population has led to and strengthened, decades later, a great dependence on private means of mobility, high land consumptions—with the resulting loss of environmental, productive and biodiversity functions—and the spatial separation engendered by land infrastructures. The relationship between the urban model and sustainability is undeniable and, therefore, the need to involve cities in preventing the environmental impact of urban activity on natural and rural spaces is absolutely clear, with the aim of guaranteeing their ecological and landscape diversity functions and territorial balance.

⁶ See the Municipal Declaration of Local Governments on the Right to Housing and the Right to the City, presented on 16 July 2018, during the United Nations High Level Political Forum.

⁷ Barcelona Declaration for Habitat III ‘Public Spaces’ of 4-5 April 2016.

- b) The impacts of climate change, the pollution affecting urban environments and territories far from cities,⁸ the dependence on a primary energy model based mainly on fossil fuels and the establishment of a linear consumption system sustained by the continuous plundering of natural resources and indiscriminate waste production, all make it urgent to change the paradigm in formulating urban policies to, not only stop, but also reverse a trend that hurls us toward worse living conditions for future generations.
- c) Today, there is scientific proof that shows that high private mobility with internal combustion engine vehicles in urban and metropolitan areas is the root of a public health crisis. Accident rates—especially when travelling to and from work—sedentary lifestyles and the structural situations of environmental pollution (noise and atmospheric⁹) have direct effects on people's health and translate into deaths from pollution,¹⁰ as well as a broad spectrum of heart, respiratory, immunological and psychological diseases and ailments, and even a reduction in children's cognitive skills. People's quality of life makes it mandatory to implement active policies to reverse the current situation,¹¹ and the involvement of the cities and territories on this issue is not only vital, but is also urgent.

13. The **economic sustainability** of our urban habitats must be guaranteed:

- a) According to United Nations figures, 54% of the world's population (urban) generates over 80% of the planet's GDP.¹² Cities' contribution to the generation of wealth is evident and is captured, according to the United Nations, in the study that reveals that the impact of the world's main cities in terms of GDP regularly exceeds their national demographic weight. Indeed, this has been shown in Barcelona and its metropolitan area, where 43% of the population of Catalonia, concentrated in 1.9% of the territory, produces up to 54% of the Catalan GDP (2014). This multiplying effect is not repeated in many other Catalan cities that maintain a demographic weight higher than their contribution of wealth.

⁸ Such as episodes of exceeding the thresholds of tropospheric ozone.

⁹ Structural pollution situations with air quality levels below rates established by the WHO (for PM2.5 and NO₂) and EU legislation (for NO₂).

¹⁰ According to 2017 data from the Barcelona Public Health Agency, at least 250 people/year die from pollution in the city of Barcelona. It also points out the pollution is the cause of some 1500 hospital admissions each year.

¹¹ See the action framework of 'health in all policies', promoted by the WHO and the existence of two plans (2014-2016 and 2017-2020), as well as the Interdepartmental and Intersectoral Public Health Plan (PIINSAP per its acronym in Catalan) that works, and has been working for years, to achieve health challenges.

¹² UN-Habitat World Cities Report, 2016. Page 31.

- b) Tourism contributes approximately 12% of the GDP of Catalonia¹³ and 15% of jobs,¹⁴ and represents one of the main sources of wealth and employment, especially in cities and urban environments. In parallel, tourism becomes a catalyst for positioning Catalonia in the global economy, as well as a way to assure its air connectivity. Despite this, the harmful effects of mass tourism on specific neighbourhoods and urban districts are growing, to the point that these effects can represent a risk to the quality of life of the resident population. The proliferation and concentration of tourist housing—often illegal¹⁵—in urban areas cause a speculative effect on housing prices, which in turn results in the exclusion of their own inhabitants, in the specialisation of their economic activities, in the vulgarisation of architectural heritage, in the impoverishment of the urban landscape, the creation of negative impacts on natural heritage and the rendering characterless of public spaces.
- c) Cities act as nodes that drive forward knowledge and research. The concentration of activities, goods and services, typical of an urban agglomeration, stimulates improved competitiveness, as well as the appearance and growth of quaternary sectors based on knowledge, information, research and culture. Likewise, structural sectors traditionally linked to urban areas, such as industry, have lost ground in Catalonia in recent years.¹⁶ Much work remains ahead of us in our cities to modernise traditional economic sectors, to sound out new and more sustainable economic models that take advantage of urban potential, and to evaluate the opportunities posed by the energy transition and the impact of new technologies (the Internet of Things, Big Data, information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, robotisation, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies, etc.).

