

**Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing
to the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council**

The right to adequate housing and climate change

**Contribution by “Taula d’entitats del Tercer Sector Social
de Catalunya” (Catalonia’s Third Sector Platform)**

Name of submitting entity, organization or individual: Taula d’entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya (Catalonia’s Third Sector Platform)

This contribution builds on the inputs received from two member organizations of Taula del Tercer Sector - [Cohabitac](#) and [ECOM](#) - two members of the former - [Fundació Habitat 3](#) and [Fundació Foment de l’Habitatge Social](#) - and the Working Group on Housing and Energy Poverty by Taula d’entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya.

Members of Taula d’entitats del Tercer Sector de Catalunya



Taula del Tercer Sector (Catalonia’s Third Sector Platform) is the main third sector-umbrella organization in Catalonia, Spain. We provide a meeting point and a platform for collective action to 35 federations and networks of NGOs representing more than 3.000 non-profit organizations from Catalonia. Our main mission is to advance social and economic rights in our country through social dialogue, advocacy and building the capacities of third sector organizations. Our platform’s thematic priorities are diverse, interrelated and aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

Our working group on the Right to Housing and Energy Poverty is charged with advancing our organization’s agenda on housing. It brings together the following organizations:

- Orde Hospitalari de Sant Joan de Déu
- Cohabitac - Coordinadora fundacions habitatge social
- ECAS - Entitats Catalanes d’Acció Social
- FEPA

- Creu Roja
- AGIPCAT
- Dincat
- Salut Mental Catalunya
- FEICAT
- Federació Catalana de Drogodependències
- Càritas Catalunya
- Fòrum Salut Mental
- Fundesplai
- Fedaiia
- Federació Catalana de Voluntariat Social
- Cocarmi
- Confederació ECOM

Know more about our work www.tercersector.cat and the Catalan third social sector www.tercersector.cat/sites/default/files/dossier_TauladelTercerSector_angles.pdf (English read)

Impact of climate change on the right to adequate housing

Effects of the climate crisis on the enjoyment of the right to housing

1. Climate change directly or indirectly affects the guarantee of most human rights of all groups; those in a situation of greater vulnerability especially.
2. According to Catalonia's "Consell Assessor pel Desenvolupament Sostenible"¹ (Advisory Council for Sustainable Development"), Catalonia is already facing extreme weather conditions: increase in drought episodes, heat waves and erosion of coastal areas. According to the same report, these extreme conditions have a **direct impact on the quality of life and health of people**, especially those in a more vulnerable situation and who have fewer resources to protect themselves.
3. With regards to the right to housing, the main effects of climate change are linked to the living conditions of households and housing **habitability**; that is, exacerbated difficulties for vulnerable families to maintain their homes at adequate temperatures in a context of extreme weather events - heat waves and cold weather in particular.
4. Increasing construction costs of new buildings, which must incorporate energy efficiency and insulation criteria, also affect the **affordability** of housing. The same logic applies to rehabilitation projects necessary to face more extreme weather conditions. These factors have led to a rise in housing prices. A report by Cohabitac² proposes a series of tax measures that could reduce the cost of promoting new social rental housing and / or housing stock rehabilitation projects with a social function.

¹ http://cads.gencat.cat/web/content/Documents/Publicacions/inf_canvi_climatic_resum.pdf

² <https://www.cohabitac.cat/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Propuestas-modificaci3n-fiscalidad-vivienda.pdf>

5. The increase in **energy poverty** can therefore not be dissociated from climate change (exacerbated needs for families to deal with increasingly extreme weather events) nor the rise in energy prices (linked to the depletion of energy resources worldwide).
6. Extreme weather conditions especially affect the living conditions of people who are **homelessness** or live in unsafe or inadequate housing conditions. The report Living in the street in Barcelona 2021 by Arrels Fundació links the deterioration of health conditions of people living on the street to exposure to extreme weather conditions³.

