



## **ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION IN SPAIN**

As parliamentary democracy was restored in Spain in 1978, a new regional administration was created, the Autonomous Communities (17), adding a third powerful tier of government to the 50 provinces and 8,078 municipalities. In addition to this basic structure of regional and local government, there is a range of other entities at local level based on municipalities, including three types of joint administration: “comarcas” (set up and controlled by the Autonomous Communities), metropolitan areas (which are similar structures created by Autonomous Communities urban areas) and “mancomunidades de municipios” (voluntary groupings of municipalities created to provide specific services).

The Autonomous Communities (regions) share with the central government the role of supervising and financing local government. They have responsibility for health and education, furthermore they undertake substantial spending to deliver a range of other economic and social services. The following are examples of this range of activity:

- ❑ Infrastructure including roads, irrigation, non-commercial ports and airports.
- ❑ Environmental protection.
- ❑ Culture, sport and leisure.
- ❑ Economic development and regulation, including tourism, agriculture and fishing.
- ❑ Support for local-level initiatives on housing, community welfare and culture.

The regions assume direct control over a substantial part of personal income tax. For historic reasons, Navarra and País Vasco Autonomous Communities have their own fiscal system, only spirits and tobacco consumption taxes and taxes on imports are not within their power and they are responsibility of the Central State. Grants are the basic source of current income for the regions, these grants fall into three broad categories, two of them catering for specific tasks of some groups of regions while the third, most important form of grant is available as general support to all regions. The grants are:

- ❑ Health service block grant. Distributed according to population.
- ❑ Grants for investment projects in poorer regions.
- ❑ Tax-sharing grant.

The provinces include seven which cover an area identical to one of the regions. These have been re-designated as regions and now combine the functions of both types of authority. Provinces have no specific constitutional responsibilities, but have a statutory duty to:

- ❑ Monitor municipal services to guarantee their adequacy.
- ❑ Provide legal, economic and technical aid to municipalities.
- ❑ In general, foster and administer the specific interests of the province.

Provinces receive grants from the State and regions for their financing, these financial transfers are almost the four-fifths of province's resources. The vast majority of them are State grants, distributed among the provinces in accordance of socio-economic variables (population, per capita income, etc.).

Most of the municipalities are small (a 60 per cent have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants). Municipal governments have a list of compulsory functions laid down by statute. The minimum set of tasks for smaller ones includes street lighting, cemeteries, water supply and sewage disposal, refuse collection, road surfacing, and food regulation. For municipalities with larger population size, the range of services stipulated by law widens to include, for instance, fire protection and public transport.

The Constitution also gives the town councils the right to intervene in any matter that concerns their interests. Beyond the statutory minimum, town councils may therefore choose to undertake other services and functions they decide beneficial to their citizens.

Municipalities have access to a variety of local taxes and significant sums from user charges. The State transfers represents around two-fifths of their total income. They are separate block grants for Barcelona and Madrid. The user charges and public prices are also an important source of financing for town councils.

## ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION IN CATALONIA

### 1.- RECENT HISTORY

The administrative division in Catalonia is different from the rest of the Spanish regions, there is the “comarca” (county).

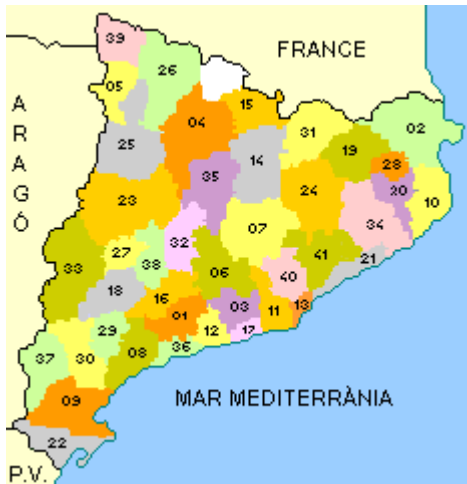
The actual county organization comes from the re-establishment of the 1936 division carried out in the Second Republic, which never came into force due to Spanish Civil War. After the Franco’s dictatorship and the approval of the Spanish Constitution (1978) and the Catalan Autonomous Statute, appeared the political and law conditions for the division into counties.