13 Data from the Department of the Vice Presidency and Economy and Treasury.

14 2013-2016 Strategic Tourism Plan in Catalonia and 2020 National Tourism Directives.

15 According to the Catalan Regional Ministry of Business and Knowledge, in 2011 over one million beds in non-legalised housing for tourist use were counted.

16 As set out by the National Pact for Industry, while industry in 2000 represented 26.9% of the Catalan economy in terms of GVA, in 2016 this percentage dropped to 20.8%.

Common ideals

14. We recognise and share the ideals and goals for sustainability agreed upon globally by the United Nations and the European Union. In this regard, we are especially aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, with the Quito Declaration on sustainable cities and human settlements for all, and with the governing principles of the Urban Agenda for the European Union.
15. We believe that the creation of an Urban Agenda for Catalonia requires the **commitment of all players and agents** that, in one way or another, influence the city and the territory by their decisions. We believe that the involvement of all administrations, citizens and economic sectors is necessary in order to work together towards the goal of dealing with the challenges we have as a country, and also the challenges for humanity. Consequently, the writing of the Urban Agenda for Catalonia must be an **integrating, coordinated and cohesive process**, which requires contributions at all levels and in all spheres.
16. We want the Urban Agenda for Catalonia to come into being via **widespread consensus**, to be strategic in its conclusions and to be borne in mind and taken on when local and metropolitan governments and the Generalitat de Catalunya exercise their competences. Due to the above, and by its clear cross-sector nature, its supervision and approval must be collaborative and collective.
17. We believe that the Urban Agenda for Catalonia must take on the diversity of the Catalan territorial model and, therefore, its implementation must not be limited only to the main metropolises, but must also be extended to the network of small and medium-sized cities that make up the territory, in order to guarantee true **territorial cohesion**. We believe that **equal rights and opportunities** must be one of the mainstays of the Urban Agenda for Catalonia, regardless of where citizens live.

Our vision

18. We believe that **people must be at the centre of urban policies**.
19. We defend the **right to the city**, understood as everything that guarantees access by everyone to its assets, rights and opportunities, assures social justice, inclusion, decent living conditions and access to basic services, which include housing, water, sewage, electricity and transport.
20. We believe that the territories, urban hubs and rural areas must watch over and ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of their citizens, as well as guaranteeing quality environments, bringing them together and governing them well.
21. We want **healthy urban environments** free from pollution. We believe that the environmental impact caused by cities must be reduced via the provision of urban services that are more efficient in their use of resources and use renewable energies. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Guarantee integrated management of the water resources available in our territory, conserving and restoring natural resources (ground and underground), progress in the use and management of rainwaters, in wastewater treatment, assuring their reuse and recycling, in infrastructure efficiency, as well as in the planning and management of demand in all fields (farming, forestry, industry, tertiary and residential), planning for periods of drought. Supervise the protection and management of coastal and river ecosystems, as well as improving resilience to climate change and restricting new construction or extensions to infrastructures that would entail a deterioration to coastal regions.
 - b) Obtain air free from polluting emissions and pollution in urban environments. Reduce the damaging effects of pollution and noise on the health and environment, by prioritising the reduction of private internal combustion engine vehicles for urban and interurban transport. Commit to sustainable mobility that includes maximising public transport, encouraging active mobility (on foot or bicycle) and the electrification of the public vehicle fleet.
 - c) Supervise the implementation of the energy transition toward a model that is decentralised, networked, universal and based on renewable energies.
22. We want cities that guarantee **people's wellbeing** and that are fair, ethical, safe, cohesive, diverse and inclusive, in which culture, education and creativity are promoted, to prevent and combat exclusion, segregation and vulnerability. In short, to provide resources to citizens throughout their lives to build a better community. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:

