

To the next mayor

This year there are municipal elections and it is important to emphasize that the struggle for agility, simplicity, and clarity in the urban licensing issued by our country's town halls must stay one of the major battles for the next municipal executives.

Licensing is still burdened with bureaucracy and the response times are high. This situation cripples and stalls the start of many projects all over the country, many of which are housing projects with a heavy impact not only for those working with the town halls, but also for the Portuguese families whose dream house suffers many delays, preventing them to live in decent houses with good habitability.

This is not a problem exclusive of the large cities. This is a national problem, taking place all over. We might even say in fact that we have recently witnessed an effort from the major cities of Portugal, with whom APPII has been working actively, to fight or at least counter bureaucracy, slowness, opacity, and complexity of the municipal procedures. But the fact remains that both professionals and companies handling with town halls still complain about this problem. The problem lays with the catastrophic level of bureaucracy that for many decades prevailed in the town halls and even today, after so much work has been done, there is still much left to do. On the one side, Portugal is managing to position itself in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, but the fact is that bureaucracy is constantly amongst the problems pointed out by the same entity.

We are facing a lot of work, and therefore we cannot stop nor can we give up. Not even the fact that we are crossing a municipal elections year may stop this work. Cities do not stop, cannot stop.

We want our cities to assume as "Cities of the Future", modern, with efficient administrative procedures, where working is pleasant and possible, and, because of that, cities positively interacting with their stakeholders and professionals, investment friendly and, finally, cities for everyone and of everyone.

Thus, we call on the next mayors and their executives first of all, if they have not already done so in the 21st century, to digitalize the licensing, for proceedings as well as for filing proceedings and also to issue expert's reports. This tool should be mandatory, for environmental reasons, to eliminate bureaucracy and to improve clarity.

Among other measures that we advocate, we also defend for quite some time the creation of a single partner in the municipalities, such as a proceedings or client manager, similar to all the companies dealing with public, in charge of monitoring each project, from the beginning to the end and capable of unlock impasses.

We would also venture to say that municipal technicians should be fully available to service both the citizens and the companies. Basically, that they should be easily contactable. Communication with the professionals in our towns must be improved. We are sure that these

measures would prevent many impasses caused by lack of communication, which naturally culminate in delays and projects complications.

There would be much more to say, but in the end we would like to stress still a stronger coordination between all the public entities in a urban procedure: DGPC (following resolution of the impasse created by many of its decisions), water, sewage, underground, and so on, and specially with AT, which recently has been raising many illegitimate problems connected with the reduced VAT rate granting for urban rehabilitation by requesting documents *extra legem*. We think it is urgent to create an extended task force under the authority of the Government to analyze, take measures and follow up. With this, bad administrative practices in all public entities originated by lack of communication and of information sharing would be prevented, we would promote coordination with the AT as regards to tax benefits applicable for urban rehabilitation, all this providing shorter licensing time limits, administrative simplification, efficient and effective coordination among all public entities, costs reduction and more certainty in administrative processes, to foster, in the end, an administrative environment streamlined, debureaucratized and targeting a fast evolution of procedures.