The Law 6/1987, 4<sup>th</sup> April, about the county organization in Catalonia rules the most important aspects of the county, such as the administrative demarcation and the “consells comarcals” as a governance and administration body of the county.

### 2.- COMARCAL MAP

Nowadays, there are 41 counties in Catalonia.

|                   |                     |                      |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 01 Alt Camp       | 15 Cerdanya         | 29 Priorat           |
| 02 Alt Empordà    | 16 Conca de Barberà | 30 Ribera d'Ebre     |
| 03 Alt Penedès    | 17 Garraf           | 31 Ripollès          |
| 04 Alt Urgell     | 18 Garrigues        | 32 Segarra           |
| 05 Alta Ribagorça | 19 Garrotxa         | 33 Segrià            |
| 06 Anoia          | 20 Gironès          | 34 Selva             |
| 07 Bages          | 21 Maresme          | 35 Solsonès          |
| 08 Baix Camp      | 22 Montsià          | 36 Tarragonès        |
| 09 Baix Ebre      | 23 Noguera          | 37 Terra Alta        |
| 10 Baix Empordà   | 24 Osona            | 38 Urgell            |
| 11 Baix Llobregat | 25 Pallars Jussà    | 39 Val d'Aran        |
| 12 Baix Penedès   | 26 Pallars Sobirà   | 40 Vallès Occidental |
| 13 Barcelonès     | 27 Pla d'Urgell     | 41 Vallès Oriental   |
| 14 Berguedà       | 28 Pla de l'Estany  |                      |



### 3.- “COMARCAL” COMPETENCES

The competences of Catalan county councils cover the following areas:

- a) territorial organization and urbanism
- b) health
- c) social services
- d) sports
- e) education
- f) public health and environment

The sources of these competences are:

- a) Bottom up (from towns to county): functions of replacement, support, collaboration or cooperation with the municipal services.

Some examples in El Maresme are: drinking water supply to all the villages from North Maresme, selective withdrawal of urban solid residues, European Resources Office.

- b) Top down (region to county): The county has the competencies that are given by the Parliament in the subjects mentioned above. Collaboration of the county in the management of Catalan government competencies, through delegations, agreements or other law thecnics.

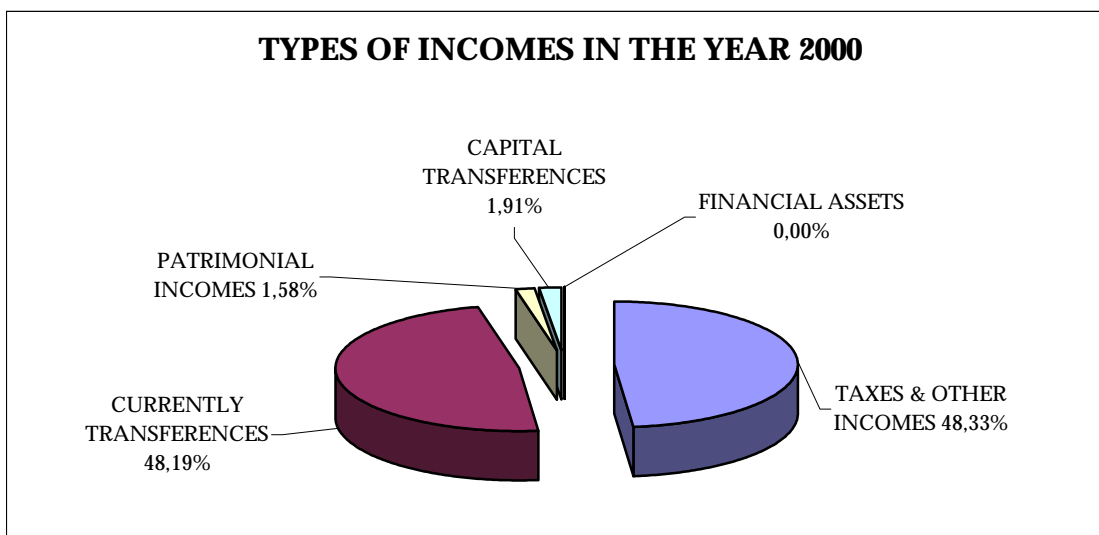
Some examples in El Maresme are: transport and canteen school service, social services, help to submit grants for the houses rehabilitation.

