

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

EUSKO JAURLARITZA



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Euskal Hiria kongresua

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CONCEPT NOTE

Inclusive territories and cities to leave no one
behind

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Bilbao (Spain)

Congress Palace EUSKALDUNA
Bilbao, Basque Country



DECADE
OF
ACTION



IMPLEMENTING
THE NEW
URBAN AGENDA

bultzatu
2050





EUSKAL HIRIA KONGRESUA 2022

The EuskalHiria Congress, has been held in Euskadi since 2002¹. This event, held every year at the end of November, promotes the discussion about the city in the context of Euskadi, addressing through a particular topic the challenges and opportunities of cities. In its 2022 edition, the Congress takes a look at the need and potential of interventions that address social inequalities to achieve cohesive and sustainable cities and territories.

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was first adopted in 2015, emphasizing a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all with an aim to have an impact across multiple levels. It defines, within its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a particular objective to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11). However, the interrelationships between society, economy and environment, accelerated by the density of occupation of urban territory, make cities prominent scenarios to assess compliance with the 2030 Agenda on its whole: if we succeed in our cities, it will be easier to reach other goals and objectives, such as those related to climate change, sanitation, water and energy.

The year 2020 marks a turning point in the global battle for sustainable development. On the one hand, the world is entering the Decade of Action, the ten-year period during which national and local governments, the private sector and civil society must accelerate their efforts to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for accelerating sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges—ranging from poverty and gender based discrimination to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap. By 2030, countless local actions, the vast majority taken in cities or by city leaders, must collectively add up to a global shift toward a more sustainable future that reduces poverty, improves health outcomes, expands access to education and reduces carbon emissions, among other societal challenges.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on all 17 SDGs has shown that what began as a health crisis has quickly become a human and socio-economic crisis. While the crisis is imperiling progress towards the SDGs, it also makes their achievement all the more urgent and necessary, and it is essential that recent gains are protected as much as possible. A transformative recovery from COVID- 19 should be pursued, one that addresses the crisis, reduces risks from future potential crises and relaunches the implementation efforts to deliver the 2030 Agenda and SDGs during the Decade of Action.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Decade of Action were conceived in a relatively more stable moment, before the COVID 19 pandemic and other recent crisis, and it was already a big endeavor. In the

¹ Previous EuskalHiria editions: www.euskadi.eus/euskalhiria



current context, with higher challenges and instability, the achievement of some SDGs has slowed down and, by the end of 2020, some of the targets were actually moving in the wrong direction.

This has led the UN Secretary General to call for a new social contract, because the global political and economic system is not delivering on critical global public goods: public health, climate action, sustainable development, peace.

The twentieth century social contract—an implicit bargain between economic imperatives of growth and productivity, and the social imperatives of redistribution and social protection—is facing enormous difficulties which are manifesting in multiple global crises and deep divisions in our societies. Inequalities in many dimensions have grown, and people are feeling left-out and left-behind. The failure of the economic model to account for the natural boundaries of our planet has led to environmental destruction and human precariousness because of climate change, extreme weather events and health pandemics such as COVID-19.

In the global north, social contracts in many nations were formulated for a mid-20th century world under conditions that now barely exist, and, in many parts of the global south, social safety nets remain under construction, despite the growth of vibrant emerging economies and societies, leaving the social contract in many countries incomplete.

With ten years left to achieve the SDGs, it is even more necessary to look for accelerators, and the importance of sustainable urbanization as an entry point for ensuring progress across multiple SDGs needs to be reemphasized.

A broadening inequalities context

The 26 richest people in the world hold as much wealth as half the global population. But income, pay and wealth are not the only measures of inequality: people's chances in life depend on their gender, family and ethnic background, race, whether or not they have a disability, and other factors. Multiple inequalities intersect and reinforce each other across the generations, the lives and expectations of millions of people are largely determined by their circumstances at birth. In this way, inequality works against human development, for everyone: we all suffer its consequences. High levels of inequality are associated with economic instability, corruption, financial crises, increased crime and poor physical and mental health.

