

## **Assessment of the contributions of the Spanish Urban Agendas to achieving sustainable urban development**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**Abstract.** The continuous flow of population from rural to urban areas in search of a better life has boosted urbanization process, whilst sustainability pillars (social, economic, environmental and institutional) have been negatively affected. Since the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I) in 1976, where serious effects derived from rapid urbanization were recognized, multiple global initiatives have been conducted to promote sustainable urban development policies at national level. Local Agenda 21 can be deemed as the pioneering worldwide action. An extensive public participation, the partnership between different social agents and open making-decision structures underpinned this initiative aiming at defining efficient strategies to be applied in every municipality of distinct countries, according to principles and mandates of Agenda 21 adopted in the 1992 Earth Summit. Same precepts were also incorporated into subsequent endeavors such as the Spanish Urban Agenda. However, the design of tools focused exclusively on certain local contexts highly undermines their assessment, as well as the benchmarking of results among cities. In this study, the Urban Agendas currently implemented in Spain were analyzed to determine their contribution to sustainable development of cities to which they were addressed. The fact that Spanish Urban Agendas do not have a normative character hampers significantly their implementation. The lack of monitoring indicators and metrics disables the assessment of progress. Furthermore, the Spanish Urban Agendas are devoid of specific actions to gather required information from public institutions to feed metrics. Efficiency of the examined Agendas is also cast into doubt because some of them omit some Sustainable Development Goals. Excluding the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda, the remaining Spanish Agendas envisage no urban action plan beyond 2030.

### **KEYWORDS**

Urbanization; Sustainable Development; Sustainability Indicators; Urban Agenda

### **1. EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN PHENOMENON CONSIDERATION THROUGH THE EXAM OF VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**

In the last decades, the prominent role played by the rural realm in the society has gradually lost importance in detriment of the urban question, that instead has been attracting attention from social actors to become one of the most interesting topics at the present time, being incorporated into the global, European and national political agendas of many countries (González Medina and García 2018).

The design of policies oriented to promote social housing in the less developed countries with the financial assistance of the World Bank boosted the first urban programmes in the last third of the XX century (World Bank 1990), inspired by the ideas of some experts such as Abrams (1966), Mangin (1967) or Turner (1972). The World Bank thus became one of the most recognized global institutions by its contribution to policy formulation of urban planning. Studies on housing shortage gave way to researches focused on the main urban issues in the southern regions (UNDP 1991), by means of an integrated approach comprising diverse cross-cutting aspects such as local governance, financial administration, efficient exploitation of city infrastructure, land planning, environmental protection or poverty alleviation in urban areas. The proposal for decentralization measures and local law reform significantly contributed to the strengthening of local institutions and the improvement of government actions. However, strategies to address the complex urban problems were only adopted after the celebration of the main international conferences. These new efforts were based on three basic principles: a long-term holistic and multidisciplinary vision, active social participation and cooperation between private initiative and public power (Bredenoord and van Lindert 2014).

Since the late 1980s<sup>1</sup>, urban sustainability has examined the most relevant aspects to be deemed in future in cities. Despite the vagueness of the term due to the large number of provided definitions (Whitehead 2003; Benton-Short and Short 2008), sustainable urban development embraces practices and policies that connect economy and environment with well-being and prosperity of citizens (Contreras Escandón 2017). Furthermore, there is some controversy over the adequacy of metrics and frameworks built to assess the contribution of those actions to urban sustainability (Gómez 2006; Diaz-Sarachaga, Jato-Espino and Castro-Fresno 2018; Diaz-Sarachaga 2019) that justifies this study. The principal initiatives led by the international community are reviewed below to analyze the evolution of the consideration of the urban question in the last years, as well as background that triggered the development of the Urban Agendas in Spain. The later discussion of the processes of the Spanish Urban Agendas enables to evaluate their effect in enhancing sustainability of cities for which they were devised.

The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment adopted in Stockholm in June 1972 (ONU 1972) can be considered as a starting point for the global urban actions undertaken in the last decades. In that document<sup>2</sup>, research on the global development of rural and urban areas was prioritized through the study of several principal topics, inter alia, housing needs, metrics on social, economic and environmental aspects of human settlements<sup>3</sup>, rural migration, geographical distribution of the population, funding for enhancing housing and infrastructure<sup>4</sup>, efficient urban transport, and effects of living and working conditions in cities.

