

# **FROM BARCELONA TO THE EU MAYORS FOR HOUSING**

**Seminar on Rent Regulations, Rent Stabilisation and Rent  
Control in Europe**

**International Social Housing Festival  
Dublin, June 2025**

**Mar Jiménez  
Commissioner for European Affairs  
Barcelona**







Where we are:

Europe is facing  
An external threat,  
But also  
An internal one



## General framework:

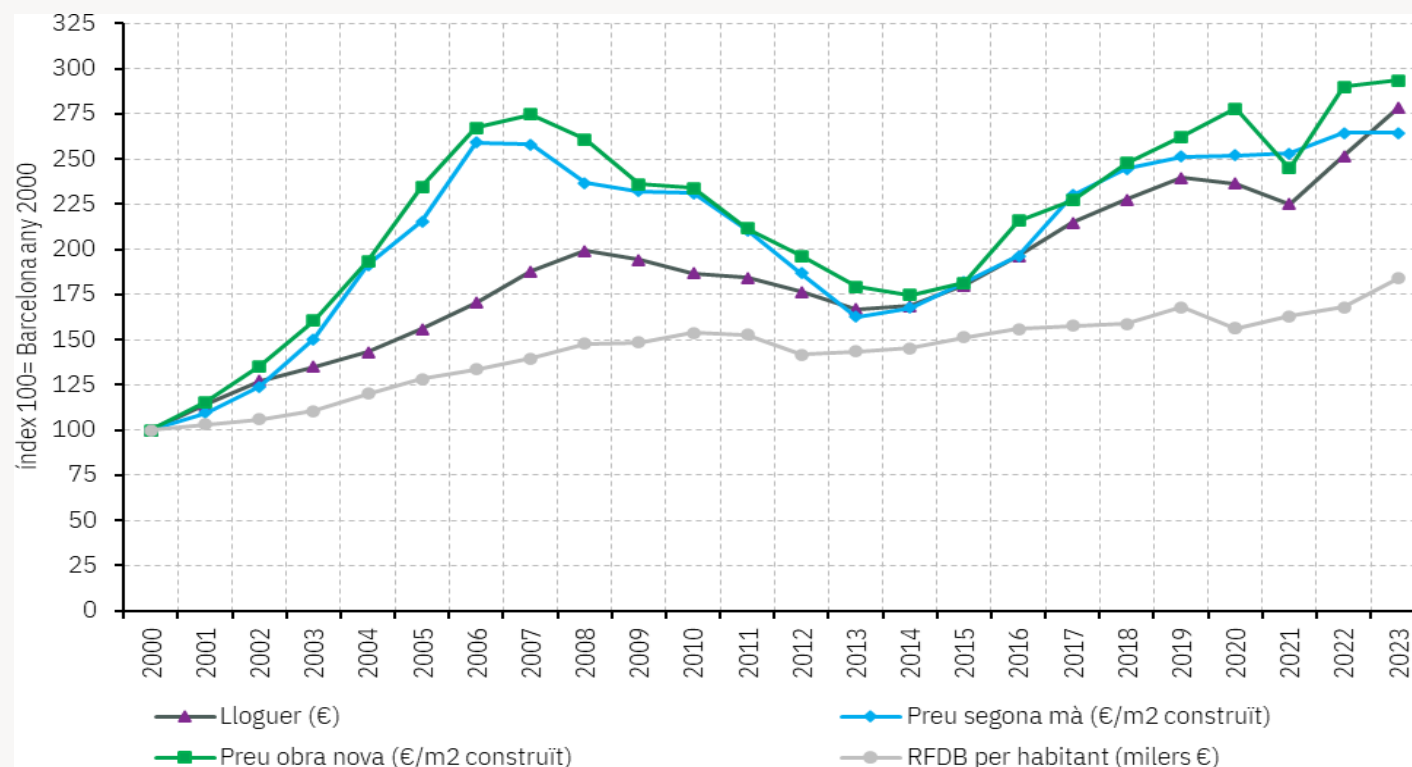
- The real-life **impacts of the financialisation of housing** today encompass large portions of our population, including particularly vulnerable groups such as youth or migrants but also large segments of the working and middle classes.
- This is **greatly eroding liveability standards, social cohesion as well as economic competitiveness** for all of society.
- This is not about Barcelona, this is not about Dublin, it is affecting all European cities.
- This is why 16 European Mayors have joined under the Mayors for Housing alliance to advocate for a more ambitious European agenda on housing. European project itself it is at stake!



