

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2030 (REVISED)



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FOREWORD

2025 marked the eightieth anniversary since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. The international community decided to devote the same effort to peace that had been necessary to end the war. That decision was also reflected in an image that continues to mark our times: Eleanor Roosevelt showing the world the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December 1948.

This longing is still alive and translates into concrete goals: to live without fear of war, hunger or disease; to breathe clean air; to have access to education; to live in equality and without discrimination.

Today, however, this horizon is threatened by a context of growing uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions and the climate emergency are advancing at the same time, putting the future of the planet and the next generations at risk. That is why it is more necessary than ever to strengthen the multilateral order and to defend the principles of peace, freedom, dignity and autonomy that are at the heart of the UN Charter.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are today the most ambitious framework available to the international community to guide social, economic and environmental development. Spain was one of the first countries to set up a specific ministry to promote compliance. Since 2018, our country has submitted three Voluntary National Reviews to the United Nations, and we are also the first country in the European Union to do so for the third time. It is a sign of commitment, transparency and accountability.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted in 2021, translates this commitment into results that are felt in the daily lives of citizens. Last year, the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was at its lowest level in a decade, and severe material deprivation fell to 8.3%. The Minimum Vital Income currently protects almost two and a half million people. Furthermore, the Climate Change Act sets a clear course towards carbon neutrality, compatible with economic growth, employment and social cohesion.

This progress is encouraging, but it is also a reminder of how much remains to be done. They reinforce key principles such as how social protection strengthens democracy, how climate justice and economic justice go hand in hand, and how ambitious policies work when they put the social majority at the centre. They also show that international commitments can be translated into real improvements for citizens.

The Strategy now enters a new phase. The revised version incorporates contributions from Autonomous Communities, local authorities, social organisations and economic agents, as collected in the latest Voluntary National Review. By doing so, Spain has consolidated a model of participatory governance around the 2030 Agenda, in which institutions and citizens work together to respond to the challenges of the present.

Those who drafted the UN Charter did so amidst ruins, thinking of those who would come after them. Decades later, the 2030 Agenda reflects this same commitment to the future. At a time when the multilateral order is undergoing unprecedented tensions, Spain stands by its determination to defend and strengthen it, with policies that respond to major global challenges and with the conviction that peace, prosperity and sustainability are only possible if they are built together.

The 2030 Revised Sustainable Development Strategy is part of this democratic effort to secure a fairer, safer and more liveable future for present and future generations.

PEDRO SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ-CASTEJÓN

MINISTERIO DE DERECHOS SOCIALES, CONSUMO Y AGENDA 2030

"A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolutions, not for patching"

Beveridge Report, 1942.

Today's world is not what it used to be. The beginning of this century has shown us that, of all the new challenges we face perhaps the most representative of our times is uncertainty, from the climate crisis to brutal inequality. Social reality is changing, as it always has, but at an unprecedented speed. That is the great revolution of this age; and the great challenge facing our welfare states.

At a time of revolution, as Beveridge said, we cannot afford to apply stopgap measures; it is time for change. The report from which this quote is taken is considered a cornerstone in the construction of post-war European welfare states. For the first time, a coordinated effort was proposed to deploy the State's social protection measures for citizens in response to the circumstances of the time, many of which were caused by the barbarities of the two wars that had consecutively devastated the continent.

However, today's world is not the same as yesterday's, and neither should our welfare states be. The 2030 Agenda essentially proposes a renewal of the post-war consensus, a new international agreement whose ultimate goal is to move forward, collectively and in solidarity, towards a future of equality and progress. Within this framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as bastions for building a welfare state for the 21st century, responding to the new social demands of our time and returning the fight against inequality to the centre of public policy.

That is why our country is firmly committed to implementing it, as confirmed by the presentation of this Revised Sustainable Development Strategy. The main purpose of this revision is to update the diagnosis, goals and public policies defined in the Strategy approved in 2021. The challenges that Spain will face in the coming years in the implementation of the SDGs are thus renewed and reconfigured, with the essential contributions of the different administrative levels, from international to local, and of civil society organisations.

Furthermore, this text offers us a new snapshot of the situation in our country, drawing some conclusions that should be cause for celebration. The reduction of the AROPE rate (at-risk-of-poverty and/or social exclusion), an increase in the minimum wage, progress in gender equality, the promotion of the circular economy, and the expansion of renewable energies. The evolution of the indicators that make up the SDGs in recent times shows that our country is moving forward, and it is doing so with equality and well-being.