Within the context of a rising concern about human settlements, mainly located in the poorer countries expressed by a large proportion of the World community, the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I) was held in Vancouver in 1976 (UN-Habitat 1976). The resulting global action plan gathered 64 recommendations towards improving people quality of life, promoting social engagement in the design of

<sup>1</sup> The report «Our Common Future» was launched in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environmental Development.

<sup>2</sup> In recommendation 4.

<sup>3</sup> Associated to build density and housing standards.

<sup>4</sup> As drinkable water supply, sewerage and waste disposal systems.

urban policies and reducing disparities between rural and urban areas. The social function of land and property<sup>5</sup>, focus on vulnerable groups and redistribution of the surplus value of urban lands<sup>6</sup>.

Whilst the Brundtland Commission defined «sustainable development» as *“the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*, (WCED 1987), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Río in 1992 promoted the development and implementation of the Agenda 21 (UNCED), as the first comprehensive programme of action conceived to achieve sustainable development worldwide by seeking a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. The chapter 28 of the «Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21» favored the incorporation of the notion «sustainable development» in the urban question as a strategy to strengthen sustainability in cities alongside with the encouragement of consultation and participation processes between companies and citizens to set the Local Agenda 21 for each municipality (Metrópolis 1994).

Collaboration among citizenry, local authorities, Academia, and national and international organizations prompted the signing of the Charter of European Cities and Towns towards Sustainability (Aalborg Chart) in 1994 at the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns held under the auspices of the European Commission, the global network of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and the city of Aalborg. The Aalborg Chart launched the European campaign for the sustainability of towns and cities through the application of the Local Agenda 21 (Aalborg). In this vein, the URBAN initiative<sup>7</sup> served to fund integrated programmes in deprived neighborhoods with the aim of addressing the main problems that hindered their development (Hurtado 2017).

Since housing is one of the main urban issues, the notion of «Right to the City»<sup>8</sup> has transferred the main role from city to man, with the mission to *“establish well-being for all and transform cities as a scenario to build collective life”*<sup>9</sup>. The «Right to the City» aims to ensure equal opportunities for vulnerable people with worse living conditions. Under this point of view, the private-public interaction and the processes of consultation and social participation should be promoted.

The refusal of various nations led by the United States to recognize the right to a home as a fundamental right<sup>10</sup> conditioned the prolegomena of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul in 1996 where certain basic questions were raised such as adequate shelter, sustainable human settlements or social engagement giving continuity to recommendations included in the 1976 Vancouver Declaration. The overall affirmation of the centrality of human rights, in particular, the

<sup>5</sup> In order to ensure a more equitable distribution of economic benefits.

<sup>6</sup> As a result of land use change, public investment or overall economic growth.

<sup>7</sup> The direct antecedent was the URBAN revitalization pilot programme implemented in 1989 to test urban regeneration strategies that were then adopted by the URBAN initiative.

<sup>8</sup> This concept appeared for the first time in 1968 in the work of Henry Lefebvre «The Urban Revolution».

<sup>9</sup> The World Charter for the Right to the City drafted in 2004 by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

<sup>10</sup> Enshrined in the article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

progressive realization of the right to decent housing and the recognition of good governance principles in the balanced development of rural and urban areas were the major achievements of Habitat II. As a result of this summit, the Habitat Agenda was launched as a plan of action aligned to the Agenda 21 mostly focused on facilitating housing development, access to land for communities, democratic land management<sup>11</sup> and coordination of public-private actions. At Habitat II, the concept «habitat» was coined as *“regional and cross-sectoral approach to human settlements planning, which places emphasis on rural/urban linkages and treats villages and cities as two ends [points] of a human settlements continuum in a common ecosystem”* (UN-Habitat 1996).

In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration incorporating the Millennium Development Goals, a set of 8 goals to primarily deal with poverty, hunger, diseases, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women before the end of 2015. Although the urban issue was not specifically covered in that declaration, the target 7.C advocated to *“halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”*, whilst the target 7.D aimed to *“achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers”*<sup>12</sup> (UN 2000). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development replaced the Millennium Development Goals by proposing the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) before the end of 2030 through the commitment of 193 countries and the involvement of multiple relevant actors at different governance levels (UN 2015). Key urban issues associated to sustainability, resilience, inclusiveness and security of cities are represented in the 10 targets of the SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, some of them to be fulfilled before the end of 2020.