## General framework:

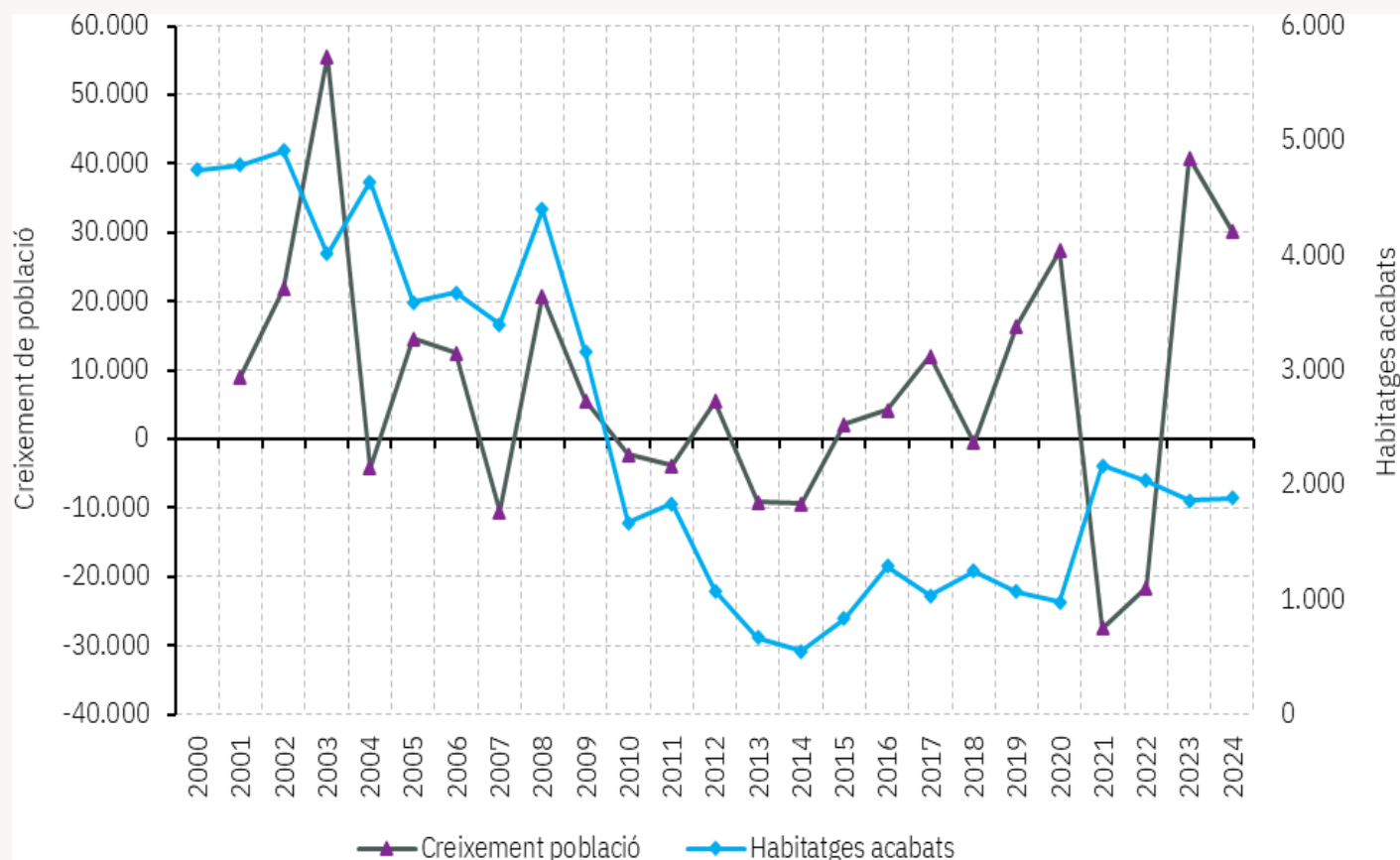
- The current situation is the result of a **long-term lack of public intervention and investment in the housing sector.**
- In the upcoming years we need to increase the investment in permanent affordable housing, and support an inclusive energy transition based on the principle of cost-neutrality.
- However, while we do all of this, **we cannot leave people unprotected.** Strengthening rent regulation is a moral imperative towards current tenants.
- But rent regulation is also an economic necessity: **we need key workers in our cities, and we need to prevent social unrest from escalating. We need to defend the ideal of Europe, reconquire the cohesion in our societies, this is what makes Europe a great experiment.**

