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*Committee on Petitions*

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## REPORT

**on the Fact-finding visit to Madrid, Valencia, Andalucía**

February 27 - March 3, 2007.

Committee on Petitions

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## **Introduction.**

The Petitions Committee remains concerned and deeply troubled as a result of the persistent and long-standing denial of the legitimate rights of many European citizens in Spain, most notably in the Valencian Region, to their land and their homes. They have become the collateral victims of many rampant urbanisation programmes founded upon legislation which provides privilege and wealth for the urbaniser and which denies individuals their very integrity.

In a large number of documented cases town councils have concocted urban development plans less because of their real requirements related to population growth and tourism, more because of what often appears as their greed and avarice. Hardly a day goes by without news of another mayor, or town councillor, who is investigated or charged concerning allegations of corruption related to urbanisation programmes. How many urbanising agents are related in one way or another to those controlling the municipalities which in turn bring them massive profit from land conversion deals and the transformation of rustic land to urban land; the transformation of property owners' arbitrarily imposed costs into the urbaniser's benefit?

What is spreading along the Spanish coastal region of the Mediterranean is not so much the programmed sustainable development of local communities – although such developments do exist; it is too often the spoliation of community and culture, the concretisation of the coastline, the destruction of the fragile flora and fauna and the massive enrichment of a small minority at the expense of the majority. Hillsides are invaded by a cancer of identikit dwellings not because they are needed but because they provide a profit for the urbaniser and the builder, for the architect and the lawyer.

During the last twenty years or so there has been a growing tendency for people to acquire property in the welcoming climate of the Spanish Mediterranean either to begin new lives or to spend their retirement years. Spanish people have also been leaving the cities to set up their homes in the beautiful rural areas. New land laws accompanied this trend purporting to provide for a rational development process. There has been an unprecedented economic bonanza in the building industry as rural property has been urbanised. How many owners of Spanish building companies are now to be found in the Forbes top one hundred or on the list of the world's wealthiest people?

Many chose to buy property in smaller village communities; buying older rural dwellings left vacant and sold by former farming families in order to restore them, dwellings which were acquired perfectly legally and legitimately. Property rights once legally acquired should normally remain, except perhaps in cases of justified and properly defined public interest when proper compensation should be provided. However buildings constructed and renovated on rural land are precisely those which are the most vulnerable to the sort of housing developments generated by Spain's new housing laws which have created situations where a family home may be no more solid than a castle made of sand.

As has been reported before, legitimate property owners have become the victims of the land grab, of laws such as the LRAU and now the LUV in Valencia, which oblige them to give up 10% of their land without compensation, ostensibly for very ill defined social purposes, and then make an arbitrary financial charge to be paid in cash or kind for the new infrastructure decided upon by the property developer without consultation of those who own the land.

The local authority in some cases even claim to be unaware of the detail of the proposed developments which are to be built on land the councils have designated for urbanisation and which will drive roads through peoples' rural homes or build new homes in peoples' back gardens. They may in some cases do no more than provide the proverbial rubber stamp. Moreover, many victims may not even be aware that their homes are jeopardised until the earth movers arrive. Victims of the land grab are counted in tens of thousands.

Village residents suddenly find that the size and population of their rural community is suddenly to be multiplied out of all proportion as a result of the ambitions of small-time mayors attracted by the siren calls of property developers. But they will not be receiving any real compensation for their troubles, or their investment. The developers will. The impact upon the environment, the availability of water and energy supply, the requirements of the building programme itself in terms of long-term disruption are often no more than secondary considerations to those who stand to reap the rewards and who will never have to live in the urban developments they create, whether or not a golf course is added as the biggest of marketing attractions.

In addition, another worrying phenomenon has emerged as more and more European citizens are buying property in good faith only to learn that, having paid their lawyers, their estate agents and their builders, not to mention their taxes, their homes are branded as illegal and that they have become the victims of the ruthless town halls which knowingly approve new construction on land which was not officially certified for that purpose. The citizen becomes the culprit; the municipal authority a passive go-between, the regional government has no responsibility and the national authorities claim they cannot interfere in spite of EU law and Treaty obligations. This is the Europe of freedom of movement, freedom of goods and services, freedom to exploit with impunity.

### **Petitions.**

The first petitions arrived early in 2003, and the most widely supported – with over 15,000 signatures, was presented by a Valencian citizens action group composed of land-grab victims, called *Abusos Urbanísticos-No!* (AUN). Many other petitions were also submitted by local community associations sometimes representing a group of expatriates from Germany, the Benelux, the UK and so on. Many were submitted by Spanish people. As new petitions continued to arrive it became an impossible task to register each one individually and they were merely recorded as supporting the AUN petition. With hindsight one can say that this was no doubt an error, but it was made necessary by the sheer volume of complaints received.

Petitions have not stopped since. But, although the original focus was, and indeed remains on the Valencian region, more petitions have been reaching the Committee from other parts of Spain including Cantabria, Andalucía, Madrid, and Murcia. Persistent reports in the press about land rights abuse have also, throughout this period, added to the volume of information available. In no other EU country are citizens rights to their property abused in this way or to this extent, and no petitions from any other EU country on such matters have been received. The closest issue of concern in other EU countries of the former Eastern bloc is related to the restitution of property confiscated under former political regimes prior to EU membership.

The Petitions Committee has approached this matter on the understanding that its own

responsibilities were relatively limited under the Treaty, and that the autonomous regions of Spain, and the Spanish national authorities themselves had the real responsibility and the political and legal duty to correct this widely perceived abuse, if necessary through the courts. However, regrettably, more than three years after the first petitions were received it has to be admitted that despite promises and the introduction of new complex laws, very little change has taken place for the better, and many thousands of people who have bought property in good faith in many parts of Spain are living with the sword of Damocles suspended over their homes and their rights.

Following the first fact-finding visit in 2004 a report was prepared and approved by the Petitions Committee which included a number of recommendations. After a second visit in 2005 a report was prepared by the Committee and presented by its rapporteur, Mme Janelly Fourtou, to plenary where, in December 2005 the attached resolution was approved by 550 members against 45, with 25 abstentions. It had been hoped that this would have a positive impact on the decision makers in Spain particularly as in Valencia a set of new land laws, notably the LUV, was replacing the discredited LRAU. A change of government in Madrid led to a review of the national framework land law and this at least looked to be an encouraging sign although the draft law still contains several anomalies in relation to EU law.