- a) Provide safe urban environments free from any type of violence, and work toward cities and territories that are ethical and fair. Guarantee equal obligations and opportunities for one and all. Foster a fair society with solidarity, guarantee access to quality jobs with decent wages and stop social precariousness. Handle policies for vulnerable families and people with redistributive policies. Promote the social economy and local consumption and locally-sourced products. Revive democratic memory, in accordance with the principles of transitional justice, such as the right to truth, to justice, to reparation and establish guarantees so that the past will never be repeated.
 - b) Protect, foster and promote the historical and architectural heritage of our urban environments, as well as all artistic and cultural expressions. Foster the wealth of our heritage as a cultural, economic and social resource. Guarantee the restoration, maintenance, spreading and equal opportunities in access to culture. Drive forward the creation, production and dissemination of the scenic, visual, musical, cinematographic and literary arts. Foster culture and art within compulsory education. Claim the right to education and culture as an engine for people's and communities' human, social and economic development and, in parallel, as an essential factor in achieving sustainable development, active citizens and enduring peace.
 - c) Promote and protect diversity, preventing discrimination due to gender, ethnicity, beliefs, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, political ideology, income or disability. Manage the hosting and shelter of immigrants and refugees by establishing a general framework for their inclusion, including housing, cultural integration, provision of public services, social inclusion, educational measures and job market, opportunities for the second and third generations and measures against spatial segregation. Seek strategies for handling the increasingly ageing population (foster active ageing, cures and medical care, stable housing, etc.), as well as designing cities that are accessible and inhabitable for all generations, particularly children and the elderly.
23. We want **quality urban environments**. Cities that are accessible to all and guarantee the universal right to housing. We believe in a model of compact, mixed and connected city with suitable densities that creates proximity to goods, services and opportunities. We want habitats that are well-equipped and smart with access to high-quality transport, energy and public spaces that prioritise and make walking possible over other mobility types. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:
- a) Commit to safe public transport, which helps to bring the territory together and improve social cohesion, which is sustainable, efficient, smart and sensitive to the most unflavoured groups and the people who make the

most intensive use of transport. Strengthen an efficient alternative to the private vehicle for urban and interurban travel. Guarantee the efficiency of infrastructures, prioritising investments in collective rail and road transport with low emissions, as well as increasing the tools to monitor and improve public services throughout the territory and improve the funding tools for public transport in Catalonia.

- b) Guarantee that all people have access to decent, accessible, durable, environmentally sustainable and quality housing. Foster alternatives in the provision of housing and increase resources for the improvement of public housing stock, with territorial balance and equal and non-discriminatory distribution of government-subsidised housing in different urban areas.
- c) Promote compact urban models with adequate densities and mixed uses to reduce daily mobility and facilitate walking (compact, complex, cohesive and connected cities). Implement neighbourhood improvement programmes via the densification of low-density areas, the modernisation of obsolete urban fabrics and driving forward the restoration of built stock. Implement more flexible and rationalised strategic planning.

24. We want urban habitats that favour people's and companies' **economic prosperity**. New production models with high added value must be explored that are associated with urban development, promoting knowledge and innovation. We must assure economic sustainability and move from a linear economic model towards a circular one. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:

- a) Foster a change in production model with innovative business models (start-ups, ICTs, biotechnology, industry 4.0, quaternary sector, etc.), taking advantage of the economic potential of agglomeration, and modernising the traditional economic sectors such as industry, building, construction and tourism, so that they are more economically and socially sustainable. Watch over the digital sovereignty of cities and territories, with digital collaborative and cooperative digital models that promote a true collaborative economy and watch over the companies' social and environmental responsibilities. Improve the competitiveness of urban economic sectors.
- b) Promote knowledge clusters, foster the implementation of new technologies, facilitate creativity and innovation and seek greater added value in the production of products and services.
- c) Guarantee the transition toward an economic and consumer model that is circular and green. Incorporate and create the principles of the circular

economy, by reducing wastes from product design and distribution to the management of urban waste, so that their recycling, reuse and recovery are possible. And thus achieve greater competitiveness, improving the efficiency of resource use and generating new job posts.