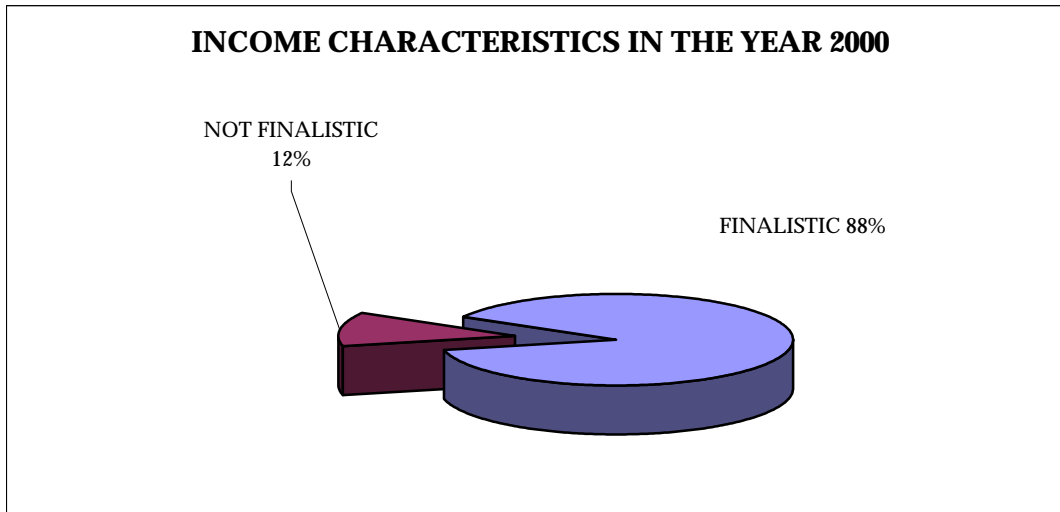
#### 4.- FINANCING OF COUNTY COUNCILS

The majority of the county councils financing come from:

- a) Taxes or public prices for the service supply.
- b) Participation in the Catalan government taxes, through the Catalan Local Cooperation Fund.
- c) Contributions from the town councils.
- d) Grants.

The “Consell Comarcal del Maresme” distributed the 2000 resources in the following way:





## 5.- CHALLENGES

The county councils face three major structural challenges:

- a) **Undefined competences:** The activity of the county councils comes from two sources, on the one hand, the Catalan government lends them its own competences, the town council hand over some of their competences, if there is a basic agreement. Competences given to the county councils by law are really narrow.
- b) **Economic insufficiency:** The counties has no participation in the incomes of the State. Furthermore, the county councils have not its own taxes resources.
- c) **Financial dependency:** Most of the counties resources are finalistic, that is to say, they go to definite activities on which the county councils have little power of decision. This is so in the case of grants or of the municipal contributions for the management of their own services.

Despite these problems, there is an open debate at the highest level about the new model of territorial organization. Political parties with representation in the Catalan Parliament, experts and civil society are discussing today which the territorial division is that will suit better to the present and future necessities of Catalonia. The county, like the town councils and provinces, will have to find their place in this new trend. There are different **possibilities:**

- a) Creation of a new administrative level, called “region” or “vegueria”, which includes all socio-economic dynamics of the territory. It can be a meeting point between the regional and local administrations.
- b) Definition of each county council in an asymmetric way, according to their own specificity.
- c) To give a new size to town councils, in order to extend their boundaries and take advantage of larger scale economies.