The Petitions Committee has nevertheless persisted on the basis that the fundamental rights of European citizens to their legitimately acquired property continued to be violated. In addition, the Committee had serious grounds to believe that specific European legislation for which the European Parliament, the Commission and Council have competence was not being respected by the Valencian government and the Spanish authorities. The European Commission agreed with this assessment as regards the EU Directives on Public Procurement for which an Article 226 infringement proceeding has been launched.

It seems highly probable, following the Committee's investigations, that other Directives are also not respected when large urbanisation projects are decided upon. They include the Environmental Impact Directives, the Water Framework Directive, the Waste Water Directive, the Habitats Directive, and the Birds Directive and in many cases also the Money Laundering Directive. All this is in addition to the provisions of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU Treaty itself insofar as, in Article 6, it incorporates into EU law the provisions of the European Charter of Human Rights for which redress may be sought at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Last but not least, elected members of the European Parliament have a direct responsibility towards the European citizens who elected them to ensure that their rights are upheld within the EU wherever they may choose to live. When they are contacted specifically on the basis of petitions they have an additional duty under Article 194 of the treaty to act, and in doing so, they work with the national or regional authorities to try to find a solution to the serious concerns of citizens.

### **Parliament's recommendations until now.**

As has been mentioned a number of recommendations were made by the Petitions Committee in July 2004 after the first fact-finding visit. Following a highly critical assessment of the situation the Committee wanted to explore more serious means of redress and possible

compensation for victims of the Valencian land laws and their abuse by regional and municipal authorities, acting with the property developers. It also sought a moratorium on all new developments which did not meet EU norms or meet the criteria of sustainability.

It was however the European Parliament<sup>1</sup>, “having regard for the rights and obligations of EU citizenship”, which voted the only recommendations which have been so far established on the basis of an institutional mandate and among these recommendations are to be found the following:

- Future regulations respect both in substance and in form the rights of property owners and that development projects carefully reflect the concerns for sustainable development, the environment and ecology that constitute fundamental policies of the Union;
- The inclusion in the new law of a clear definition of public interest which unambiguously prevents the possibility that the “public interest” justification ...could be used for the promotion of private, rather than public interests;
- The establishment of binding criteria for the calculation of compensation in cases of damages or losses on the basis of standards and principles recognised by the case-law of the ECJ and the ECHR;
- Fundamental review of the bases for selecting the development agent and of the procedure for awarding public contracts.....;
- Measures to ensure that each land owner concerned by any development plan is informed individually, effectively and in good time of any plan and any aspect thereof which might affect his or her property and fundamental rights..;
- Claims offices should be set up under the responsibility of the local authorities and the Valencian Regional Government involving the regional ombudsman to provide assistance ..;

Meanwhile, urbanisation has continued unabated and in Valencia many new urbanisation projects were rushed through in haste to take advantage of the old law before the new law became operational in February 2006. And, petitions continued to reach the Parliament from a growing number of municipalities in Valencia and beyond. Several cases began to reach the courts including the case brought by Veins de Parcent, who also petitioned the Committee. Over one thousand cases remain unopened according to “Valencian news” a regional on-line publication.

Having considered the matter on a number of occasions in 2006, and in particular following the meeting of the Committee on November 28th 2006 where petitioners and Valencian authorities were present, a new fact-finding visit was proposed. A letter to the President of the European Parliament seeking authorisation for the visit was sent on December 22<sup>nd</sup> following further consultation with the political group secretariats.

### **The 2007 fact-finding visit.**

In the face of obstruction, attempts to delay the visit and attacks on the integrity of the members of the delegation which took place from within the Parliament and from outside, the

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament Resolution on the alleged abuse of the Valencian Land Law...and its effect on European Citizens (Petitions 609/2003, 732/2003, 985/2002, 1112/220, 107/2004, and others) (2004/2008 INI) Doc A6-0382/2005.

Bureau took a decision to authorise the mission to visit Valencia, Madrid and Andalucía on February 12<sup>th</sup>. The dates from February 27<sup>th</sup> until March 3<sup>rd</sup> were also agreed.

Having also received petitions from Madrid and Andalucía, these autonomous regions were also included in the mission in order to provide, in addition to an assessment of petitions themselves, an alternative perspective of land law application in comparison with the Valencian Region.<sup>1</sup>

Having met with some of the EU Member State diplomatic representatives in Madrid, but not with representatives of the national Ministry for Housing as planned, the delegation travelled to Almería, in Andalucía.

The delegation sincerely regrets that a meeting at national level was not agreed as an official request was sent well in advance through the Spanish Permanent Representation in Brussels. The reasons given for the refusal do not appear too credible given the circumstances of the visit and the objectives of the fact-finding team. It had been hoped that a discussion of the new national framework legislation and its impact on the regions and their responsibilities could have been organised.

#### Andalucía.

Although the day of the visit coincided with the Andalusian feast day and public holiday, representatives of the regional government in the Province of Almería held a two hour meeting with the delegation to discuss the Andalusian land laws and their application in a number of municipalities.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities informed the delegation about their objectives for the orderly, sustainable and planned development of their region which allows the local authorities to provide proper services for local communities. They admitted and recognised that a number of municipal authorities had acted wrongly and in some cases, such as in Malaga, they had acted illegally, and for this the Mayor and several town councillors were under arrest. They stated that illegal building, in other words the building of homes in unauthorised areas, made it impossible for local authorities to provide water and electricity as they should, and provide for waste disposal. They recognised that in some cases considerable sums of money were made from such illegal practices.

Responding to questions about the regular application of land laws in the context of urbanisation programmes they insisted that municipal authorities enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy but were under an obligation to act within certain guidelines regarding the size and extent of developments. Sustainable development they reiterated was the first priority of land use planning. They also indicated that not all local authorities used the urbanising agent and that the Valencian rules were not applicable to Andalucía. A group of local landowners could combine their resources to jointly develop their own land rather than invite an urbaniser in to do the job, the delegation was told. When the local authority decides that development is

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<sup>1</sup> Programme of the delegation to Spain, draft no.6, Petitions Committee Brussels, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2007. Annex 1 of this report.

<sup>2</sup> Meeting with Delegado Provincial, Consejería de Obras Publicas y Transportes, Director General de Inspeccion de Ordenacion del Territorio, Urbanismo y Vivienda, Inspector Jefe Almería.

necessary in the public interest then an urbaniser is normally used and he is chosen following a public invitation to tender, published in the Official Journal of the EU, according to Andalusian law. An urbaniser was not a person who was imposed upon owners of land.

Information regarding urbanisation projects were publicised and land owners affected were informed they said. Also notaries public and registrars must be recorded and registered with the Regional authorities in order to legitimately practice.