According to UN Habitat's World Cities Report 2022², growing levels of inequality and exclusion are becoming persistent trends in urban areas. For more than two-thirds of the world's urban population, income inequality has increased since 1980. This widening gap means that about 2.9 billion people are living in cities where income inequalities are currently more pronounced than they were a generation ago. In a rapidly urbanizing world, the nature of inequality will largely depend on what happens in cities.

²<https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>



The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing inequalities³, and entire regions that were making progress on eradicating poverty and narrowing inequality have been set back years. It has also further entrenched existing patterns of discrimination and stigma, with reports emerging from many countries of discrimination against different groups. The most vulnerable communities have borne the brunt of the health crisis and its economic fallout: those living in poverty, older people, and people with disabilities and pre-existing conditions. And, on the other hand, social, political and economic inequalities have amplified the impacts of the pandemic.

Furthermore, the pandemic has put a spotlight on risks we have ignored for decades: inadequate health systems, gaps in social protection, economic and structural inequalities, environmental degradation or the climate crisis.

Looking to the future, two seismic shifts will shape the 21st century, according to UN's Secretary General: the climate crisis, and digital transformation, and both could widen inequalities even further. On one hand, by 2050, we estimate that accelerating climate change will affect millions of people through malnutrition, malaria and other diseases, migration, and extreme weather events. On the other hand, some of the developments in today's tech and innovation hubs may be cause for concern; the digital divide reinforces social and economic divides, from literacy to healthcare, from urban to rural, from kindergarten to college.

At the same time, managing urban areas has become one of the most important challenges of the twenty-first century, where the built environment is a key element in urban living. Significant investments in infrastructure and further development are made to accommodate the increasing number of people moving to cities, thus increasing the pressure on available resources, waste, pollution and carbon emissions generated. Additionally, urban sprawl has also affected social sustainability: 75% of cities have higher levels of spatial inequality compared to two decades ago⁴, which means that basic urban services, quality public spaces, affordable housing and livelihood opportunities are not evenly distributed within these cities.

These current dynamics create threats to inter-generational equality and justice. But they also represent significant opportunities, as they have forced changes in the urban environment that a year ago would have seemed far-fetched, for example: a surge in electric vehicles and remote work, the digitalization of services, supply chain and delivery industry transformation, the reactivation of suburban areas, etc.

Reducing inequalities is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and this should be the guiding route for sustainable and inclusive recovery in the following years.

³*Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*

⁴UN-Habitat (2020) World Cities Report



A territorial approach for addressing inequalities

The existing inequalities between different social groups and individuals have in most cases a marked relationship with the spaces that these social groups and individuals inhabit. This relationship between inequality and inhabited space is manifested in different sectors and scales, and is transversal in nature.

There are socio-spatial inequities between different streets in the same neighbourhood and between different neighbourhoods in a city. Recent studies show, for example, that life expectancy between inhabitants of different neighbourhoods in a city like Madrid can vary by approximately 7 years, with - in general terms - rich neighbourhoods having a higher life expectancy in relation to poorer neighbourhoods. These differences have a multifactorial origin, however, various studies indicate that the physical characteristics of the environment -directly related to urban planning, but also to the allocation of public resources for its urban management through the provision of urban facilities, areas green and accessibility, among others- play a fundamental role in determining people's health. In such a way that the very dynamics of urban planning - without a perspective of equity - constitute in themselves an accelerator of social inequalities in cities.