In Europe, the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities<sup>13</sup> was approved in 2007 to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in the matter of sustainability in European cities by defining two parallel courses of action that cover spatial, temporal and sectoral aspects of cities. Social cohesion, quality of life, energy efficiency, and creation and consolidation of high-quality public spaces were part of urban development policies, whilst integrated programmes in deprived neighborhoods combined improvement of the environment, stimulus for employment and development of efficient urban public transport.

Only a few European countries had implemented urban policies at all governance levels (local, regional and national) (Van der Berg, Braun and van der Meer 2007). However, this trend changed after the signing of the Amsterdam Pact in May 2016, that defines elements and operational frameworks of the Urban Agenda for the European Union (EU)<sup>14</sup>, with the purpose to cover social, economic, environmental, territorial and cultural factors. The European Urban Agenda is based on three fundamental pillars to enhance regulation, funding and access information.

<sup>11</sup> Little is said about how social participation will be implemented in processes of making-decision that involve planning, budgeting, management, monitoring and assessment.

<sup>12</sup> With access to land and/or property secure tenure.

<sup>13</sup> Adopted at the Informal Council Meeting of Ministers on urban development of 24-25 May 2007 in Leipzig.

<sup>14</sup> Founded on conclusions adopted in the European Council on 26-27 June 2014.

## 2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROCESSES OF THE URBAN AGENDAS IN SPAIN

During the preparatory meetings that preceded the Habitat III Conference<sup>15</sup>, the need to suggest solutions to the problem of uncontrolled suburbanization, climate change effects, scarce use of green energies and diverse social issues in cities were highlighted, as well as the reference to equality and social justice. Habitat III thus proposed the «New Urban Agenda» as a frame to share a common vision of a «City for All», where citizens can enjoy the rights and opportunities recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN-Habitat 2017).

Equal rights for all groups are the cornerstone of equality that refers to full ownership of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights regardless gender, race, ethnicity, age, creed, disability, social diversity and socio-economic condition. Furthermore, the participation of all citizens in the process of urban development reaffirms their sense of belonging to society and full exercise of their citizenship (Correa de Oliveira 2004). Besides the analysis of all sustainable development dimensions, the New Agenda recognizes other key urban components: territorial aspect boosts a balanced and integrated development at all levels, civism promotes social cohesion, inclusion and safety, gender parity, sustainable and accessible public transport, and urban resilience diminishes the impact of disasters and human vulnerability. Although the New Agenda<sup>16</sup> is markedly urban, it also reflects a strong commitment to promote development in cities based on people<sup>17</sup>, as previously proclaimed in the action plan of the Habitat I Conference.

The imminent Brexit and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda shaped the discussions of the 8<sup>th</sup> European Summit of Regions and Cities held in Bucharest on 14-15 March 2019, which culminated in the approval of the Declaration of Bucharest<sup>18</sup> where a renewed vision of the European Union was presented on the bases of democratic and solidary principles<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, it establishes a functional relationship between the Leipzig Charter and the European Urban Agenda.

Being the Cohesion Policy one of the main axes of action in the European Union, urban development is articulated as a fundamental component to promote a balanced spatial development of the territory through effective and sustainable long-term sectoral policies (Castillo and Haarich 2013). The Spanish urban development has been historically associated to land policy and housing development, but it has adopted a holistic view in

<sup>15</sup> Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, A/CONF.226/PC.1/4 on 9 September 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding to Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 80% of population live in urban areas. The major challenge to implement the New Urban Agenda there is the improvement of people quality of life, the reduction of inequalities and the achievement of sustainable urban development. Social inequality has risen as a consequence of socio-demographic changes over the XXI century, inter alia, population ageing, vulnerability of youth, gender inequalities, ethnic diversity and migration. However, one of the differential aspects adopted in that geographical area is the promotion of the «Right to the City» as the common ideal of a city for all, grounded on a democratic management of the urban development process through social engagement and inclusive urban regulations.

<sup>17</sup> In recommendation 26 of the New Urban Agenda.

<sup>18</sup> Accessible on <https://cor.europa.eu/en/summit2019/Pages/programme.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup> Designing policies that consider local needs.

the last years because the ongoing implementation of integrated urban projects<sup>20</sup> (Hurtado 2018).

## **2.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE URBAN AGENDAS IN SPAIN**

The Action Plan of the 2030 Agenda approved in June 2018 by the Spanish Government identified the Spanish Urban Agenda as a policy without binding force to respond to the challenges of the Anthropocene era (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), where deep changes that are taking place worldwide make untenable the current way of life.