However, this revision comes precisely as a result of our approach to positive data not with complacency, but with hope; hope that we will continue to advance the social agenda and expand rights for the majority of people in our country. The President of the Government introduced this document by pointing out how the 2030 Agenda obliges us to look to the future; how it projects us towards a shared horizon, a common goal towards which we are all moving.

I would also like to encourage our readers to look both forward and backward. On the still-warm ashes of the authoritarian and violent upsurge that led to the Second World War, a social wave swept through Europe. This led to new social and economic rights for the working classes, the expansion of welfare systems, and the consolidation of the pillars of education, healthcare, pensions and care for dependent persons. Free, public and universal.

Ultimately, a strong welfare state is what previous generations left us. Today, a renewed welfare state that is more ambitious, more flexible and adaptive, and more extensive is what we must leave to future generations so that, in a time marked by uncertainty and violence, they can look to the future with hope rather than fear. This must be done for future generations and to honour those who came before us. With this conviction, the goals proposed by the 2030 Agenda are being advanced. The foundations laid by the last century have been indispensable, but they must be renewed to remain so.

PABLO BUSTINDUY AMADOR

01

INTRODUCTION: THE 2030 AGENDA IN THE INTERNATIONAL, EUROPEAN AND SPANISH CONTEXT

INTERNATIONAL AGENDA 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted on 25 September 2015, when 193 countries reached an international agreement to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all people. Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Divided into 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 global monitoring indicators, the 2030 Agenda thus became the international community's most ambitious roadmap to date to achieve a more just future for all people. To this end, it combines the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) with cross-cutting priorities focused on people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

With its adoption in 2015, the 2030 Agenda continued the work of the United Nations on development and sustainability, embodied in different summits and in previous agendas such as the Millennium Development Goals. It also became an agenda of agendas, taking on previous frameworks such as international law and human rights (hereafter, HR). It also provides an integrative framework for other agendas, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions—adopted by the United Nations Climate Change Conference through the Paris Agreement in 2015—and the Urban Agenda.

Ten years after its adoption, the current scenario of multiple crises highlights the need to reaffirm the international commitment and the localisation of the 2030 Agenda into a national plan. Geopolitical tensions,

economic and international trade restructuring, economic recessions and the eco-social crisis caused by the climate emergency are phenomena that require coordinated responses to ensure a sustainable future that leaves no one behind. Therefore, since the approval of the Sustainable Development Strategy in 2021 following the outbreak of COVID-19, the various consequences of the multiple interrelated crises at international, national and local levels have led to a range of reflections on how to adapt the measures linked to the 2030 Agenda to an increasingly volatile scenario.

In his speech on the priorities for 2025, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres identified conflict, inequality, the climate crisis and runaway technology as the four challenges that, in the best-case scenario, could jeopardise the Sustainable Development Agenda and, in the worst-case scenario, could threaten our very existence. However, as the UN Secretary-General points out, on the 80th anniversary of the international institution, the good news is that *"we have the plans to meet these challenges. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, we need to set the wheel in motion"*.

Five years away from the 2030 target and at the halfway point of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the latest *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* (SDG Report 2025) has shown that the world is at a critical juncture. Only 35% of the Sustainable Development Goals show clear or moderate progress, while nearly half show insufficient progress and a worrying 18% are even going backwards. This scenario has been described as a "global development emergency", exacerbated by armed conflict, climate crisis, geopolitical tensions and economic shocks.

The report is an urgent call to redouble efforts in six key transitions of the 2030 Agenda: food systems, energy, digitalisation, education, employment and social protection, as well as climate action and biodiversity conservation. As underlined at the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, it is imperative to push for inclusive solutions based on science and evidence, strengthen multilateral cooperation and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs to leave no one behind.

In this global context of insufficient progress and setbacks in some SDGs, Spain has improved its position since 2015 in the global sustainable development ranking compiled by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). Specifically, our country has moved from 30th place in 2016 to 14th place in 2025, where it has remained stable in recent years, based on its progress in most of the SDGs. While significant challenges remain, 81 points have been reached, three more than the regional average, a cumulative increase of 2.7 points since 2015. The country shows progress on 11 of the 17 goals and has fully achieved the agreed targets on one of them since 2024: gender equality. However, relevant challenges remain in areas such as food security, responsible production and consumption, climate action, the protection of terrestrial ecosystems and the strengthening of strategic partnerships.