Reclassification of land from rural to building land (urbanisable) entails the owner in a cession of 10% of his land to the local authority for public use and the landowner must pay a proportion of the cost of new amenities. Again in response to questioning, it was claimed that the public interest must be defined according to the specific needs of each development bearing in mind environmental, economic and social constraints of each community involved.

The delegation was informed that all plans must be notified to the Regional Government for final approval and plans can be challenged if they are not in conformity with the principles of the regional law. Citizens are able to appeal against planning decisions to the regional authority and a corps of inspectors has been established to investigate the implementation of urbanisation projects. The head of the Investigation Service was present for the discussion on this. Injunctions have been imposed on urbanisation plans which have not met with conservation criteria and heavy fines have been imposed upon property developers responsible for illegal developments; five major disciplinary cases are ongoing against local authorities for illegal housing activities.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that in spite of the safeguards, abuses have occurred and a number of urbanisation programmes were, as has been said, under investigation. Two in particular were addressed by the delegation: the situation in Ronda, and in Albox and the Alamanzera valley. In the latter situation a tacit agreement between builders and the local authority led to the construction of several hundred illegal homes which were bought mostly by expatriates, through registered estate agents and lawyers, in good faith. Many of them are now under the threat of demolition. The Mayor is under investigation.

The delegation was informed by the regional authorities that the illegal status applies to the building and not to the land on which it is built. An illegally built house may be subject to demolition and the land restored to its original state. (An unfortunate comparison was attempted comparing the purchase of an illegal house with the purchase of an illegal car which the law confiscates.) Anyone who buys an illegal home in good faith can, it was said, take out a civil action in the courts against the seller or could try to obtain a criminal action for fraud. This can, it was admitted, take many years and be a very costly exercise.

However, it appears clear that those who have bought houses which are found to be illegal in good faith are, according to the regional government, not so much victims as equally responsible for what has happened.

There does not seem to be a proper recognition at the moment which is clear to the delegation of the extent of blame and responsibility which must be attached to the local authority, the builders who have made the profit, and the regional authority who was either ignorant of what was happening or which chose not to act to prevent such an occurrence. There is, in short, no sense of proper proportionality of guilt and no apparent procedure, outside of the courts, for

resolving the problem in spite of the potential provided by the regional inspectorate to intervene.

It is of course true that no two cases of illegal building are identical and that there is also a difference between buildings which are illegally constructed in areas which are expressly and objectively forbidden because they are situated in special conservation areas, or designated flood-plains, and those built merely in non-designated areas but which do not constitute any other sort of obstruction. Whereas demolition is more likely for the former, retroactive authorisation and accommodation may be possible for the latter within a revised development plan. This may entail additional costs for the land owner but at least a rectification of the status of land or the building permits may be a possibility which will preserve his property.

Either way, given the scale of the problem which is developing, some sort of functioning administrative tribunal should be established to resolve such matters bearing in mind the true responsibilities of all parties. At the very least, the innocent victims of illegal housing should not have to shoulder all the consequences. It seems apparent in Albox, that residents in what are now identified as illegal housing there did not receive proper advice from the local authority, from surveyors or from local lawyers.

### The Valencia Region.

It is with some considerable justification that a delegation from the Petitions Committee returned to Valencia for the third time. Not only is there an infringement procedure still under way concerning the Directive on Public Procurement, but also a series of new petitions have demonstrated that the authorities have failed to respect the assurances which were given to the previous delegations that the recommendations made then would be carefully considered particularly as regards individual rights, water and the environment. During the visit itself the delegation was given documents concerning almost sixty new allegations of land law abuse.

The contrast between the meeting which was finally agreed with the Valencian Government minister responsible, Esteban Gonzalez Pons, and the meetings which took place in several towns and villages with the locally affected population was enlightening.

There has also been an increase in the number of cases which have been initiated by investigating magistrates against corruption based upon urbanisation programmes implemented by town halls. The delegation visited, in that respect, Orihuela, Catral and the Torreveija district. The mayor of Catral came out from the Town Hall to provide the delegation with some explanatory documents while its members were listening to petitioners' complaints.

In October 2006 the Regional Authorities stripped Catral town council of its urbanisation powers because of the building of 1270 illegal homes next to the *el Hondo* natural parkland. The crackdown appears to have been short-lived however as partially built properties in the area were still being completed in spite of the ban. The developers continue to build, and the houses are advertised for sale in the UK according to the local people, many of whom were themselves victims of this practice and who were faced with the loss of their houses as though they were at fault.

The delegation visited the Rojales district, south of Alicante with one of the petitioners

(250/2005) and observed extensive housing developments in El Rason and El Limonar where areas of Mediterranean pine forest had been cleared and only the roots were remaining as housing encroached all the way down to the lagoon area by the shore. The area known as the *Parque Natural de las Lagunas de la Mata y Torrevieja* was under intensive construction.

In San Miguel de Salinas the delegation was met by about one hundred local villagers who handed in another petition complaining about the destruction of their local environment, the lack of basic services and the contamination of their water supply about which they said the local and regional authorities had done nothing since they first complained two years ago. A German resident complained about old and broken asbestos piping which was still in use, and copper sulphate contamination in drinking water and a water treatment plant which was rat-infested and broken.

In Orihuela, the delegation was given presents of local oranges, lemons and grapefruit which, it was told were the last to be produced in the area around Los Almendros (1129/2003) before the developers moved in. Each owner in this district is being obliged to cede 60% of his land, according to the petitioners, and building will proceed in an area which has been designated a natural park. There was no public tender for the urbanisation work according to other residents in this area.

Also in this area, a new citizens' group called *Claro*, introduced itself to the delegation and submitted a new petition alleging that the rights of European citizens to vote in the local elections had been violated by the authorities. Of 18,000 voter applications sent out to non Spanish EU residents in September, 11,000 had been returned in December. They claimed that two-thirds of voter application forms had just not been delivered because of inadequate postal services.

The meeting which was organised with the Regional Ombudsman, the *Sindic de Greuges* Sra Emilia Caballero, allowed members of the delegation to receive confirmation about many of the problems faced by local communities as they faced up to unwanted urbanisation schemes. She expressed particular concerns about the lack of social housing in the vast majority of urbanisation developments which led her to question the way in which authorities are able to define for themselves what is in the public interest. She was also critical of the lack of public involvement in the decisions taken by local town halls in many areas.