The sustainable urban development defines design parameters and strategies that cities need to continue strengthening social cohesion and meet people demands<sup>21</sup>. The Spanish Agenda considers the model city as a principal factor to deal with the gradual transformation of the Spanish urban model from the beginning of the XXI century, based on compact mid-size cities with a mix of uses where life in society fosters social diversity and well-being, and scattered developments located in the periphery of population centers without identity. Strategic goals and lines of action established by the Spanish Agenda aim to recover, preserve and enhance positive values of every Spanish city, as well as be implemented in any other rural and urban municipality, regardless their size. The strategic framework shaped by the Spanish Agenda requires a holistic and transversal vision beyond isolated actions undertaken within the confines of the city. Hence the importance of participatory and multidimensional approaches made through citizen participation and the involvement of different actors in the public and private sphere to choice sectoral actions.

The approval of the Urban Agenda of Andalusia<sup>22</sup> confirmed the strong commitment of this region to implement a model of sustainable and integrated urban development in the coming years, from a strategic perspective in which the objectives of the city as a whole are holistically considered so that it incorporates the multidimensional character of urban issues through the consideration of its specificities. The use of land, the balance between uses and its effect on territorial cohesion determine the spatial dimension of the Andalusian Agenda, whilst the economic dimension is noted for a diversified economy as a result of the rise of the average size of regional companies, internationalization and the transfer of scientific and technological advances. Besides, the interaction and cooperation between public and private stakeholders determine the guidelines to follow in terms of governance. Social exclusion, population ageing and vulnerable groups care are the biggest challenges of the Andalusian Agenda (Junta de Andalucía 2018).

The Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda represented the first cross-border urban initiative in the European Union under the responsibility of Galicia region and the northern part of Portugal, with the purpose of improving that area with severe mobility issues and uneven utilization of land. The reduction of impacts derived from urban sprawl is mainly sought by the Eixo Atlántico Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

<sup>20</sup> In the last four consecutive scheduling periods: Urban Pilot Project (1989-1999), Urban (1994-2006), Urban (2007-2013) and EDUSI (2014-2020).

<sup>21</sup> The Spanish Urban Agenda is based on the principle of sustainable urban development set by the National Law on Land-use and Urban Rehabilitation (article 3 TRLSRU).

<sup>22</sup> Agreement of the Andalusian Governing Council of 18 September 2018.

With regard to the main urban centers, dispersion is caused by the proliferation of residential areas in the periphery and generates traffic congestion. On the other hand, sprawl in downtown cities is due to low density and reduced economic activity that exacerbate precarious infrastructure and social, economic and environmental issues. Various alternatives towards territorial balance such as interurban cohesion and integration between cities and the countryside seek to reverse this tendency (Eixo Atlántico).

The 2050 Bultzatu Agenda<sup>23</sup> intends to enhance urban territory of the Basque Country through economic growth, sustainability and social cohesion in a time period that significantly exceeds the deadline of 2030 set by the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the purpose of making cities safer and more sustainable, resilient and inclusive as stated in the SDG 11 is also remained. Since the territorial configuration of the Basque Country correspond to a polycentric model where the three metropolitan areas are strongly interrelated with other rural and urban areas, the Basque Agenda seeks an adaptation between urban growth and territorial development that hampers social inequalities in the farthest municipalities (Euskadi).

The reaffirmation of Basque culture and identity is done through the strengthening of diversity in urban areas, reconciliation of private life and work that ensures quality of life and well-being, coexistence of distinct urban grids in the same city and the transformation of housing model by means of the incorporation of technologies associated to dependency care or shared housing.

The emergence of the city in the Habitat III Conference as a major priority of the international political agenda delimits urban environments as the scenario where sustainable development is to be achieved (Citylab). Although social equity and territorial cohesion substantiate the New Urban Agenda to promote sustainable development worldwide, territorial particularities are crucial to success. As an example, the uneven approach adopted by the Andalusian, the 2050 Bultzatu and the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agendas that aims to satisfy their own needs without ignoring guidelines of the New Urban Agenda.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESSES OF THE SPANISH URBAN AGENDAS**

After the celebration of the Spanish Council of Ministers on 22 February 2019, the Spanish Urban Agenda was adopted as a benchmarking tool in order to define actions to be undertaken up to 2030, with the aim that rural and urban areas of the national territory move towards sustainable development according to guidelines previously approved by the United Nations and the European Union. The 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the European Urban Agenda shaped the framework to assess the contribution of the Spanish Urban Agenda to sustainable development of the country. A comparative analysis of the processes of Urban Agendas established by some Spanish autonomous communities and the Spanish Urban Agenda is presented below.

