# Real Estate Research

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# Real Estate Strategic Outlook: Iberia

# What are the macroeconomic drivers?

#### Economic growth outpaces Eurozone

Over the next five years, Spain and to a lesser extent Portugal, should outperform economic growth in the Eurozone. This is due to a combination of improving competitiveness, exports of services, and public spending boosted by EU Next Generation Funds. At the same time, high unemployment, particularly for young people, remains a key risk. Political stability has improved recently with the successful formation of a new left-wing coalition government. However, the downside of this outcome is that regulation limiting residential rental growth is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

# Strategy: what and where?

#### Shift from PRS to affordable and student accommodation

Regulation poses a continuing challenge for the private rented sector in Spain in suppressing rental growth once a lease has been signed and reducing churn. Given residential yields remain low, returns for this sector are likely to be insufficient to attract further capital. Our focus for the time being is therefore on the flex living, student housing, and affordable residential sectors.

Student housing is a particularly interesting subsector in Iberia, given the imbalance of purpose-built student housing compared to international student numbers. Investment in new product needs to be tailored to the specific requirements of this market. For example, full catering service until recently has been the market norm.

Flex living is also an opportunity, both for new developments and office conversions, mainly in the gateway cities of Madrid and Barcelona. It offers young professionals and business travellers an all bills included product in a market where rented accommodation is in short supply. Currently, there are around 2,500 beds and average occupancy is high, suggesting there is room for further development.

Affordable housing has been a strategy we have pursued for several years with success. Partnering with local authorities who provide land for developing housing at below-market rents reduces development costs to offset the lower rents. This strategy can produce a stable income stream and is attractive to investors looking for exposure to the residential sector with limited income risk.

#### Barcelona logistics to benefit from low land availability

The lack of available land on which to build in and around Barcelona has resulted in consistently strong rental growth for the logistics sector in this market. Now that pricing has corrected, we see an opportunity to acquire at more attractive capital values and benefit from strong future rental growth, particularly in the 1st and 2nd rings.

Valencia is another promising market for logistics, with vacancy in H1 2023 falling to just over 1%. The current supply pipeline under construction is just enough to satisfy a year of demand, so availability is likely to remain constrained in the short term. Rental growth is likely to outperform in the Eje Central area which connects Valencia to Madrid in the West. Madrid, on the other hand, is much less supply constrained and this is likely to dampen rental growth for the foreseeable future. With yields currently at a similar level to Barcelona, returns in this market are likely to underperform.

# Barcelona logistics rents outperform Madrid (€/sqm/year)



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