

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## What Are We Building in Vitoria-Gasteiz?

The city we live in, Vitoria-Gasteiz, was recently named by National Geographic magazine as being one of the best travel destinations for 2021. The article refers to urban nature conservation and preservation of tradition, and the buildings in its historic quarter. I agree **wholeheartedly** that the city is worthy of this accolade, however today, I want to look at **the other side of the coin**.

As in all cities, Vitoria has many problems to face, some which are easier to solve than others. **When it comes down to** our quality of life, subjects such as **homelessness** and **squatting**, empty and **derelict** buildings, house prices and rent must be **tackled** so that our society can be fair and more equal.

It was claimed that our town has only 10 **homeless** people living on the streets, something I find quite hard to believe when I walk across it to see more and more people **begging** and asking for public help. Even if this is true, **I think that this is 10 too many**. **Why?**

Well, there are so many empty buildings here that there is no good reason why anyone should be left destitute. The sole motive for creating housing should be so that people can live in them. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case with many individuals and institutions trying to make a quick profit while others have nothing.

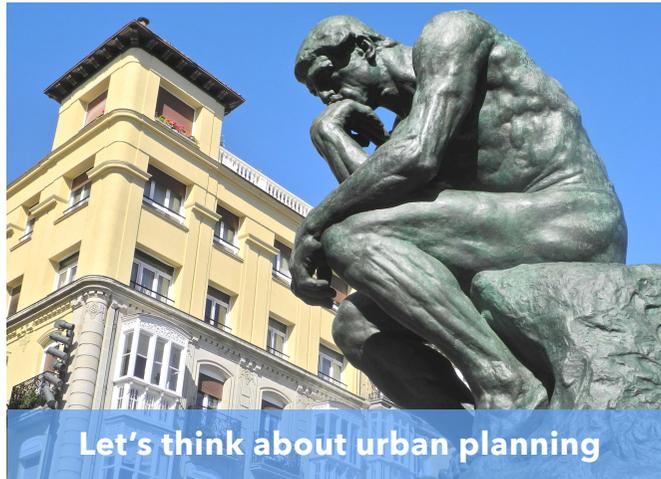
In a more fair and equal society, it should not be necessary for people to have to **squat**. In Vitoria, not only do we have the biggest **squatted** district in the whole of Europe in Errekaleor, we have various other locations where **squatters** come into conflict with the police, the town council and property owners.

Not only are there far too many unoccupied flats but as you can see in the video, there are also incredible buildings dating from as far back as the 12th century that have been left **to crumble**, such as the Casa Maturana-Verástegui, whose roof **caved in** just before Christmas.

Yet all this seems to contradict the fact that house prices and rental costs here are so incredibly high. The minimum price for a council house is €150,000 and it is almost impossible to rent a flat for less than €700 a month. **How is this possible when supply is higher than demand?** Surely, if there is so much accommodation available, the prices should be coming down. → → →

07/01/21 / **Keyword: building**

**ECP coach Kez investigates town planning in Vitoria. Why are there so many empty and derelict buildings and why are there new ones being built?**



### Useful vocabulary

**wholeheartedly:** with complete sincerity and commitment  
**the other side of the coin:** the opposite aspect of a subject  
**when it comes down to...:** when a specific matter is under consideration

**homelessness (n):** the state of having no home. **(adj) homeless**

**to squat:** to illegally occupy an uninhabited building **(squatting) (adj) squatted (n) squatters**

**derelict:** in a bad condition because of disuse and neglect

**begging:** asking for food or money, given voluntarily by others  
**to crumble:** to fall apart; to disintegrate

**to cave in:** to collapse

**outlying:** far from the centre

### Let's chat about that!

1. How would you answer the 3 questions in the text?
2. Which ideas do you agree with and which ones do you disagree with?
3. Can you recognise the buildings in the video?
4. Can you explain your opinion about squatting & squatters?
5. Which projects in your town deserve public money and which ones don't? Why?

# LIVE! English Events

## Come and socialise in English!



### Coffee Saturdays

1st Saturday 11:00

~~3rd Oct~~

~~7th Nov~~

~~5th Dec~~

**9th Jan**

6th Feb

6th Mar

Not in April

8th May

5th Jun

### Sports Dive

2nd Friday 18:30

~~16th Oct~~

~~13th Nov~~

~~11th Dec~~

**15th Jan**

12th Feb

12th Mar

16th Apr

14th May

11th Jun

### Cinema Nights

Last Friday 19:30

~~30th Oct~~

~~27th Nov~~

~~Not in Dec~~

**29th Jan**

26th Feb

26th Mar

30th April

28th May

25th Jun



An ECP LIVE! English event

## SPORTS DIVE!

The 2nd Friday of every month: 18.30



It is also possible to see many new constructions being built, not only on the outskirts of the town and the **outlying** villages but also on vacant pieces of land in town. **Do we really need them, and if so, who are they for?** I had a conversation with a neighbour who said that she had 8 flats here, but she was complaining about another neighbour who had more!

The council seems to have money for certain projects but not for the ones that would maintain the beauty and the attraction of the old part or provide shelter for the people who most need it. I feel there should be more equality in society and that there should be access to housing for everyone. It is a basic human right and it should not be used to help the rich get richer.

*Written by ECP coach Kez Kurien.*

## Vitorianos! Tell us about your buildings!

Look at these photos and tell us about the buildings



Old petrol station, La Florida park



Zulueta Palace



Old City Council offices



Escoriaza Esquibel Palace