To define the strategy to be followed by the Spanish municipalities, the Spanish Urban Agenda is organized around the Decalogue of First Level Goals (FLG) as shown in Table 1, that includes 30 specific objectives that support several lines of action to promote the

<sup>23</sup> The Basque Government approved the 2050 Bultzatu Urban Agenda in the Governing Council on 19 November 2019.

implementation of the Urban Agenda. The linkage between the proposed aims and the present situation of Spanish villages and cities is reflected on a set of descriptive local data<sup>24</sup>. The use of a system comprising 72 indicators (35 qualitative and 37 quantitative) related to the metrics of the Sustainable Development Goal 11 and those of the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (EDUSI) from 2014-2020 facilitates the evaluation and follow-up of progress in the achievement of the strategic objectives involved in the Spanish Urban Agenda. 2023 and 2030 were selected as milestones to examine results of the Agenda implementation.

**Table 1.** Decalogue of the First Level Goals (FLG) (MITMA 2019)

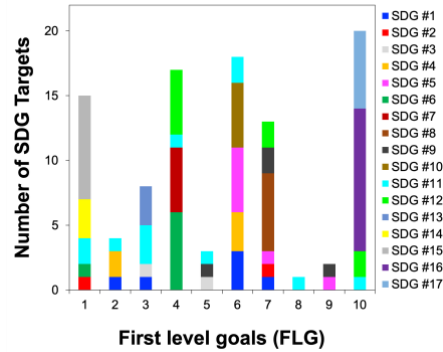
FLG	Description
1	Land planning and rational land use
2	Avoiding urban sprawl and revitalization of cities
3	Preventing and reducing impacts of climate change. Strengthening resilience
4	Sustainable resource management and promoting circular economy
5	Fostering proximity and sustainable mobility
6	Building social cohesion and equity
7	Encouraging and promoting urban economy
8	Ensuring access to housing
9	Leading and promoting digital innovation
10	Improvement of intervention and governance instruments

A correspondence analysis of the targets set by the 2030 Agenda and the specific objectives of the Spanish Urban Agenda served to determine the degree of consideration of the SDG with respect to the aims provided by the Spanish Urban Agenda (Figure 1). 100 out of the 169 targets given by the 2030 Agenda are associated to the objectives of the Spanish Urban Agenda. The SDG 11<sup>25</sup> and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions exhibited the highest number of related targets (11). By contrast, the SDG 2: Zero hunger and SDG 3: Good health and well-being only showed 2 targets. In terms of the First Level Goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda, the FLG 6: Building social cohesion and equity and FLG 10: Improvement of intervention and governance instruments revealed the strongest connection with the 2030 Agenda with 18 and 20 targets associated, respectively. Instead, the FLG 8: Ensuring access to housing and FLG 9: Leading and promoting digital innovation with only 1 and 2 targets, evidenced scarce reciprocity with the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>24</sup> Accessible on <http://www.aue.gob.es>

<sup>25</sup> The 10 targets included in the SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities were considered in the First Level Goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda.





**Figure 1.** Correspondence between the SDG Targets and the First Level Goals (FLG) of the Spanish Urban Agenda.

The New Urban Agenda approved in the Habitat III Conference does not provide any specific goal, target or indicator to lead the international community towards a better and sustainable future. 111 out of the 161 generic principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda are linked to the 10 First Level Goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda. The FLG 10 gathered 25 pledges of the New Urban Agenda, whilst the FLG 9 only had 4 ones.

As a result of a questionnaire responded in 2015 by European experts in the field of cities<sup>26</sup>, a list of 12 Priority themes (PT) (Table 2) were incorporated in the European Urban Agenda to face major urban challenges, promoting the achievement of the objectives included in the 2020 Europe Strategic Programme through the integrated action of all members of the European Union and the cooperation between all levels of governance to produce concrete results within a given period. The FLG 4: and FLG 5: Fostering proximity and sustainable mobility showed a stronger affinity to the Priority themes of the European Urban Agenda, with a total of three connections to each one of them.