A similar relationship is expressed in the inequalities found between urban and rural inhabitants of the same territory. The lack of economic opportunities, as well as the differences in relation to security and public services between inhabitants of rural and urban environments, are considered the main engines that drive migration from the countryside to the city and urbanization as a universal phenomenon. Frequently, the processes of population concentration lead to an increase in public investment in urban areas, increasing inequalities, and thus accelerating a vicious circle that leads to more complex processes, such as depopulation, aging and the feminization of the rural environment, as opposed to the phenomena found in cities. Inequality is also clearly expressed between different territories. In the Spanish case, for example, the GDP per capita of the richest autonomous communities practically doubles that of the least rich.

The New Urban Agenda as an accelerator to achieve the SDGs

The New Urban Agenda - approved by the member countries at the Habitat III summit in 2016 - and its implementation framework act as a roadmap for sustainable urban development for the next twenty years, as well as constituting an accelerator of the 2030 Agenda and amplifying its impact on other global agendas such as the one arising from the Sendai Framework or the COP conferences on Climate Change.

The New Urban Agenda as a means of achieving SDG 11 and the urban dimension of the other SDGs offers a framework for unlocking the value of urbanization. The sectoral nature of the SDGs requires a spatial framework, which the NUA provides. For instance, it will be impossible to address poverty (SDG 1), inequality (SDG 10), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality (SDG5), water and sanitation (SDG 6),



economic growth and employment (SDG 8), industrialization and innovation (SDG 9) and consumption and production patterns (SDG12) without addressing the way cities and territories are planned, managed and governed.

It has sometimes been an under-appreciated framework, yet the New Urban Agenda is the best tool we have to manage all the risks and opportunities of cities⁵, such as population growth, environmental sustainability, social services and equality, among others.

In the High Level Meeting on the implementation progress of the New Urban Agenda, celebrated in New York on the 28th of April 2022, it was achieved a renovated commitment to make a dedicated effort to integrate urbanization more systematically in plans and development strategies to pursue the SDGs. United Nations Deputy Secretary General assured that the Local 2030 coalition led by UN-Habitat and UNDP will bring together the actions of local and national governments, businesses, local entrepreneurs, youth and networks of neighborhood organizations, since collaborative approach is a pillar for development, and cities are key actors in a networked and multiactor multilateral system.

Effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda will leverage the value of sustainable urbanization, particularly through urban governance structures, spatial development planning and management as well as effective means of implementation in the form of adequate financing, capacity building, information, technology and innovation. Specific regional action plans and local initiatives by city governments and civil society groups complement each other. Together they can drive awareness, enthusiasm and acceptance of these global sustainability agendas.

The event

EuskalHiria 2022 Congress will take place on November 28 and 29 in Bilbao, and will feature the participation of renowned international and Basque Country experts, as well as coming from other places in Spain. The event will be co-organized by the Department of Territorial Planning, Housing and Transport of the Government of the Basque Country and the UN-Habitat Office in Spain.

The event will be held in a hybrid format, it will be organized in person and streamed on-line for a greater impact. The main languages will be Spanish, Euskera (Basque) and English, with simultaneous interpretation.

The programme will start with an introductory presentation and followed by four panel discussions that will address issues related to the different faces of inequality in the territory and the role of Sustainable Development Goals as a guiding route and the New Urban Agenda an accelerator to achieve sustainability and leave no one behind.

⁵ President of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid (2022)



The debates will be organized in four sessions:

1. Session 1: The social divide: a diagnosis from the territory and the city
2. Session 2: Balanced territories: prosperity and opportunities in the urban-rural continuum.
3. Session 3: More sustainable cities: social inclusion and equity
4. Dialogue: A New Social Contract to achieve more sustainable and cohesive territories and cities

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Tentative programme

DAY 1: Monday, November 28th

9:00 Registration

9:30-10:30 OPENING SESSION

9:30 INSTITUTIONAL OPENING

- **Iñaki Arriola**, Basque Country Counselor of the Department of Territorial Planning, Housing and Transport
- **Rafael Tuts**, Acting Deputy Director and Director of the Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat

Video message by Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

9:55 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- **Eduardo Moreno**, ex-Director of Research and Innovation, UN-Habitat

