

Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

Project city profile

City description

Vitoria-Gasteiz was founded in 1181 and is the capital and the second largest city in the Basque Country. The city was awarded the European Green Capital in 2012. It inhabits a strategic position in a corridor between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe. It has been one of the most powerful and diversified industrial areas in Spain and ranks first in Spain in terms of per capita income, with an average per capita GDP 40% higher than that of the European Union. Many international companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Michelin, Gamesa, and Aernnova have factories in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The growth of the city, from its Medieval Quarter to its newest neighborhoods, has been directed by the signature urban planning policies of each era.

Sustainability profile

The city council has, since 1995, linked to the Local Agenda 21 a bundle of plans on natural resources, energy and water savings, biodiversity protection, waste treatment, sustainable transport and citizens health improvement which have been gradually adopted with the consensus and involvement of citizens, NGOs, institutions, industry, university...

In 2009, Vitoria-Gasteiz was one of the first EU municipalities that signed up to the Covenant of Mayors, voluntarily committing to increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources to meet and exceed the European Union 20% CO2 reduction objective by 2020. The city's long-term aim is to become a carbon-neutral zone, with an interim goal of cutting emissions by half by 2050, through wide-ranging actions in different sectors and public education.

Some data supports our environment planning tradition: 1/3 of the surface area of the municipality are forested area (479 m²/person) and another 1/3 extensive rural area of high agricultural value, 4 Natura 2000 network spaces, 600 ha of Green Belt, 45 m² of public green areas/person, 130,000 trees in city streets, 210 organic farming plots, 100% of the population lives less than 300 m from green spaces, the city is still reasonably compact (around 46 homes per hectare)



Facts & Figures

Population / Land area
245,000 / 278 km²

Municipal budget
€ 332 million

Mayor
Mr. Gorka Urtaran Aguirre

Partner city
Edmonton

Website
www.vitoria-gasteiz.org

so 95% of the population have access to all kinds of basic services (educational, health, sports, cultural, etc.) within 500 m of their home, only 25% of the journeys within the city are made by car, 284 days of good air quality each year and low levels of residents exposure to noise.

The icon of Vitoria-Gasteiz is its Green Belt, a network of 5 interconnected suburban parks, which provides a smooth transition between the urban area and the rural environment. It works as an urban green infrastructure integrating nature into the city, playing a fundamental role in cooling the urban climate and improving comfort, reducing contamination, capturing carbon, increasing the infiltration capacity of the soil and consequently improving urban biocapacity. So, according to the new strategy of UE for the promotion of green infrastructure, Vitoria-Gasteiz is leading this innovative scheme through a new green infrastructure plan.

Vitoria-Gasteiz is, today, an environmental benchmark representing the archetypal average-size city, in which 84% of the citizens of Europe live and shares to a large extent the same problems and solutions.

Our citizens enjoy a good quality of life and well-being, with high life expectancy. According to the latest surveys, they are generally satisfied with their city and with the opportunities it offers.

Sustainable Mobility and Public Space Plan

Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council is committed to sustainable development that allows its citizens to maintain a high quality of life. Reflected in this idea, in 2007, a Sustainable Mobility and Public Space Plan (SMPSP) was proposed that has been developed in the last years into a major contributor to urban planning.

The commitment of the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz to sustainable mobility is the result of a joint effort between various involved stakeholders includes citizens, technicians of different municipal departments, and policy makers. The role of the citizens is clearly reflected in the participation process that has accompanied the development of the SMPSP from its beginnings through the Citizens Forum for Sustainable Mobility. The high level of public participation, leading to the Citizens Covenant for Sustainable Mobility, has served to strengthen the collective sense and enabled a common plan to be drafted. As a result, conflicts are avoided and the Plan has been adjusted to meet the requirements of citizens.

The SMPSP has achieved a series of benefits for the city including reversing the trend in the modal split, reducing the use of private car and increasing displacements in public transport, by bicycle and walking. Vitoria-Gasteiz created functional networks for pedestrian mobility and for cyclists which gave value to public space. The City found that the progress reached in the public transport system resulted primarily in reducing pollutant emissions and saving travel time for users.

Project Team

Lead Coordinator

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Rural Area and Mountains,
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Master Plan for Cyclist Mobility

In 2010, Vitoria-Gasteiz implemented the “Master Plan for Cyclist Mobility”, which made bicycle promotion an integral part of the city’s transport policy. The Master Plan set the ambitious target of 15% cycling mode share by 2020 while maintaining 55% mode of walking. Since its introduction, cycling has increased while car traffic has significantly decreased. In 2014 the modal shift was 54.4% pedestrian, 24.7% private car, 7.6% public transport, and 12.3% bicycle.

Water management

Vitoria-Gasteiz has been a prime example in Europe of a city successfully coping with water scarcity. The City set ambitious targets to drastically reduce the consumption of water to below 100 liters per capita per day. Vitoria-Gasteiz has made water related investments within the context of Agenda 21 Environmental Action Plan to improve its water supply, reduce losses, increase sustainable consumption, and overall improve the quality of water. Total domestic water demand shows a significant decrease, from 130 litres per capita/day in 2004, to 106 litres per capita/day in 2014, equivalent to an 18% reduction.

Thematic areas and goals

Ecosystem services

As the European Green Capital 2012, the city launched several projects to support municipal biodiversity and assist ecosystem services. The Greenbelt was designed to solve a large number of problems including water management, biodiversity, saving natural resources and public use. Interventions carried out in the Greenbelt, including controlling flooding and erosion, have been based on natural processes. As a result, the Greenbelt is ideal for public use with high ecological and landscape value, some of which form part of the European Natura 2000 Network. The Greenbelt lies next to some of the most valuable natural spaces in the municipality between the City and the countryside.

