

Crunch time for illegal houses

The most ambitious project to regularize houses in Andalusia is met with rejection by the residents of Chiclana, who are asked to foot the bill.

Pedro Espinoza, El Pais – Cádiz – 22nd November 2009

Original article in Spanish [HERE](#)

During the past 30 years they grew like mushrooms. And now getting rid of them will not be easy. The council of Chiclana (Cadiz), aided by the Government of Andalusia, has commenced the final phase of one of its most ambitious and complex objectives: to regularize more than 15,000 illegal homes. It is seeking the solution through ordinances that have divided the city into areas and by securing the provision of basic services like drinking water or sewerage. The cost must be borne by the homeowners who built without permission. And that is the problem. Those who have lived for years in unlicensed houses are not willing to pay the costs demanded by the town council, headed by the Socialist José María Román. They consider them to be exorbitant. If the residents do not pay, the plan is doomed to failure and will indefinitely extend the complex irregular planning situation in the city. It will also put into question a policy that the regional government wanted to extend to other parts of the community.

The demonstration yesterday, which gathered more than 4,000 people, was the public expression of those who oppose the legalization process driven by the socialist municipal government. The inventory conducted by the Department of Housing and Regional Planning states that there are 15,007 illegal homes in Chiclana. Of these, 10,632 are within the new areas of basic management and fall within this process of legalisation which began with the opening of an office and has continued with the elaboration of by-laws that define the steps to be followed and sets the costs, that according to preliminary estimates are between 30,000 and 140,000 euros. Within this price are the administrative costs to legalize the houses and work to provide basic services such as lighting, drainage or water supply.

But many are not willing to pay this money. And it's not a political issue. They also rejected the ordinances proposed by the previous government of the PP and IU. It is an economic issue. "It's impractical, especially in these times," says Miguel Perez, spokesperson for the platform that called the demonstration. Most ask, with the support of local opposition, that the Junta and the City Council should pay 75% of the costs. They argue that both administrations allowed illegal houses to mushroom out of control in Chiclana for years.

The latest proposal of this platform, which includes a number of associations, is that owners should pay for the most essential basic services and that the Council should delay the rest of the project until they have a new general plan because the current plan is annulled by the TSJA.

Others, like José Antonio Sanchez, of the Federación Norte, proposed that the City Council should (endorsed by the Junta), request a large loan of EUR 360 million (estimated cost of the regularisation) and that the owners should repay it to the council in monthly instalments not above 80 euros. "Banks are not going to give loans to everyone to pay the costs they are asking for," he warns. The neighbourhood movement, which also incorporates political overtones, has also produced the Chiclana justa platform, a group that does not want public money invested in

helping those who built their houses without permission. "Those who didn't pay should pay now," says its spokesman, Jose Izquierdo.

The city council is in a difficult position. It must find ways to reduce cost: loans, extension of deadlines or individual works contracts. But everyone is still not convinced. Without residents willing to pay, the mushrooms of illegal urbanism will remain in Chiclana.