Travelling north from Alicante the delegation was unable to respect its agreement to meet with residents of Tibi and el Aljibe, and it recognises how sad and infuriating this was for the village which had prepared to receive the delegation in order to lend added weight to their claims against the massive urbanisation which threatens to destroy their local community. The delegation did receive the extensive documentation which they provided and which updates the Committee on the situation compared to when the village was visited in 2005.

In Parcent, the delegation was welcomed by what seemed like the whole town and an impromptu procession followed the members to the place where a public meeting was organised, and people were able to express their fears for their neighbourhood which faced a fourfold increase in its population and the urbanisation of its hillsides and rural spaces. The President of the local residents association of El Repla, where 1496 new houses are planned, described "the catastrophic effect of building thousands of unwanted holiday homes, devastating millions of square metres of precious and environmentally sensitive countryside.

All this had been planned without even the most basic social or environmental impact study and without a proper scientific report on the adequacy of water resources.” The residents complained that no-one affected had yet received a single official letter or notice from the town hall to explain the impact of the plans. The plans were rushed through in the final days of the former LRAU on 30th January 2006.

In Parcent, three sectors have become subject of urbanisation projects and they all contain serious flaws and discrepancies, sufficient in fact for the courts to have stepped in to halt the development of the largest one, El Repla, for the time being. But beyond this lies the fact that a small town, whose 900 population is willing to accept and understand the need for a sustainable development plan for the area is totally unwilling to be submerged by an urbanisation project which foresees an increase of up to 10,000 population in the next decade.

Indeed, at the meeting in the town hall which the delegation had with the mayor who presented the plans, it was the developers themselves, one of whom is the brother of the Councillor for urban planning, who answered the detailed questions about the projected expansion of the town based upon a calculation of about four persons per projected household. During the past several years, much of the rural land in the valley had been bought up by the developers who stand to make a large profit from the reclassification, although it will be the fifty or so families who live on the hillsides who will shoulder a disproportionate amount of the costs should the project materialize.

In the village, emotions were very high as older men who had lived all their lives spoke about their fear for their community and the delegation was escorted under a throng of umbrellas along the narrow streets and back to the waiting bus.

At a public meeting organised in Benissa, in a packed hall the delegation heard from people from several towns and villages who were opposed to urbanisation projects. They included Tormos, Altea, Villajoiosa, Mutxamel, Alfaz, Val de Lagaurt, Tibi, Rabassa, Denia, Javea, Orxeta, Liber – el Collado, Orba and Gata de Gorgos. The nature of the complaints were similar and related to lack of water, no environmental impact assessment, problems related to the choice of the urbaniser and allegations of corruption, excessive contributions and arbitrary costs for new infrastructure, lack of information, problems with declarations of public utility but no subsequent social housing, little or no compensation and loss of legitimately bought land. The Mayor of Benissa spoke to say he was a victim, not of the land laws, but of allegations that he had misused his authority in approving the construction of his own country home which did not comply with planning law.

The meeting with the Valencian minister for Urbanisation, Esteban Gonzalez Pons proved difficult to organise, it was only finalised following a visit by his Chef de Cabinet to Brussels on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Statements made at press conferences organised before the meeting by the minister, by two MEPs and by representatives of the business community all attacking the delegation as well as its members individually.

At the last minute the meeting scenario was changed so that the business community, with whom arrangements had been made for a separate meeting, were finally included in the same meeting with the minister. This portrayed the minister, flanked on each side and supported by the presidents of the Valencia Tourist Board, Building promoters, Urbanisers, Estate Agents and Travel agents, all criticised the visit and defended the Valencian land laws and the

activities of the construction industry. The meeting was therefore confrontational rather than constructive.

It was alleged that each delegation visit had cost the Valencian region two hundred million euros in lost tourism, that there were hidden interests behind the organisation of the visit, that the Bank of Spain was reported as having declared that one thousand million euros had also been lost in investment as a result of the Petitions Committee visits and that the petitions received were in fact bogus or a mere figment of the delegations' imagination.

The delegation outlined the nature of the concerns of the Committee and explained that it had returned in the hope that many of the problems faced by local communities would have been resolved in cooperation with the authorities. It addressed the specific problem of illegal housing as distinct from the more general problems faced as a result of the extensive urbanisation programmes which were being implemented without due regard for the rights of small property owners or the environment.

The minister refused to acknowledge that there were any problems with the urbanisation programmes and if there were any, he maintained that they should be resolved through the courts. The only specific case he referred to was the illegal housing problem in Catral which the delegation had visited.

Representatives from the business community were also sharply critical of the visit but nevertheless welcomed the opportunity to meet with the delegation. It was explained that the building industry accounted for 25% of the region's GDP and provided much employment and that any falling off of business would lead to more unemployment. The representative of the Federation of Real Estate businesses suggested that an expert committee could be set up to analyse complaints.

To conclude, the delegation said that while it appreciated the concerns expressed by the business community, the solution should also lay with them. It rejected the charges against its integrity which had been made without any justification or evidence. Compared to previous visits it appeared clearer than ever that the land law had been devised or at least interpreted primarily in the interests of the developers and urbanisers, and not with the legitimate rights of individual property owners in mind, nor the fragile social or ecological environment.

Following this meeting the members of the delegation travelled to the Province of Castellon to meet with the local communities which had also submitted petitions. The first stop was in Mestrets.

This is a small coastal community where 42 houses, inhabited on a permanent basis, are to make way for a 6000 house development. The residents, many of whom have lived there all their lives, have all amenities already yet they are to be obliged to help pay for this extensive urbanisation where most will lose their homes. The local people demanded proper compensation for their properties and the right to be re-housed in similar circumstances if urbanisation was essential. Instead they had invariably been offered very little, often no more than a small apartment in a large block.

They had received no reply from the Valencian regional authorities and only the Sindic de Greuges had responded to and supported their concerns, they said.

The delegation then moved on towards Cabanes and the Marina d'Or development which consisted of a long line of ten story buildings along the beach (the Playa Torre la Sal) which were under construction. The petitioners claim that the current population of less than 3000 will be increased to 125000 during the holiday season. 24000 homes are planned altogether as well as three golf courses and a theme park – Mundo Ilusion. The apartments are adjacent to a natural reserve which contains a protected species of bird (aguilucho cenizo) and there has not been any approval concerning the guaranteed provision of water for the urban complex. A desalination plant is however envisaged which, according to the petitioners, will require EU funding.

