

Barcelona's Pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights

A stronger social Europe is only possible if people are guaranteed the right to adequate housing. The lack of affordable housing is triggering across European cities gentrification, poverty, residential exclusion and homelessness. Lack of affordable housing is becoming a clear driving force of social exclusion. Barcelona has put the realization of the right to adequate housing as a political and budgetary priority.

Commitment to principle 19 on housing and homelessness

Housing

Speculation in housing markets has greatly aggravated the effects of the world economic crisis in many countries and cities. The malfunctioning housing markets cause severe economic and social losses through a growing residential exclusion and homelessness, especially in big cities. They need to be corrected and stabilized through public regulation and the engagement of public and private actors.

Barcelona City Council is committed to article 2 of the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which calls to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the realization of the right to an adequate housing.

To meet this goal, Barcelona objectives on housing policies are;

- To reach an average annual expenditure on housing of 182.5 mills (2016-2019), in contrast with the annual average of the previous mandate (2008 - 2015) of 101 mills.
- To enlarge the affordable housing stock, through;
 - o Direct promotion with 3,720 dwellings.
 - o Delegated promotion (Cohousing or Housing Association) with 867 dwellings.
 - o Direct purchase from the private market with preferential right to buy. By the end of the 2016-2019 period there will be 750 dwellings acquire through this system, with a total budget of 74 mills
- To shift the tenure model, from property to rental and others. Out of the affordable housing stock, 80% of it will be on rental and 20% on right of surface tenure model. By the end of 2019, Barcelona Housing Agency will manage 9,327 rental units, which represents 27% more than 4 years ago.
- Maintain the efforts to avoid residential exclusion and homelessness through direct rental aids, with 9,000 beneficiaries and the 24 mills budget in 2019, almost double than in 2014. To improve the renovation aids, with more than 10.000 beneficiaries and a budget of 25 mills. To reorientate these aids towards a more social inclusive target and linking it to reference index as well as to anti- gentrification measures like the obligation to maintain the same economic conditions before and after the renovation and the extension of rental contracts by a minimum of five years.

Barcelona is committed to deliver on the principle 19 of the European Pillar of Social Rights in line with our efforts at international level through the signature of the *Declaration of Municipalities for the Right to Adequate Housing* which was presented at the United Nations High Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals as well as in line with the EU Urban Agenda through the support to the Action Plan of the Housing Partnership. We are committed to make the right to adequate housing a reality for all people in our city.

Homelessness

The economic crisis has impacted severely the most vulnerable groups of the population in Barcelona. According to the last street counting carried out on 16 May 2018, there were 956 rough sleepers and 2,130 people sleeping in public supported shelters. This means an increase of 45.3% in the number of rough sleepers and 79.0% increase in the number of people living in shelters and inclusion flats compared to 2008.. In addition, during the same period we saw 67.5% increase in the number of people living in informal settlements. At the same time, among the people living in public supported accommodations, 14.3% of them were poor workers in 2017 (a significant increase from 5% in 2013).

This level of homelessness has not reduced despite enhanced efforts at local level. Since 2008, we have increased almost a 100% the number of places in public supported shelters and inclusion flats. In this sense, we have detected an increase in demand coming from outside the city. In October 2018, 47% of the people in first level shelters were living in Barcelona for less than 3 months.

Barcelona is committed to combat homelessness which is a key priority of the City Council for 2016-2020. We are investing €35 million (29% more than in 2015) to deliver our Plan to counter Homelessness with the following measures:

- A new shelter for young people aged 18-23 opened in 2018 (21 places, annual budget of €546,329) to prevent homelessness amongst ex-minors not accompanied.
- Labour inclusion programmes (Làbora Program funded with €3.2 million) to reduce the risk of homelessness and create specific pathways for the regularization of irregular migrants
- A new shelter for homeless people with mental illness opened in 2017 (45 places) (€1,149,750) and the mental health team was expanded (€387,000) to ensure an appropriate care to homeless people
- Expanding the Housing First Programme (Primer la Llar) with 50 more flats in 2019 (€1 million Eur).
- Creating temporary individual accommodations with 47 more individual housing units with common services in 2019 (€1.5 million).
- Improving living conditions in shelters by renovating shelters following the recommendations of an expert group (pending approval) (€12 million)
- An increase of 158% in the budget for the outreach teams (€2.846.493 per year in 2017) to provide social support to homeless people even if they do not enter into a shelter or an accommodation programme.



We believe it is not possible to put an end to homelessness if it is only approached from a local perspective; to be able to change dynamics that cause homelessness it is absolutely necessary to work from many different fronts and levels of government. As demonstrated in the case of Barcelona, there is not a direct correlation between efforts at local level and reduction of homelessness.

Homelessness is a global problem of access to housing, and it hits hardest people in urban areas, especially in big cities. We, the local governments, are the public administration that is closest to the population and the most sensitive to their everyday needs. Many developments take place in cities, which we cannot control and that are affecting directly the right to housing. Every time is becoming more difficult to live in big cities. That is why we need to find solutions to guarantee the right to affordable housing from the local, regional, national and EU level.

Signature and date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Laia Ortiz". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "L" and "O".

Ms. Laia Ortiz
Deputy Mayor for Social Rights
Barcelona City Council

Barcelona, January 19, 2019