

Urban plan revision provides an opportunity to embed climate actions in Vitoria-Gasteiz

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Executive snapshot



Vitoria-Gasteiz is leveraging the revision of its General Urban Plan (PGOU in Spanish) to better align urban planning with its climate neutrality ambitions. Urban plans are key instruments shaping land use, infrastructure and development over the long term, yet they often lack integration with climate strategies.

Through the City Expert Support Facility (CESF), the city received targeted support to bridge this gap. The process combined cross-department collaboration, expert input and structured analysis to assess how existing planning provisions align with climate goals and where improvements are needed. A participatory workshop and subsequent expert work helped identify priority areas, including energy retrofit, urban metabolism and climate resilience.

The initiative aimed not only to strengthen the PGOU revision but also to generate practical insights and methods that can be applied by other cities seeking to embed climate action into planning frameworks.





Knowledge Report

THE IMPACT

By systematically analysing how existing planning provisions align with climate goals, the city gained a clearer understanding of where regulatory changes can accelerate mitigation and adaptation.

The process improved internal alignment across departments, fostering shared ownership of climate objectives within planning, mobility and energy domains. It also enhanced the city's capacity to translate high-level climate commitments into concrete regulatory and spatial planning measures.

In addition, the work generated a structured methodology and evidence base that can inform future planning decisions and support replication by other cities.

THE APPROACH

The CESF support combined facilitation, expert coordination and technical analysis in a structured, multi-phase process.

It began with a multi-stakeholder workshop involving municipal teams, technical experts and peer cities, where an alignment matrix was used to assess the PGOU against climate objectives and identify key gaps and opportunities.

Building on this, the process coordinated specialised expert teams to carry out detailed analysis of priority themes - urban energy retrofit, urban metabolism and climate resilience - and to explore regulatory solutions, including potential new or revised planning provisions.

The approach also integrated external expertise through a collaborative platform and drew on examples from other cities. Throughout, emphasis was placed on linking strategic climate goals with practical, implementable planning measures.



OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

- Identification of priority areas: urban energy retrofit, urban metabolism, and climate resilience
- Mapping of regulatory gaps and opportunities within the PGOU to support climate neutrality objectives
- Development of synthesis matrices and recommendations to inform the PGOU revision
- Recommendations for supporting municipalities in integrating climate action into their **General Urban Ordinance Plan (PGOU)**

What worked:

- Early cross-department alignment created a shared understanding of climate objectives and strengthened coordination across municipal teams.
- The use of practical tools such as an alignment matrix helped systematically identify overlaps and gaps between planning provisions and climate goals.
- Engaging locally grounded expertise (incl. professionals in building renovation, energy, mobility, adaptation) ensured that proposed solutions were relevant, feasible and aligned with existing regulatory frameworks.
- Combining internal municipal knowledge with external expert input and peer city examples improved the quality and robustness of the outputs.

Transferable insight:

- Urban plan revisions represent a key opportunity to embed climate neutrality as a core dimension of long-term city development.
- Structured analytical approaches are essential to translate high-level climate targets into concrete planning and regulatory measures.
- Effective integration of climate action into planning depends on early and sustained coordination across departments and policy areas.
- Involving multiple expert teams across disciplines strengthens the depth and applicability of proposed solutions.
- Prioritising a limited number of key focus areas enables cities to concentrate efforts and achieve more impactful outcomes.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Learn more about [Vitoria-Gasteiz](#) 

Consult the [Recommendations for supporting municipalities in integrating climate action into their General Urban Ordinance Plan \(PGOU\)](#).

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NEXT STEPS FOR THE CITY

- Vitoria-Gasteiz will translate the developed proposals into the formal revision of the PGOU by drafting and incorporating the necessary regulatory amendments into the planning document currently under approval.
- The city aims to maintain the collaborative, cross-departmental coordination established during the process as implementation progresses. It will also align these outcomes with other planning instruments, notably feeding mobility-related insights into the ongoing update of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.
- Beyond the local scale, the city will share results with other municipalities through platforms such as citiES2030 and NetZeroCities exchanges, fostering peer learning and replication.
- In parallel, it plans to engage with regional and national authorities, including the Basque Government and relevant ministries, to align regulatory frameworks and explore support for implementation.