Today, Vitoria-Gasteiz seeks to apply the Greenbelt philosophy to the municipality, both within the city and in the rest of the region. The aim is to construct a green infrastructure system of interconnected spaces and networks to improve the ecological relationship of Vitoria-Gasteiz with its Bioregion. The goal is to protect and improve the region’s natural assets, guaranteeing



Segregated bike lane outside the green Europa Congress Centre
Photo Credit Dave Dodge, Green Energy Futures



The City Hall of Vitoria-Gasteiz is equipped with numerous solar panels.
Photo Credit Dave Dodge, Green Energy Futures



Vitoria-Gasteiz’s greenbelt is rich with natural wildlife
Photo Credit Dave Dodge, Green Energy Futures

ecosystem services that contribute to saving energy, combat climate change, promote food self-sufficiency, and improve human health. With the aim of improving the ecological, environmental and social functionality of the city's green spaces, Vitoria-Gasteiz City Hall has initiated the Green Urban Infrastructure Strategy of Vitoria-Gasteiz.

Goals: Vitoria-Gasteiz looks forward to sharing its experiences with other project cities and is curious to learn how other cities have integrated ecosystem services within an urban landscape, and how they have connected these areas with the city center. The City is also interested in learning about other Green Belt projects similar to its own.

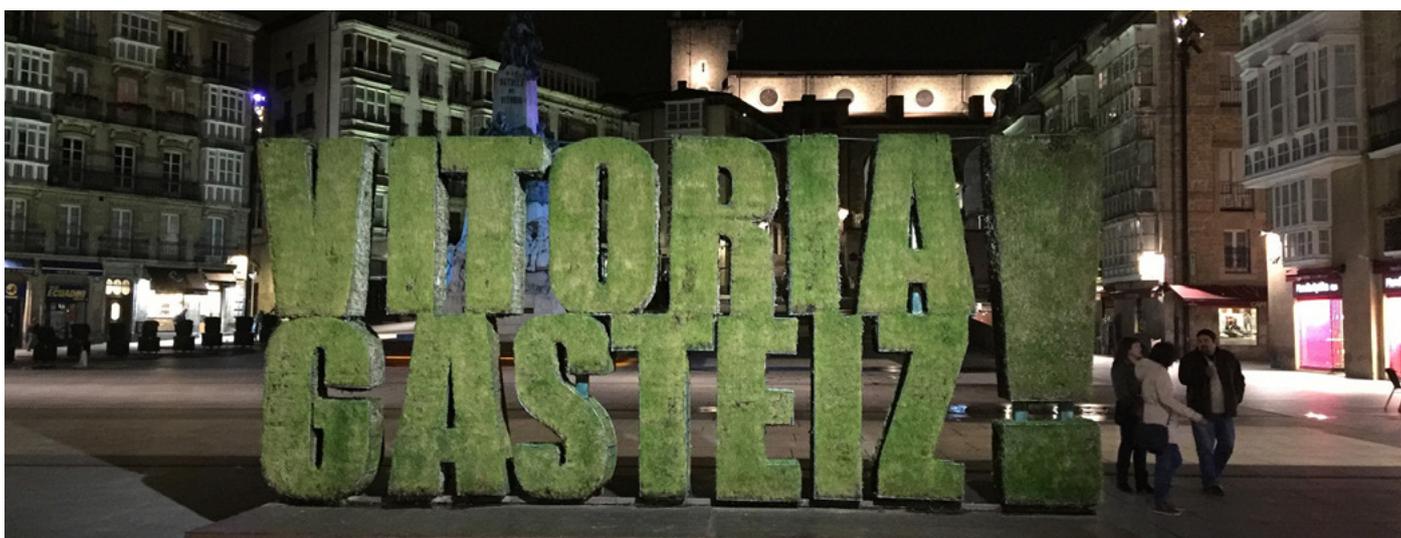
Within the exchange, both Vitoria-Gasteiz and their partner, the City of Edmonton, will look to explore shared challenges and potential collaborations related to ecosystem services and multifunctional landscapes. Each city hopes to continue exchanging and sharing knowledge to benefit their own actions at the local level.

Low-carbon development

The Energy Agency of Vitoria-Gasteiz (AEVI), created in 2007 for the purpose of ensuring efficient energy provision for municipal services, is working to encourage the integration of guidelines for energy saving, efficiency, and sustainability in all scopes of municipal management. Vitoria-Gasteiz has implemented different renewable energy sources (biomass, geothermal, photovoltaic, wind, etc.) in municipal buildings. The City's Europa Congress Centre is also currently being renovated to meet LEED Gold and Passive House standards. The Energy Agency is putting forward a model that is not only applicable to the municipality's buildings but also to those of other cities.

Goals: Vitoria-Gasteiz is interested in sharing its experiences and discussing similar projects related to low-carbon infrastructure. Through the collaboration framework, both Vitoria-Gasteiz and Edmonton will work to advance low-carbon development principles, in which the two cities would periodically discuss and share their progress towards Compact of Mayors commitments.

Edmonton was especially interested in learning about the implementation structure and financial basis for upcoming large-scale retrofit programs. Collaboration between the research bodies from Edmonton and Vitoria-Gasteiz will also support and form knowledge sharing networks to advance work.



The famous green Vitoria-Gasteiz! sign in the historic city center, Photo Credit Dave Dodge, Green Energy Futures

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