25. We want cities that emphasise the **territorial and environmental angles**. We must assure that our cities are well planned out and connected to all other urban areas, cities and settlements that shape the territorial networks of influence, equipped with natural and farming spaces that conserve their respective territorial values, and adapt cities and territories to the effects of climate change. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:
- a) Strengthen the interdependencies between cities, the pertinent areas of influence. Establish formulas and tools to rebalance and assure territorial equality, both in the management and absorption of the externalities and negative impacts of urban areas, and in the rationalisation of the environmental and economic benefits of conserving open spaces. Recognise and foster the protection of strategic open spaces. Safeguard food sovereignty by—amongst other actions—protecting the lands with the highest farming value and, especially, peri-urban lands. Improve the physical and digital interconnectivity of the territory, both with regard to territorial structuring and improvement of competitiveness.
 - b) Conserve the ecosystems with an urban impact, improve biological corridors and green infrastructures at all levels, by protecting rivers and coastal regions and fostering biodiversity in urban areas. Promulgate the naturalisation of public spaces in cities, and suppress city development expectations in isolated and unsustainable sectors.
 - c) Improve risk management, increase resilience and the adaptation capacities of socioeconomic sectors and natural systems, and reduce the population's exposure to the most vulnerable lands (coastlines, deltas, flood lands, river courses, etc.). Moderate or restrict urban growth in areas that, for different causes, could become more sensitive to the impact of climate change.
26. We want cities that are **better governed**, more democratic and more transparent, which assure better management of urban policies by listening and being aware of citizens' needs. Financing given to local and regional governments must be reviewed, in order to provide citizens with better public services. We must obtain more responsible governments that are more ethical and more efficient in their management of the common good. The actions to achieve this goal include, but are not limited to:

- a) Guarantee the principles of decentralisation and subsidiarity in managing urban policies. Recognise the diverse metropolitan and territorial realities, watching over the implementation of more democratic and open governance instruments. Strengthen and structure administrative areas in accordance with citizen proximity and public needs.
- b) Foster decision making by citizens, establishing tools and processes for their co-participation. Promote transparency in governments and administrations. Establish mechanisms to control corruption. Provide and facilitate public access to the administration. Improve the control channels of public spending and accountability. Start-up permanent spaces for dialogue with the most representative social and economic organisations.
- c) Establish financing mechanisms at local and territorial levels to articulate urban policies. Develop vertical and horizontal models for financial resource distribution according to needs.

Call to action

- 27. We feel beseeched and called up to confront the challenges of sustainability and **we commit to drafting and driving forward the Urban Agenda for Catalonia**, an initiative with a strategic and holistic vision, which will be sensitive to the different urban and territorial realities of Catalonia and that advocate urban sustainable development.
- 28. Reconfirm the **synchrony** required of the Urban Agenda for Catalonia with the goals established in the Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All, with the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals and in the principles and action plans set out in the Urban Agenda for the EU.
- 29. We believe that the Urban Agenda for Catalonia must have effective **implementation capacity**, must **coherently integrate** all public initiatives on urban sustainability, must be able to be **implemented in the Catalan context** and must be promoted and **driven forward at all government levels** with an urban dimension.
- 30. We encourage all territorial, metropolitan and local governments, associations, organisations and institutions with an urban dimension to **collaborate with the Urban Assembly of Catalonia** in designing and writing the Urban Agenda for Catalonia.

Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya
Barcelona, 5 November 2018
Signed by the members of the Urban Assembly of Catalonia