Regarding the 2030 Agenda, no correspondence was found between the Priority themes determined by the European Union and the SDG 2, SDG 4: Quality education, SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, SDG 14: Life below water» and SDG 17: Partnerships for goals.

**Table 2.** Priority themes (PT) for the European Urban Agenda (EU)

PT	Description
1	Inclusion of migrants and refugees
2	Air quality
3	Poverty and urban regeneration
4	Housing
5	Circular economy
6	Employment and training in local economy
7	Climate change
8	Energy transition
9	Sustainable land use and nature-based solutions
10	Urban mobility
11	Digital transition (Smart Cities)
12	Innovative and responsible public procurement

<sup>26</sup> According to the document «Results of the Public Consultation on the key features of an Urban Agenda for the European Union» published on 27 May 2015.

### 3.1. The Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda

The Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda is an instrument of inter-regional development around five main axes of action to organize the territory, boost employment and economic growth, sustainability, social inclusiveness, social engagement and efficient local administration. The document defines 173 areas of intervention and 174 expected results that were assigned to those in charge<sup>27</sup>. But, no metrics to follow-up results were set. The promotion of employment and economic growth collected the largest number of intervention areas (57) and expected results (49), whilst the achievement of sustainability showed the lower registers with 15 interventions and 24 results. Local administrations were mostly required to implement 113 measures associated to the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda, unlike the European Union with only 48 ones. Inclusion and social participation agglutinated the highest amount of requested actions (34). As for the correlation with the Spanish Urban Agenda, the FLG 10 gathered 38 areas of intervention included in the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda (38). Contrariwise, the FLG 3: Preventing and reducing impacts of climate change, strengthening resilience with no interventions.

The discussion of a link between the 169 SDG Targets of the 17 SDG and the 173 areas of intervention covered by the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda revealed that 74 of them were connected with the SDG 11, as long as the targets of the SDG 1: End poverty, SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 13: Climate action and SDG 15: Life on land presented no connections with the interventions of the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda.

### 3.2. The 2050 Bultzatu Agenda

The 2050 Bultzatu Agenda was designed according to the Spatial Planning Guidelines that summarize territorial and sectoral planning of the Basque Country in the context of Europe and the 2030 Basque Country Agenda. The 2050 Bultzatu Agenda considered 15 future challenges, 8 strategic priorities (Table 3), 5 cross-cutting principles, 32 axes of intervention and 106 lines of actuation. Moreover, 21 indicators were defined to assess the degree of compliance with the Basque Agenda.

**Table 3.** Strategic priorities (SP) of the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda (Euskadi)

SP #	Description
1	Housing and basic infrastructure
2	Cities in motion: a new mobility
3	A new sustainable urban planning model
4	Innovative and wise cities
5	Dynamic and competitive cities
6	Sustainable and resilient cities
7	Cities focused on quality of life
8	Diversity and inclusion as a sign of identity

The strategy oriented to housing and basic infrastructure displayed the highest number of lines of actuation (16). On the contrary, the priority of innovative and wise cities only reflected 9 ones. In relation to the axes of intervention, the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits gathered 9 ones, whilst multi-modal mobility, connectivity, universal health coverage system, and high-quality and equitable health care only showed one each. The

<sup>27</sup> Local, regional and national administrations, Eixo, Europe Union and Civil Society.

FLG 6 of the Spanish Urban Agenda «Building social cohesion and equity» exhibited the higher amount of actuaciones in the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda (19). But, the FLG 8: Ensuring access to housing and FLG 9: Leading and promoting digital innovation were the least considered in the planned actuaciones, with 7 ones each.

30 out of the 106 lines of actuation set by the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda were associated to the targets of the SDG 11. However, the targets of the SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 14 and SDG 17 were not connected with actuaciones of the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda.

### 3.3. The Urban Agenda of Andalusia

Aiming at enhancing the development of the region by exploiting the potential afforded by the system of cities, the Junta de Andalucía elaborated its own Urban Agenda as an opportunity for progress, well-being and modernity. The Andalusian Urban Agenda was thus established as a strategic framework focused on social, economic, environmental and spatial development of Andalusia through the design and implementation of public policies in 2030 year horizon to make cities safer and more inclusive, resilient and sustainable. Main urban challenges, issues and needs related to spatial, economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions were summarized in 42 facts that enabled the definition of the 15 challenges shown in Table 4, around which the Andalusian Agenda wants to transform regional urban reality through 48 axes of actuation that cover 24 strategic lines. The Andalusian Agenda describes no indicator or metrics to follow-up their components.

