

Beatriz Corredor presenting the project



Photo credit: Ministerio de Vivienda

## Solar power Efficient homes

**I**f renewable energy is the future, building an efficient and sustainable home could be considered the greatest technological challenge of our age.

To help this kind of project in Spain, Madrid will be the host for the first edition of Solar Decathlon held outside the United States. It is an international competition where around 20 universities take part in designing the most efficient solar home.

The event will take place from the 18th to the 27th of June and 20 homes will be on display which function

solely on solar power. They have been designed and built by students from universities in nine different countries. The biannual event is also scheduled for Spain in 2012, although the city where it is to be held has not yet been confirmed.

The initiative was presented by the Ministers for Housing, Beatriz Corredor, Industry, Miguel Sebastián, Science and Innovation, Cristina Garmendia and Madrid's mayor, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón.

Many of the projects are designed to be completely self supporting without the need to connect to the communal electricity system. "They are

not prototypes or models, they are finished homes where everything works by solar energy containing advanced installations of domotics (home automation) to operate everything from the washing machine to the computer, including the lights, curtains and air conditioning" affirmed Corredor adding that, "these solutions will soon be adaptable for everyday living". The aim of Solar Decathlon is to promote the investigation within universities into the design of energy efficient homes, to make the public aware of the ecological and economic advantages of these technologies and to stimulate

the business world to introduce solar technology into homes and businesses, whilst supporting innovation and the creation of new patents.

The houses will be built and displayed on a plot of land of over 40,000 square metres next to the River Manzanares and will be judged by a panel of international experts in the sector. Factors such as use of solar power, CO2 emissions, comfort, communication, sustainability etc. will be taken into account. There will also be a mobile exhibition all over Spain with models of the houses and workshops for children explaining the advantages of the use of sustainable energies. The UK project will be presented by the University of Nottingham, there are six Spanish contenders, six Brazilian, four German, two French, two American, two Chinese and one each from Finland and Mexico.

## Unemployment

# Jobseekers increase

**J**anuary is traditionally a lousy month for employment and 2010 is no exception with a further 124,890 people losing their jobs and the number of unemployed now totalling over four million.

For the sixth month running more people joined the job queue than left it and there are now a staggering 4,048,493 people signed on looking for work as of the end of January. The number of unemployed has increased by 720,692 in the last 12 months, an increase of 21.6 per cent and the service sector has been the hardest hit with 102,130 more hotel and restaurant professionals out on the street. This sector forms almost 82 per cent of the total number of unemployed.

The Employment General Secretary, Maravillas Rojo, underlined the historical increases in unemployment in January, "even during periods of economic growth", but acknowledged that the new figures are, "very negative". However she affirmed that the overall tendency is for a slowdown in the growth of the number of unemployed, admitting at the same time that the turning point had not yet been reached.

In the Canaries, the regional government's Minister for Employment, Jorge Rodríguez, announced that their administration's aim was to maintain the level of unemployment at 250,000 throughout 2010. He underlined that since May last year, the Canaries is the only region where unemployment has stabilised and insisted on the importance of tourism in the Islands' economy. He gave his opinion that the Spanish economy would now grow this year and that 2011 wouldn't see much improvement but announced that all the current forecasts indicated that the Canaries would reach the turning point in the second half of 2010 and early 2011.

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