At the public meeting in Valencia the President of AUN introduced the delegation and the representatives from many local associations spoke about their particular situation. Several presented new petitions to the delegation. The following examples are indicative of the problems encountered. In Benicalp many families are being displaced because of a rezoning of the area which is being done for the benefit of the Valencia Football Club. In Mestrella, the community is under threat of a new urban development project where, it is said the benefits will only go to the builders and developers as people are forced to give up their homes and their families' land.

In Peniscola, in the northern coastal area of the Valencian region, 3000 new dwellings are planned in an area which is designated as a national park. The local residents have tried to take the case to the court but, after two and a half years there is still no prospect of a hearing of the case. There has been no environmental impact assessment and the authorities are not concerned by the fact that the area has been designated as part of a Natura 2000 specially protected area.

Other complaints were received from Alboraya, Valencia itself Parque y Jardin Jose M Orensa, Picassent, Villalonga, Alboraya, Albalat, the Hospital of Virgen del Consuelo de Valencia ( where local residents are subject to toxic emissions from cobalt pumps and radioactive helium; public land given to a private company modified planning permission without any consideration to local community), and Albufera. Many people came along to the meeting to vent their frustration that they were being totally ignored by local authorities who listened only to the sirens of the urbanisers and developers.

Of the 540 municipalities which make up the Valencian Region it would appear that about 15 – 20 per cent, concentrated essentially in the coastal hinterland, have experienced serious problems resulting from extensive urbanisation, many involving allegations of corruption in recent years. Few municipal authorities have conducted urbanisation planning procedures in close association with, and the active involvement of the local community as has happened in Xabia for example.

It would seem to be the case therefore that weaknesses in the overly complex land law legislation are readily able to be exploited and the number of complaints generated by urbanisation programmes continue to rise. The regional authorities have an obligation to recognise this and honour the rights of small property owners and the environment and to do something about the grievances. There is no proof that they have yet come to terms with this except on a sporadic basis related to some illegal housing developments.

The fundamental rights of European citizens to their property are not recognised in the same way here as in other European countries and it is evident that there is a level of persistent abuse resulting from urbanisation which undermines claims that the region acts in full conformity with the EU Treaty. In addition, there is mounting evidence that not only are EU Directives not willingly applied, they are not even clearly transposed, for example, in the case of public procurement procedures.

### The region of Madrid.

The Madrid region has not been immune from urban development, on the contrary. The success of the Spanish economy in the last twenty years has attracted a massive influx of population from many European countries and the wider world. Growing affluence has also created a sizable sector of the urban population which seeks to buy second homes away from the noise of the city in the beautiful hillsides and slopes towards the Sierra Guaderrama.

Developers have been quick to grasp the opportunities that this situation has created and town halls have been forced to rethink their general land use planning to cover the next decades. Such developments have brought with them, as in other parts of Spain, allegations of unfair and predatory practices, and corruption.<sup>1</sup>

The Petitions Committee has received petitions from a number of localities north of Madrid and, in the time available, the delegation was able to visit Torrelodones and Galapagar. It could not visit Rascafria about which it nevertheless was provided with documentary information concerning the urbanisation of a specially protected area under the Birds Directive. Before the visit however, it met with petitioners in the course of a meeting in Madrid at which a number of political parties were also represented. Contrary to the situation in Valencia, the main concerns of the petitioners met tended to focus on the lack of respect for the environment, including specially protected areas, and the related problems of proper access to water and waste facilities in the areas targeted by the developers.

Fortunately the delegation was able to hold a meeting with the minister responsible for urbanisation in the Madrid Regional Government, Francisco Granados. However, the exchange of views was rather superficial, but nevertheless useful in that it did allow the delegation to learn more about the Region's priorities and procedures regarding the environment and rights of property owners to which the minister said he was personally committed. Regarding the two municipalities to be visited he informed the delegation that the plan for Torrelodones had been withdrawn for the moment and the plan for Galapagar had yet to be finally approved. He also explained the procedures for the appointment of urbanising agents which, he said, were based upon EU Directives. In the Madrid Region he said compensation was paid to landowners affected by urbanisation projects on the basis of the new reclassification, unlike in Valencia.

On arrival in Galapagar, the delegation met with the mayor and several of members of the town council. The concerns of the delegation based upon the petitions received regarding the development programmes were expressed, notably regarding the Natura 2000 sites along the River Guaderrama and the problem of waste water treatment. The Mayor gave a detailed

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<sup>1</sup> See for example *El Mundo*: El mapa de la speculation. Supplement especial 11/2006; [www.elmundo.es](http://www.elmundo.es) Informe global de la corrupcion 2006 – Transparency International-Espania.

explanation of the project and identified all the key areas on a large map before outlining the main stages of the procedure leading to the approval of the general plan. He said the plan was now awaiting final approval from Madrid.

He said that the local authority had chosen to proceed, if approved, without the services of an urbaniser which was not considered to be necessary. He said that full attention had been given to the environmental impact assessment and that 16 separate sectoral reports had been produced including on the potential impact of the regional park of Manzanares and the Guaderrama basin. He announced that the register of the town hall had recorded 12,201 allegations concerning the plan with 1691 signatories in support of the allegations. There had been 63 different categories of complaint.

For a population of about 33,000 he considered that the proportion of objections was not surprising. He further commented upon the report of the Hydrological Board and on the fact that plans for a station and for additional high voltage power lines were not a municipal responsibility. He informed the delegation that almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Galapagar was covered by conservation measures which would be respected. The proposed plan, he said accounted for 6900 new homes over the next fifteen years which was a sustainable number and not disproportionate in relation to the existing population.

The delegation was satisfied with the explanations given by the mayor which was in contrast to the approach adopted by the Valencian authorities with whom we met.

The visit to Torreleón was most useful and informative but necessarily was of a lesser impact given that the proposed urbanisation which was to have established a golf course and some 1500 new dwellings in a special protected area had been withdrawn, though many feared it would be resurrected after the elections at the end of May.

The final public meeting of the mission was held in Galapagar and allowed the delegation to compare and contrast the explanations given by the mayor with the feelings expressed by a large number of the local inhabitants. Eighteen declarations were made which included some serious comments about developments in neighbouring areas such as El Escorial. The main focus of concern was the size of the programme and its impact on the local areas of outstanding natural beauty, on endangered bird species, the lack of proper water treatment facilities as well as the plan's effect on the social fabric of the community.

## **Conclusions.**

The application of land laws governing the rights of individuals over their legitimately acquired property remains problematic in several of the Spanish autonomous regions. Pressures to engage in massive urban development projects are more often than not promoted by the business community which has the most to gain from this lucrative activity. Town halls and regional governments respond in varying degrees, ranging from loyal commitment to their local community to passive and often active acceptance of the urbaniser's plans, and their regional laws reflect these differences.