10:10 PRESENTATION OF THE BULTZATU REPORT

- **Andoni Hidalgo**, Eurolker

10:25 *Coffee Break*

11:00-13:00 SESSION 1: Addressing the social gap: a look from the territory and the city

Moderator: TBC

Video message by Shipra Narang Suri, Chief, Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat

11:10 FRAMEWORK PRESENTATION

- **Katja Hujo**, Senior Research Coordinator, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

11:20 ROUND TABLE

- **Emma Toledano-Laredo**, Director General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission.
- **David Lucas**, Secretary General of the Urban Agenda and Housing



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- **Miguel de los Toyos**, Vice Counselor of Territorial Planning and Urban Agenda of the Basque Government.
 - **Juan Mari Aburto**, Mayor of Bilbao
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Questions, comments and interventions

13:00 Lunch break

15:00-17:00 SESSION 2: Balanced Territories: Prosperity and Opportunities in the Urban-Rural Continuum

Moderator: Verónica Benedet, Unesco Chair of Cultural Landscape, Territory and Heritage of the UPV/EHU

Video message by Remy Sietchiping, Chief of Policy, Legislation and Governance, UN-Habitat

15:10 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- **Mikel Landabaso**, Director of Growth and Innovation at the Joint Research Center of the European Commission
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15:20 ROUND TABLE

- **Juana López Pagán**, Director General for Policies against Depopulation (General Secretariat for the Demographic Challenge) / FEMP
 - **Ignacio de La Puerta**, Director of Territorial Planning and Urban Agenda, Basque Government
 - **Sergi Raventós**, Office of the Pilot Plan for the Implementation of the Universal Basic Income Barcelona City Council
 - **Eulalia Moreno de Acevedo**, Director General of Urbanism and Territorial Planning, Extremadura Government.
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Questions, comments and interventions



DAY2: Tuesday, November 29th

09:10-09:30 Keynote presentation

- **Natalia Olson-Urtecho**, Director of Government Associations, Plug and Play

09:00-11:00 SESSION 3: More sustainable cities: social inclusion and equity

Moderator: Esther Higueras, Professor, Polytechnic University of Madrid.

Video message by Naomi Hoogervorst, Chief, Planning, Finance and Economics Section, UN-Habitat

11:10 KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- **Rufino Hernandez**, AH Architects. CAVIAR. Urban Regeneration Research Center

11:20 ROUND TABLE

- **Amanda Flety**, Coordinator of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, UCLG
- **Albert Cuchi**, Coordinator of the Master's Degree in Sustainable Intervention in the Built Environment of the UPC.
- **Oriol Nel-lo**, Professor, Department of Geography, Autonomous University of Barcelona
- **Jose Fariña**, Professor and Emeritus Professor of the Polytechnic University of Madrid

Questions, comments and interventions

11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:30-13:30 DIALOGUE: A New Social Contract to achieve more sustainable and cohesive territories and cities

Moderador: Estibaliz Saez de Camara Oleaga, Director of Sustainability and Social Commitment, University of the Basque Country

11:40 DIALOGUE



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- **Jonan Fernández**, Secretary General for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda of the Basque Government
 - **José Moisés Martín Carretero**, General Director Red2Red
 - **Shipra Narang Suri**, Chief of the Urban Practices Division, UN-HABITAT
 - **Cristina Monge**, Professor, University of Zaragoza
 - **Natalia Olson-Urtecho**, Director of Government Associations, Plug and Play
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Questions, comments and interventions

13:30-13:45 CONCLUSIONS

- **Rafael Tuts**, Acting Deputy Director and Director of the Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat

13:45-14:00 CLOSING

- **Carmen Sánchez-Miranda**, Head of UN-Habitat Office in Spain
Video message by Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme
 - **Miguel de los Toyos**, Vice Counselor of Territorial Planning and Urban Agenda of the Basque Government.
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