Differentiated impacts in different parts of the Catalan territory

7. Catalonia experiences the impacts of climate change and its specific effects on the right to housing according to different geographical circumstances. Some territories are more prone to heat waves, such as the Lleida hinterland and Ebre Valley⁴; while others suffer from coastal erosion, as in the case of Maresme and Delta de l'Ebre⁵.
8. In **rural areas**, home ownership and an aging housing stock prevail, with units designed without or with few criteria of insulation, circular economy and energy savings. In some rural areas with poor urban and territorial planning, certain neighborhoods are particularly exposed to risks clearly associated with climate change, which is the increased risk of forest fires; especially of high virulence fires⁶.
9. We find more diversity in **metropolitan and urban areas**, although the existing housing stock is usually between 25 and 40 years old. Many of these units, especially in peripheral or degraded urban areas, require urgent and comprehensive rehabilitation processes. Low income families living in these housing units often use **public spaces** to improve habitable conditions in summer, especially in episodes of extreme heat or tropical nights. However, not all neighborhoods enjoy the same density of quality public spaces that include sufficient trees, green spaces and climate shelters.
10. According to the current evolution of weather conditions, **housing and urban upgrading processes** should incorporate accessibility and insulation criteria in the face of extreme conditions, incorporating passive qualities such as double glazing, avoiding thermal bridges, having ventilated facades, roofs and thermally protected roofs... Well-off neighborhoods can take on the increases in consumption costs while the most vulnerable households must limit the operation of air conditioning systems.
11. The non-introduction of **biodiversity criteria and nature-based solutions** in previous urban planning and housing constructions exacerbates extreme conditions in densified urban areas. Rising temperatures in metropolitan areas are also linked to the excessive use of materials such as asphalt and concrete, as opposed to the lack of green spaces, natural or artificial shadows and sustainable urban drainage equipment.

Differentiated impacts according to specific groups

³ https://img.arrelsfundacio.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/viure-al-carrer-a-barcelona_2021.pdf

⁴ <https://www.lamanvana.cat/lajuntament-de-lleida-elabora-un-pla-per-fer-front-als-33ctes-del-canvi-climatic/>

⁵ <https://www.cema.cat/catradiocatalunya-al-dia/sos-al-maresme-el-canvi-climatic-amenaca-tren-campings-i-ports/noticia/3162569/>

⁶ <https://www.acm.cat/actualitat/reportateegestio-forestal-contra-incendis-cada-cop-mes-virulents-el-mon-local-aposta-prevencio>

12. The **main groups affected** by extreme weather conditions are low-income families, single-parent families, the elderly, people with disabilities and migrants. These are the most affected by energy poverty and the lack of housing adaptation to climate change.
13. **People with disabilities** are among the main groups affected⁷. First, because extreme temperature changes affect this group to a greater extent. Secondly, because the group is more exposed to energy poverty, given that employment and income data are significantly lower than average, while the cost of living is usually higher (due to of medical treatments, support products, housing adaptation works and need for support staff). The group is also increasingly using the support of technological products to enhance their personal autonomy, becoming "electrodependent", which means greater exposure to rising energy costs and therefore greater vulnerability and risk of poverty.
14. The **increase in inequalities and poverty conditions** in Catalonia (25,9% in 2022 - the highest rate in Catalonia's historical series), is one of the main factors behind exacerbated impacts of climate change over housing conditions. According to official data from IDESCAT⁸, there has been a substantial increase in the number of people experiencing **energy poverty** in Catalonia. The ratio of people who cannot keep their home at an adequate temperature rose from 9.4% to 15.4% in 2022.
15. In spite of Catalonia's Law 24/2015 on urgent measures to address the housing and energy poverty emergency (a key advancement to protect energy rights of people in a situation of vulnerability), cuts in energy supplies by the main energy companies still occur and affect people who cannot pay their bills due to economic vulnerability.
16. An agreement regarding energy poverty was signed a year ago by the Catalan government and Endesa (the main utility electric company in Spain), which established mechanisms to respond to energy poverty. However, it has not yet been possible to resolve the accumulated debt conditions of thousands of families nor the payment of their bills since 2021⁹. A care solidarity fund was devised but has not been established yet. Other supplier companies refused to engage with this matter.