Figure 1\_ In the case of the city of Barcelona, between the years 2000 and 2023, while **average household income had increased by 84%**, **the average sale price of new housing had risen by 193%**, that of **second-hand housing by 165%**, and rental prices by **178%** "



## Figure 2. Population Growth and Completed Dwellings. Barcelona. 2000–2024

Source: Idescat, continuous population register up to 2021 and annual population census from 2022 onwards; Housing Secretariat, based on completion permits from the Association of Quantity Surveyors and Technical Architects.





## AN INCREASING SOCIAL UNREST....





# ACROSS EUROPE....





TO SUM UP: SUPPLY DOESN'T MEET THE DEMAND

## **A MARKET FAILURE!!**

We need to address the legitimate demands of our citizens with effective solutions.

WE NEED TO INTERVENE THE MARKET

# Barcelona, committed with the right to housing, and this means, among other policies, rent regulation:

**Spain (Law 12/2023 - article 18):**

**Regions can declare a market tense area if at least one of two conditions applies:**

- a) Average burden of the cost of the mortgage or rent in the household budget plus basic housing expenses and supplies exceeds thirty percent of the average income of the household.**
- b) Increase in the sale or rental housing price has been at least 3% higher than the consumer price index over a five year period.**

- Catalonia pioneered rent regulation in Spain in 2020, which was deemed unconstitutional at the time. However, the Spanish Law of 2023 introduced the possibility to implement rent regulation, and so Catalunya introduced it in early 2024 to 140 municipalities with stressed housing markets, which were afterwards extended to 271, encompassing more than 7 million people.

