

## **EU threatens to freeze funding if Spanish urban abuses are not resolved.**

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A preliminary report to the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament on urban planning abuse in Spain proposes to freeze EU funding if the situation is not resolved.

The motion for a European parliamentary resolution was authored by the Danish green MEP Margrete Auken. It is the third such report on urban planning abuses in Spain and the language is getting stronger.

The report notes that 'many thousands of European citizens have, in different circumstances, bought property in Spain in good faith acting with local lawyers, town planners and architects, only to find later that they have become victims of urbanisation abuse by unscrupulous local authorities and that as a result, their property faces demolition because their homes have been found to be illegally built and therefore worthless and un-saleable'.

It further notes that 'Whereas there is growing evidence that the judicial authorities in Spain have begun to respond to the challenge resulting from excessive urbanisation .....'(the report) 'observes however that procedures remain outrageously slow and that sentences passed in many of these cases are unable to be enforced in a way which provides any satisfaction to the victims of such abuse'.

The report claims that the activity of urban abuse 'has been most damaging to the image of Spain and to its broader economic and political interests in Europe'. It states that '... the tens of thousands of workers in the building industry now face unemployment because of the unsustainable urbanisation policies which were pursued and from which they now have also become victims'.

The report reminds the committee that the EU commission has the power to suspend funding to a member state or region 'if it considers this necessary in order to persuade a member state to end serious breaches of the rules and principles'.

The report will be subject to revision and amendment before it is voted on in March 2009.

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