Measures undertaken by third sector organizations in Catalonia

17. The **Habitat 3 Foundation**¹⁰ has promoted the construction and rehabilitation of new housing units devoted to vulnerable families in a social rental modality. These units have incorporated insulation works and the establishment of sensorization and efficiency systems which record and analyze weather and energy data.
18. The "Llar Casa Bloc" project by Habitat 3 Foundation¹¹ created 17 housing units including measures to tackle the digital divide thanks to collaboration with Cellnex Telecom. Measures have also been implemented to combat situations of energy poverty through the improvement of energy efficiency tools, thanks to the

7

https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/accessible/ca/noticia/lestudi-del-greuge-economic-de-les-persones-amb-discapacitat-publicat-a-la-revista-espanola-de-discapacitad_1078224

8

https://www.tercersector.cat/sites/default/files/2022-06/2022-06-29_ndp_la_taula_del_tercer_sector_adverteix_dun_estancament_social_i_crida_a_laccio_del_govern_per_revertir_la_pobresa_i_lexclusio.pdf

9

<https://pobresaenergetica.es/2022/03/29/lalianca-contra-la-pobresa-energetica-i-la-aula-del-tercer-sector-reclamen-aprofitar-al-maxim-el-conveni-que-regula-la-pobresa-energetica/>

¹⁰ <https://www.habitat3.cat/>

¹¹ <http://www.larcasabloc.org/>

collaboration with Naturgy Foundation. As a result of a collaboration with Artistom, “Llar Casa Bloc” also includes Lydos Hybrid hot water products.

19. The **Coordinadora de Fundacions d’Habitatge Social - COHABITAC**¹² has built new housing units that incorporate energy efficiency criteria and are adapted to extreme weather conditions (Double AA + SOCIAL). COHABITAC cooperated with European organizations such as UCLT and INTERG to find a solution so that land is not an impediment to affordability and to introduce the concept of circular economy in order to reduce the consumption of materials in the construction of new houses.
20. The **Fundació Foment de l’Habitatge Social**¹³, together with Fundació Mambré and Fundació Hàbitat3, is developing a project to diagnose and improve energy efficiency in vulnerable households. The aim is to improve their quality of life, alleviate energy poverty and make a modest contribution to halting climate change from the perspective of the right to housing. The main obstacle is access to funding.
21. The **Table of entities of the Third Social Sector of Catalonia** has participated in the Table of Energy Poverty created by the Catalan Government, together with other social agents such as the Alliance against Energy Poverty, the Catalan Association of Municipalities and the Catalan Federation of Municipalities. Recently, one of the most important results for this institution has been the signing of a pioneering agreement between the Government of Catalonia and Endesa (the main electricity supply company in Spain) to respond to situations of energy poverty.
22. Currently, Taula del Tercer Sector is also participating in the design of a new **Strategy for tackling homelessness in Catalonia 2022-2025**¹⁴; a policy instrument led by the government of Catalonia with the participation of the Standing Committee formed by a group of social agents among which Taula del Tercer Sector. This strategy should address, among other priorities, the exacerbated effects of climate change over people who are homeless by providing them with sustainable housing solutions.
23. Taula del Tercer Sector is part of the steering committee of **Aliança Catalunya 2030**¹⁵ (Catalonia Alliance for the 2030 Agenda); a platform to promote sustainability, social resilience and climate change adaptation. The Alliance brings together many different stakeholders to promote commitment and compliance with the 2030 Agenda.
24. Taula del Tercer Sector took part since 2017 in the **Urban Agenda of Catalonia and the Rural Agenda of Catalonia**¹⁶; both promoted by the government of Government to comply with and localize the New Urban Agenda in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability, including the protection of the right to housing.

¹² <https://www.cohabitac.cat/>

¹³ <https://habitatgesocial.org/>

¹⁴ https://dretssocials.gencat.cat/ca/el_departament/plans_dactuacio/marc-daccio-per-a-labordatge-del-sensellarisme-a-catalunya-2022-2025/

¹⁵ http://cads.gencat.cat/ca/Agenda_2030/alianza/

¹⁶ <https://agendaurbanacatalunya.cat>