The local residents, whether Spanish or not, are the most affected by such urbanisation programmes and inevitably, under the circumstances, they have the most to lose. In too many cases they not only have the most to lose, they actually risk losing everything they have

worked for and this is more common in the Valencian region than anywhere else. For it is in this region that the delegation from the Petitions Committee came up against the most arrogance and the least explanation for the urbanisation projects which have led to the destruction of many beautiful and fragile coastal areas. It is in this region that the majority of petitions received describe the disproportionate urban dreams of developers which amount to as many nightmares for the local people who as EU citizens and residents deserve much better.

This is not to deny that serious problems exist in many other areas of Spain mentioned earlier in this report and amply documented by several serious studies of the phenomenon. The solution to the problem of excessive urbanisation lies essentially with the local authorities and regional assemblies which approve legislation. The national government also has specific role to ensure full compliance with EU legislation and Treaty obligations in such matters as fundamental rights, the environment and public procurement. The Spanish Constitution has never been properly tested in relation to the land-grab which has created so many victims. The only attempt, by a prominent Valencian lawyer, to take the issue before the Constitutional Court failed on a procedural matter.

It may not be too long before the matter comes to the attention of the European Court of Justice and a decision in that instance which went against Spain and the regional authorities could have far-reaching implications in terms of liability and compensation for the victims.

The Petitions Committee is determined to continue to fulfil its modest responsibilities to the full under the Treaty in defence of the European citizen and provide, where justified, its firm and total support. There is no doubt in the view of this delegation that there is a manifest lack of respect for the fundamental rights concerning the property of European citizens in many parts of Spain and in particular in the Valencian Region. The European Parliament and the other EU institutions have a clear obligation to their citizens to ensure that this persistent violation of citizens' rights must stop. It is in everyone's interest that this happens sooner rather than later.

## Recommendations:

- Calls upon the Commission to fully take into account and assess the issues raised in this report, particularly as regards the possible infringement of EU law and basic rights and principles contained in the EU Treaty as they affect the citizens who have become the victims of extensive urbanisation;
- Calls upon the Spanish authorities and regional governments, in particular the Valencian Government, who are under obligation to respect and apply the provisions of the EU Treaty and EU laws, to recognise the individual's legitimate right to his legally acquired property and to establish, in law, more precisely defined criteria regarding the application of Article 33 of the Spanish Constitution concerning the public interest, in order to prevent and forbid the abuse of peoples' property rights by decisions of local and regional authorities;
- Calls into question the methods of designation and frequently excessive powers given in practice to urbanisers and property developers by certain local authorities at the expense of local communities and the citizens who have their homes and their legally acquired property there;
- Urges local authorities to consult their citizens and involve them in urban development projects in order to encourage acceptable and sustainable urban development where this is necessary, in the interest of local communities, not in the sole interest of the property developers, estate agents and other vested interests;
- Strongly condemns the covert practice of certain property developers to undermine by subterfuge the legitimate ownership of property by European citizens by interfering with the registration of land and calls upon local authorities to establish proper legal safeguards against this practice;
- Calls upon regional authorities to establish special administrative tribunals involving local ombudsmen, to which independent investigation services should report, which should have a power of arbitration in relation to disputes concerning urbanisation projects, and which should be accessible free of charge to those directly affected by urbanisation programmes, including those who are victims of illegal property deals concerning unauthorised urban development;
- Considers that where compensation is required for loss of property, that this should be at proper rates which conform to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights.

**List of Petitions received during the Fact-finding visit:**

- **Petition by Robert Alan Barlow (EN), on representation of an association directly affected by "Plan Parcial el sector 2, 'tres amigos'**
- **Petition by Abusos Urbanísticos Alanzora No (EN), on housing "irregularities" in the Alanzora Valley, Almeria (Spain)**
- **Petition by Asociacion de perjudicados CV-95 Orihuela-Costa (ES), on irregularities in the drawn of the carriageway "CV-95 Orihuela-Costa".**
- **Petition by Carlos Javier Dura Alema (Amigos de Sierra Escalona) (ES), on the inconvenience of the construction of 4000 dwellings in the heart of the PPNN Sierra Escalona.**
- **Petition by CLARO (partido para Orihuela-Costa) (ES and non-ES), on the infringement of voting rights in the Orihuela municipality.**
- **Petition by Gabriele Wesenauer-Wagner (), on the inconvenience of the PAU-25 in Orihuela.**
- **Petition by Salvador Ruiz Cruanes (ES), on the injustice of the construction of buildings in a protected area.**
- **Petition by Joan Josep Cano i Cano# (ES), on the irregularities in the "PAI Sector: 'la Serreta' de la Nucia-Alacant".**
- **Petition by Bengt Lomm (Scandinavian), on the change of the construction regulation in the Scandinavian colony.**
- **Petition by Eichenberger Ulrich and Eichenberger-Brechbühler Monika (DE?), on ?**
- **Petition by Jesus Pons Vidal (Associació per la protecció mediambiental de**

**l'Atzúbia) (ES), on the possible construction of 1958 buildings with the consequent problems that such an important increase in the population could entail.**

- Petition by Rosemary and Bob Johnson (EN?), on the urban development proposed in Tormos.**
- Petition by John F. Oakley (EN?), on the negotiations for the Balneario to be acquired by a substantial property development company (with dossier).**
- Petition by La Cuta Owners' Association (ES), on the 298 illegal properties in Lliber (Alicante).**
- Petition by Eckhard Ropohl F (?), on the valencian land grab rules.**
- Petition by David-Michael Sparkes and Rosita Carmen Sparkes (EN), on the urban plans in Fleix de la Vall de Laguar.**
- Petition by Gaspar Lloret Valenzuela (spokesperson of Municipal Socialist Group) (ES), on the allegations against the PGOU in Vila Joiosa.**
- Petition by Eric Sanderson and Denise Sanderson (EN?), on the injustice they feel about the money is requested from the Town Hall to construct in a part of their land.**
- Petition by "Abusos urbanísticos NO" (ES), on the massive urban development invading the Maigmó an Ventós mountain ranges.**
- Petition by Fernando Ripoll Vidal (Administrator of Arenal Parcent SL) (ES), on the adhesion of 15 owners affected by PAI "la Solana".**
- Petition by Neighbor's Association "San Miguel Arcángel" (ES), on the massive urban development in San Miguel de Salinas (Alicante).**
- Petition by "Platform against CV-95" and other 5 Associations (ES), on the struggle against the carriageway CV-95.**