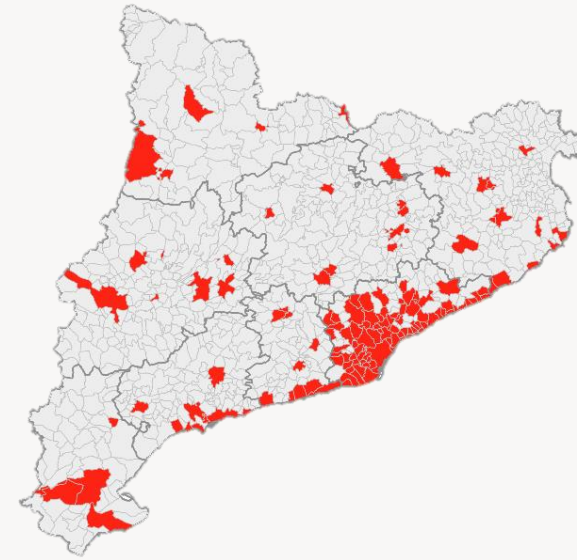


## **Barcelona, committed with the right to housing, and this means, among other policies, rent regulation:**

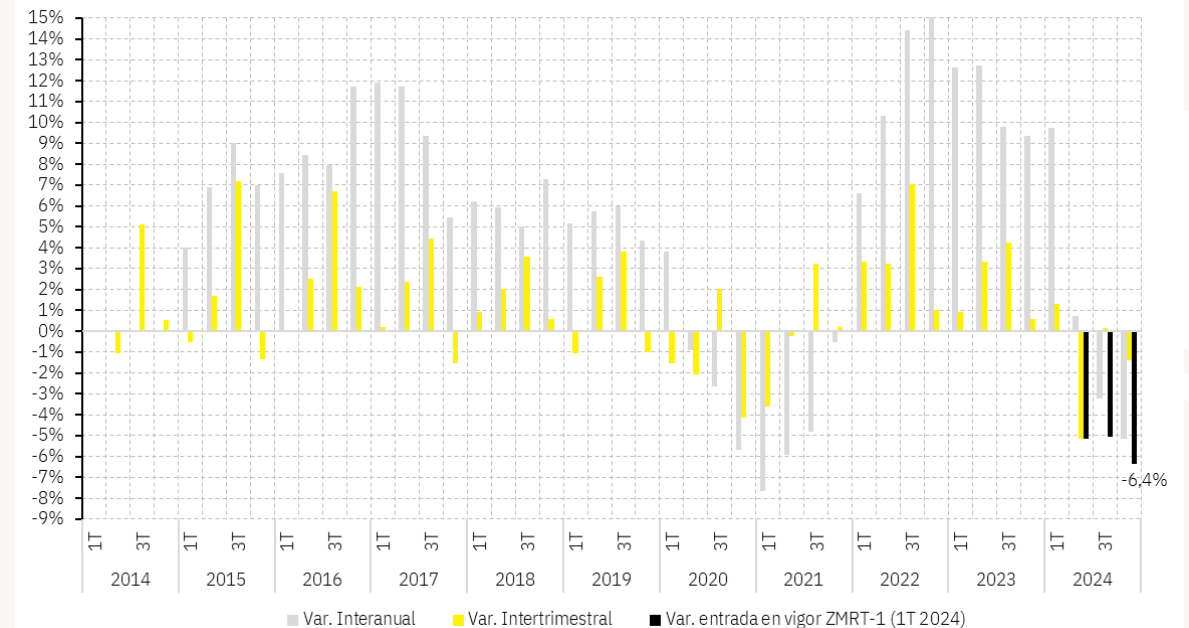
- This regulation stabilizes rent increases between rental contracts (5-7 years long depending on the type of landlord) which are limited to the annual updating index.
- In addition, landlords owning 5 or more units need to reduce rents to meet the rental reference index, which is based on average rents in each census track.
- As a result, one year after its implementation, average rents for new rental contracts have lowered by 6.4% in Barcelona.
- And the supply has not decreased! We see new units join the rental market, although at a slower pace.

## New State regulation (and regional implementation) under Law 12/2023

- Precedent: Temporary regulation in Catalonia under Law 11/2020.
- Based on Law 12/2023, Tense Market Areas have been declared (140 municipalities)
- New rental contracts cannot exceed the prize from the previous contract, once the indexed annual rent increase has been applied.
- When owned by a large landlord (5 or more units), rent cannot be higher than what is established in the Reference Index for rental prices.
- Results: 6,4% decrease in rents until 1<sup>st</sup> trimester of 2025.



Average rental price variation (€/month) in Barcelona 2014-2024







# Barcelona, committed with the right to housing

## Short-term rentals:

- STR have been frozen in most neighbourhoods in Barcelona since 2014 - there are around 10,000 legal units.
- However, illegal units are being offered and we have a team devoted to track them down: Since 2016 important inspection effort.
- But now... our Mayor has now committed to **eradicate all STR by 2028 - 0 housing units will be used as touristic apartments in Barcelona.**
  - The City Council will not approve any urban planning that would allow them.
  - by the end of 2028, TOURIST APARTMENTS that now operate by means of a prior communication will not be able to apply for a license because there will be no planning that allows it and, therefore, they will have to close.