**Table 4.** Challenges (CH) of the Andalusian Urban Agenda (Junta de Andalucía 2018)

CH	Description
1	Promoting integrated and sustainable cities
2	Encouraging interconnected territoriality
3	Searching territorial balance
4	Identification of strategic productive sectors in cities
5	Adaptation of production to current challenges
6	Planning a «City for All»
7	City socially sustainable
8	Fostering equitable cities
9	Consolidating the city as space of coexistence
10	Prevention and reduction of climate change effects
11	Designing cities for well-being and quality of life
12	Responsible and clean cities
13	Improvement of governance
14	Effective administration
15	Management with leadership

The social dimension presented the largest amount of actuaciones (13), whilst only 7 actions were provided by the economic aspect. With reference to the Challenges established by the Andalusian Agenda, the CH 5: Adaptation of production to current challenges and CH 12: Responsible and clean cities showed the higher number of actuaciones (5), in distinction from the CH 2: Encouraging interconnected territoriality, CH 4: Identification of strategic productive sectors in cities, CH 7: City socially sustainable, CH 10: Prevention and reduction of climate change effects and CH 11: Designing cities for well-being and quality of life with 2 each. In terms of the First Level Goals included in the Spanish Urban Agenda,

the FLG 10 disclosed the greatest quantity of actuations with 17, whilst the FLG 8 and FLG 9 only were tied to one actuation.

As well as the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda and the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda, the targets of the SDG 11 exhibited the higher number of correlations (19) with the 48 axes of actuation of the Andalusian Urban Agenda. The targets of the SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy, SDG 13 and SDG 14 were associated with no actions proposed by the Andalusian Agenda.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The processes of Urban Agendas in Spain mainly intend to provide solutions in the urban realm because the myriad challenges derived from inter alia, population growth, affordable housing demand, climate change effects, unemployment and social disparities. However, their implementation is hampered by the lack of normative legislation to properly integrate the Urban Agendas into urban and regional planning. That fact justifies the scarce amount of Urban Agendas developed in Spain (3) with respect to the number of autonomous communities in the country (17), as well as the unequal approach adopted by the Eixo Atlántico Urban Agenda, the Urban Agenda of Andalusia and the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda.

The monitoring of progress and subsequent evaluation of the results require the use of indicators whose definition and implementation in all processes of Urban Agendas is highly necessary. No metrics were included in the Eixo Atlántico and the Andalusian Urban Agendas, whilst the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda comprises 21 indicators to assess the 106 actions proposed. Furthermore, effectiveness of indicators is strongly connected to data availability. In this sense, all Spanish Urban Agendas lack specific measures to periodically obtain accurate information from different administrations involved.

The 2030 Agenda is the reference document that defines goals and targets to be achieved by all countries worldwide in the next years and substantiates other global initiatives such as the New Urban Agenda, the European Urban Agenda or the Spanish Urban Agendas, where the consideration of the Sustainable Development Goals was uneven. Whilst the Spanish Urban Agenda was linked to all the 17 SDG and 60% of the SDG Targets, 6 SDG were ignored by the European Urban Agenda. The 2050 Bultzatu Agenda, the Eixo Atlántico and the Andalusian Urban Agendas showed no correlation with 4, 5 and 6 SDG, respectively. This fact questions the effectiveness and adequacy of the examined Spanish Urban Agendas in relation to the spirit that promoted the processes of Urban Agendas in the country.

The interlinkage between principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda and the specific goals of the European Urban Agenda, and the 10 First Level Goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda is less than 70% and 80%, respectively. There is no clear pattern that describes the correspondence between actions provided by the three Spanish Urban Agendas examined and the First Level Goals of the Spanish Urban Agenda. A higher number of actions tied to intervention and governance was covered by the Eixo Atlántico and the Andalusian Urban Agendas, whilst the lowest amount of actions was devoted to ensuring access to housing and promoting digital innovation in all the three regional Agendas.

Excluding the 2050 Bultzatu Agenda, the Eixo Atlántico and the Andalusian Urban Agendas consider both the year 2030 as deadline without any subsequent strategy. Moreover, the rapid urban transformations due to effects of urbanization suggest a shortening of the 20-year term for the celebration of the United Nations Conferences for Human Settlements, also known as Habitat Conferences.

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