- **Petition by Karl-Heinz un Annelie von der Brügggen (DE?), on ..**
- **Petition by Ignacio Montés Reig (attorney) (ES), on the intervention of an appeal against the resolution of the Autonomic Secretary of Land and Environment.**
- **Petition by Sebastián Marchante (Neighbor's Association Casa Fus) (ES), on the sewer system, street lighting and street tarmaced in the "Casa Fus" urbanisation.**
- **Petition by neighbor's of Mutxamel (ES), on the impossibility of develop the urbanisation Molí Nou.**
- **Petition by "Nueva Cultura del Territorio" Association (EN/ES), on the injustice regarding urban aspects in Aspe, Elda, Elche, Hondón de las Nieves, Monforte del Cid, Monovar and Novelda.**
- **Petition by Cecilia Navarro Ruiz, Antonio Puerto García (Citizens Meeting for a sustainable Aspe) (ES), on the 4000 allegations against the PGOU in Aspe and the location of an industrial state.**
- **Petition by AECU (European Association of Customers and users in general and specially urbanism) (ES), on urban abuses against citizens in San Miguel de Salinas.**
- **Petition by Social and Charity Delegation Association (Orihuela Diocese) (ES), on a leaflet explaining the moral position of the Diocese regarding the excessive urban development.**
- **Petition by Aby Pieter Eliander (NL), on the application for a single-family house in Partida Roba de Hornos (belonging to the municipality of Catral).**
- **Petition by Stewart Muir, Joyce Robson (EN/ES), on the infringement of European Directives concerning public participation in environmental matters and public procurement. Intent to infringe European Directives concerning sustainable water supply, the environmental Impact.**

- Petition by "Compromís pel territori" (several associations) (ES), on the explanation by means of a dossier of the new territorial politics asked for Valencian region.
- Petition by Paquita Mayor Ferrandiz (ES), on PGOU in Orxeta.
- Petition by Antonio Ferrándiz González (ES), on the PGOU in Tormos (Alicante).
- Petition by "Newburgh's Association Mestrets-Borriolenc" (ES), on the PAI-Mestrets de Castelló.
- Petition by S.S. (DE), on the environmental destruction by constructions in the 'Atalayas' of Peníscola, Castellón, Spain.
- Petition by Carlos Gómez Gil (platform of citizen initiative) (ES), on the inconvenience of the "Plan Rabassa".
- Petition by Association "Salvem l'horta de Vera Alboraià" (save the orchard of Vera) (ES), on the damage caused by a urban plan on the orchard of Vera.
- Petition by José Carles Ballester (ES), on the construction of a luxurious urbanisation where there are occupied houses.
- Petition by Salvador Blanco Revert (association "recuperem la Model") (ES), on the claim to preserve the prison "la Model".
- Petition by Associations affected by PAIs in Cullera (ES), on several law breaks due to two PAIs in Cullera (in Marenyet y Brosquil).
- Petition by Angeles Ferrando Juan (ES), on urban abuse in the approbation of PAI 7-A in Villalonga (Valencia).
- Petition by Julio Sanz García (ES), on the legal urban infraction in Alboraya (Valencia).

- **Petition by José Miguel Sanfeliu Bueno (Association of affected people by PAI "dels Tarongers Golf Resort", Albalat dels Tarongers) (ES), on the PAI dels Tarongers Golf Resort.**
- **Petition by Diego Gomez (Escola Valenciana) (ES), on the resolutions of the 4th Congress of "Escola Valenciana".**
- **Petition by "defenders of PPNN Albufera" (ES), on the PAI in the PPNN Albufera, breaking European legislation.**
- **Petition by Agustín Antonio Sanmartín y González (and 6 signs) (ES), on the PGOU of Valencia, refusing the new location of Mestalla (Valencia Club de Fútbol) and other sport installations.**
- **Petition by Rosario Valls Comes (association Antics propietaris del Nou Mestalla: former owners of the new Mestalla) (ES), on the PGOU of Valencia, refusing the new location of Mestalla (Valencia Club de Fútbol) and other sport installations.**
- **Petition by Juan Jose Salvador Tena (association of Benicàssim citizens) (ES), on the construction of one golf course in a wetland.**
- **Petition by Jose Roger Dols (Neighbours association of Sant Joan del Riu Sec, 144 members) (ES), on the PAI 04-UE-T and 13-UE-R in Castellon de la Plana.**
- **Petition by neighbours associations "defenders of El Borseal" and "neighbours of Ribera" (ES), on the PAIs "Torre la Sal" and "Marina d'or-Golf".**
- **Petition by .. (ES), on the construction of a golf course on a wetland in Benicàssim.**
- **Petition by Odorina Tena Llorens, Uwe Jöns, Kerstin Jöns, Manuel Sanmiguel Rubio, Vicente Botella Tena (DE/ES), on the suggestion of different alternatives to the current route of the connection between PDAI (technical alternative of program for the development of composed interventions: Alternativa Técnica de Programa para el Desarrollo de Actuación Integrada) and the road N-340.**

- **Petition by Neighbours Association "Partida Pitchell" and Neighbours Association "Camí Vell", Peníscola (ES), on the PGOU in Peníscola (Castellón, Spain).**
- **Petition by affected parties by the eolic plan of the Valencian Community (EN), on the eolic plan of the Valencian Community.**
- **Petition by (ES), on the unhealthy situation of the Hospital "Virgen del Consuelo" in Valencia.**
- **Petition by Neighbours of Chamberí (a neighbourhood in Madrid) (ES), on the change of the urban plan in Chamberí.**
- **Petition by Sierra Oeste desarrollo S.O.S.tenible (ES), on the excessive urban plans in the West range in Madrid.**
- **Petition by neighbour's associations of Moralarzal, Torreloanes, Rascafría, Las Rozas, Galapagar (ES), on the breaking of European legislation.**
- **Petition by neighbours of Rascafría (ES), on the inform of the PGOU in Rascafría (Madrid).**
- **Petition by Pablo González de Villaumbrosia García (ES), on the high-tension power lines.**
- **Petition by Ángel de Prada Solaesa in representation of "Association Escorial and surroundings" (ES), on the opposition against the PGOU in El Escorial, San Lorenzo del Escorial and Santa María de la Alameda (Madrid).**
- **Petition by Forest Rangers in Madrid (ES), on the prohibition of the Regional Government to the forest rangers to denounce urban development and environmental crimes.**
- **Petition by Neighbour's association Galapagar (Madrid) (ES), on the expedient 0258/2006.**

- **Petition by Ecologist association "Xoriguer" (ES), on the PGOU in Vila Joiosa (Villajoyosa, Alicante).**
- **Petition by Association "Save Mojácar and East Almería" (ES), on the devastating urban plans in a high ecological, cultural and landscaping level area.**

# PARLEMENT EUROPEEN



COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS  
SECRETARIAT

Brussels, 27 February, 2007

Draft Number 6.