# Barcelona, committed with the right to housing

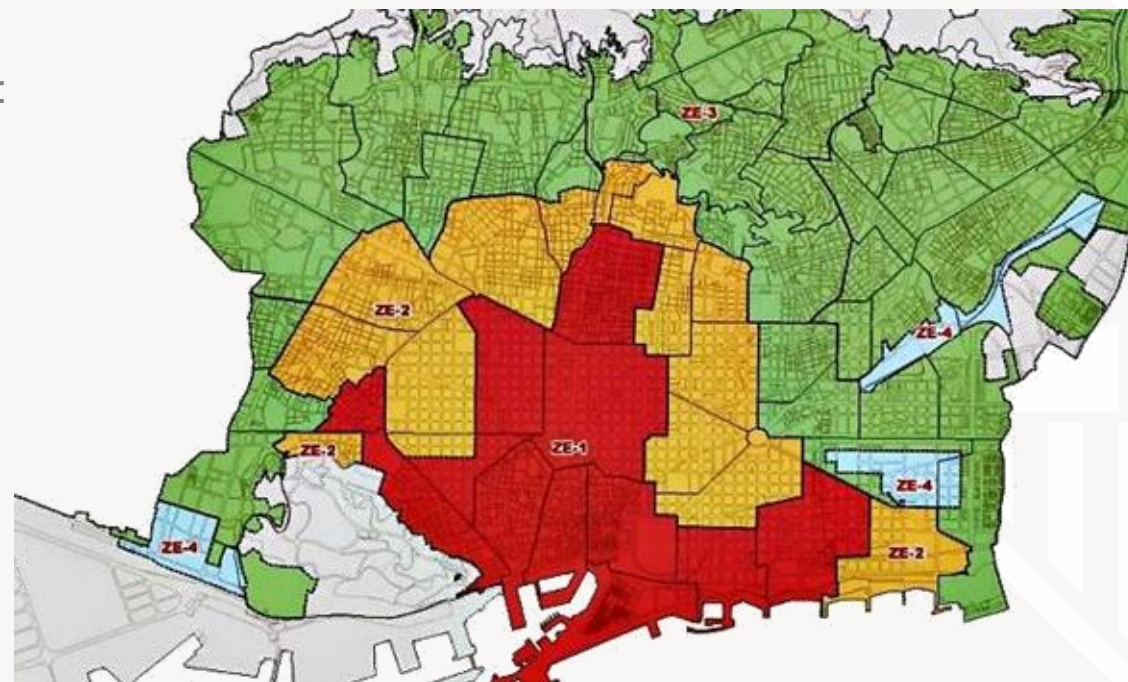
## Short-term rentals, Current challenges:

- In between long-term and short-term touristic rentals lay seasonal rentals, which represent around 25% of new rental contracts in Barcelona.
- They are generally rentals of more than 1 month and less than 1 year, and they represent a loophole in the law.
- Barcelona City Council is studying the possibility of protecting permanent housing through zoning, therefore limiting the possibility to use housing units for uses other than permanent housing.
- In parallel, we will implement in Barcelona, from minute 1, the autonomous law to regulate seasonal rentals that will be voted in the Catalan Parliament before the end of July. It will be approved a bill and that will establish that seasonal rentals and room rentals will be subject to the same limits as regular rentals, with the aim of protecting the right to housing.



# Regulation of Touristic Apartments

- The **Touristic Apartments Especial Urban Plan** (PEUAT) establishes 3 areas for the regulation of touristic apartments:
  - Decrease (licenses are not renewed).
  - Stabilization (a cap is set on the number of existing licenses)
  - Potential growth
- **Commitment to eradicate all licenses** (> 10,000) by 2028.



## **BUT WE NEED TO ACT AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT... EUROPE!**

- The European Housing Action Plan is the result of a collaborative process between 15 EU Mayors, with the support of Eurocities and C40, to contribute to the ongoing development of the first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan as well as the pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing.
- It is a call to bold and immediate action to swiftly address the housing crisis, which is exacerbating social unrest and threatening the fundamental pillars of the European project.
- The Plan paves the way for enhanced EU support to tackle the persistent housing crisis







Ajuntament  
de Barcelona

**MANY THANKS**  
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