## Draft Programme

### Delegation to Spain (Madrid, Valencia, Andalucía)

27 February - 3 March

(Authorisation of the Bureau: 12 February, 2007)

**Members:** Marcin LIBICKI (UEN, Poland)  
Michael CASHMAN (PES, UK)

**Secretariat:** Mr David Lowe, Head of Secretariat  
Mr Angel Ardaiz Egües, Secretary

**Group Staff:** Kjell SEVON (Greens)  
Witold ZIOBRO (UEN)

**Interpreters:** ZUBRZYCKA-PEREZ PL/ES/EN (Team leader)  
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tel: 00 32 498 983 534. secretariat mission.

This visit is the third fact-finding mission dealing with Spanish land law and urban development projects conducted by the Petitions Committee. It was finally authorised by the Bureau of the European Parliament on February 12th 2007 having been agreed by the Petitions Committee on November 27th 2006. To emphasise the importance of the visit the two most senior members of the Committee are participating in it. Based on the large and growing number of petitions that the Committee on Petitions receives from Spain, members will be meeting with national, regional and local authorities which, each, have a responsibility for the problems faced by petitioners as well as for the solutions which must be found. Failure to find solutions cannot fail to have a negative impact on public confidence in the building of large 'urban' infrastructure projects which, in many cases, undermine the rights of European citizens - including of course Spanish citizens, to their legitimately acquired private property.

The role of the European Parliament is naturally related to defending and promoting the rights of European citizens as defined under the EU Treaty and to ensuring the proper application of EU law by member states and autonomous regions. As a result it will not be investigating allegations of corruption which, though widely reported in relation to many urbanisation projects, falls under the full competence of the Spanish authorities themselves, who are indeed acting in many areas to combat such threats. The existing infringement procedure, brought by the European Commission against Spain concerning the public procurement procedures linked to urbanisation programmes in the Valencian region, as reported on by Parliament, is an important development which is to be welcomed, but which remains the responsibility of the European Commission alone.

A report on the Valencian Land Law, and allegations of abuse, which followed the second fact-finding visit, was adopted by the European Parliament in December 2005 by 550 for, 45 against and 25 abstentions.

There is no doubt that this is a most important issue for many European citizens who are attracted by all that Spain has to offer who need to be assured that their rights to own their own property and to move freely with their families within Europe's frontiers are fully and completely respected. The protection of the fragile environment particularly though not exclusively in coastal areas, access to water and more transparent development criteria, mentioned in the above report, are also of concern to us.

This mission will meet with petitioners, national, regional and local authorities, and other interested parties in Spain. It plans to visit Madrid, Galapagar, Almeria, Albox, Orihuela, Alicante, Torrevieja, Rojales, San Miguel de Salinas, Catral, Tibi, Parcent, Benissa, Benicasim, Oropesa and Valencia. Public meetings will take place in Benissa and Valencia.

The draft programme follows; it is subject to slight modification resulting from logistic constraints.

We shall prepare a report to the Petitions Committee and to the Bureau of the European Parliament summarising the findings of the visit and making recommendations.

Marcin Libicki.

Michael Cashman.

## Draft Programme

### **Tuesday 27 February 2007**

- 14:35 Departure for Madrid. (Flight nr: IB 7791)
- 18h00 Meeting with national authorities regarding the new national framework legislation covering land use planning.
- 20h00 Meeting with EU Ambassadors for an exchange of views regarding current developments in relation to Land Law situation. (Hotel)

*Overnight Madrid - Hotel Gaudi*

### **Wednesday 28 February 2007**

- 08.30 Breakfast meeting;
- 10:25 Departure for Almeria; (Flight nr.: IB 8592)  
*- on arrival, at 11:30 bus to be available for delegation*
- 12h15 Meeting with Andalucian Regional Government Delegation in Almeria.
- 14h-16h Visit to sites in the Almeria area where EU citizens have been victims of illegal housing practices. (Albox, Almanzora Valley) - *by bus*
- 18h00 Meetings in Orihuela. with local petitioners (CLARO and others)
- 19h15 Departure *by bus* to Alicante:  
*- arrival +/- 20.30hrs*

*Overnight Alicante: Hotel Melia.*

### **Thursday 1 March 2007**

- 08.00 Breakfast Meeting (Hotel)
- 9h-11h00 Visit to areas south of Alicante province including: Torrevieja - Rojales, San Miguel de Salinas and Catral.  
*Return to Alicante - by bus*
- 13h-14h Meeting with the Sindic de Greuges - Alicante  
*c/Pascual Blasco No 1.*
- 14h-17h30 Visit to areas north of Alicante including Tibi, Parcent and Benissa.  
*-by bus*

19-21h00 Meeting with petitioners and people affected by the Land laws.

*Overnight Benissa: Casas de San Jaime.*

### **Friday 2 March, 2007**

9h00 Departure towards Valencia and Castellon Province visiting sites concerned by urbanisation projects which are the subject of complaints by EU citizens, including Javea. -by bus

11.30 Meeting with Architects, Lawyers & Property Developers -Valencia.

12.30 Meeting with Sr Gonzalez Pons; Valencian Minister for Urbanisation.

14.00 Depart for Castellon Province

15.30 Arrival in Benicassim and Oropesa and Mestrets - Petitioners

17.15 Meeting with Mayor of Oropesa

18.00 Return to Valencia

19-21h Meeting with petitioners from the Valencian province.

*Overnight Valencia*

### **Saturday 3 March, 2007**

08:00 flight to Madrid (flight nr: IB 8999)

09.45 Meeting with petitioners in Madrid EP Office (Paseo de la Castellana, 46, E-28046 Madrid). 10:00 bus to be available for delegation

*(Mr Libicki: flight back to Brussels at 12:20- flight nr:IB 3202 )*

10h30 -18h00 Visit to sites in the Madrid region which are the subject of petitions to the Committee, notably Galapagar area (eventual discussion with regional authorities on application of the land law)

*Overnight : Madrid*

David LOWE  
Head of Secretariat  
Committee on Petitions

## **HOTELS:**

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