Against this backdrop, the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), held in July 2025, conducted an in-depth review of SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). Scientific evidence was placed at the heart of the 2030 Agenda to respond, through coordinated action, to the multiple and interrelated challenges of the 21st century.

In 2024, the HLPF focused on strengthening the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in a context of multiple crises, through the analysis of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions, in coordination with the Summit for the Future, also held in October of that year. As a result, the Pact for the Future—approved by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 79/1 in September 2024—devotes its first chapter to sustainable development and financing for development.

Its priorities include strengthening action to achieve the SDGs, eradicating poverty and hunger, closing the financing gap for the SDGs, boosting the multilateral trading system, social cohesion, human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality and combating climate change. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), such as the one presented by Spain in 2024, are presented within the context of this Forum, which also serves as a starting point for the mid-term review of the Strategy.

In recent decades, essential commitments have also been made at the international level in the field of combating climate change and its effects. Since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and the Paris Agreement in 2015, the United Nations Climate Change Conference has established itself as the main international forum for protecting the planet and one of the priorities of the 2030 Agenda.

The Conference of the Parties (COP 29) was held in Azerbaijan in November 2024 and was known as "The Finance COP". Notable agreements include a commitment by the 197 participating countries to double installed renewable energy capacity by 2030, the establishment of a global carbon market and, in particular, the creation of a new climate finance fund to strengthen support for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries.

Furthermore, on the tenth anniversary of the Paris Agreement, and following COP 30 in Belém (Brazil) in November 2025, under the slogan *Global Collective Effort*, it was agreed to mobilise USD 1.3 trillion annually for developing countries, to strengthen nationally determined contributions (NDCs) with clear plans until 2035, and to create the *Tropical Forests Forever Facility* mechanism for the conservation of the Amazon. In addition, financial instruments geared towards environmental results were promoted, consolidating progress towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement and adaptation to extreme climate events.

Biodiversity and ecosystem degradation is another key area of intervention. The Global Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), published in 2019, revealed that biodiversity and ecosystem services are deteriorating at an unprecedented rate due to human activities, directly threatening human well-being and sustainable development. The report stresses that nearly one million species are at risk of extinction and that habitat loss, overexploitation, climate change and pollution are the main drivers of this crisis.

Meanwhile, the IPBES Thematic Assessment Report on the Links between Biodiversity, Water, Food and Health (2024) has reiterated in its conclusions the fundamental role of biodiversity, highlighting that its decline has an impact on the functioning of ecosystems, water availability and quality, food security and nutrition, human health, plants and animals, as well as resilience to the impacts of climate change. In particular, it highlights the importance of prioritising response options that leverage synergies to sustainably manage biodiversity, water, food, health and climate change, contributing positively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 15, recognise biodiversity as an essential pillar for eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, protecting health and strengthening resilience to climate change. The 2030 Agenda and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework reinforce this vision by integrating concrete targets to conserve and restore ecosystems, underlining that without biodiversity, truly sustainable development cannot be achieved. Furthermore, according to the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (2025), seven of the nine planetary boundaries have already been exceeded, including climate change and biosphere integrity, which increases the risk of destabilising the Earth system and compromises the planet's sustainability.

The social aspect of the SDGs should also be highlighted, particularly their relationship with SDG 8: decent work and sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. In other words, this goal aims to achieve full employment and decent work for all. The 2025 HLPF highlighted the need to invest in decent jobs and just transitions, as well as to strengthen the link between economic development and social development, especially in contexts of crisis and persistent inequality. This priority was reaffirmed at the Second World Summit for Social Development, held in Doha, Qatar, in November 2025.

The summit underlined the urgency of making progress on the social SDGs, in particular SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), along with SDG 8, as key pillars to ensure social cohesion and inclusive development in a context of multiple crises. The Doha Political Declaration, adopted in the framework of the Summit, renews the global commitment to social justice, poverty eradication, gender equality and universal social protection, setting out explicit commitments and measurable actions aimed at reducing inequalities and ensuring inclusive societies.

Likewise, the importance of interconnections between SDGs should be taken into account, as sustainability is a dynamic concept that goes beyond traditional policy areas. Progress or setbacks in one dimension therefore affects others, highlighting the need for a systemic approach that considers the synergies between the different SDGs. This implies that the 17 SDGs do not stand alone, but are interrelated in multiple ways.

Therefore, when tackling the goal of eradicating poverty, other areas are simultaneously addressed, such as reducing inequalities (SDG 10), quality education (SDG 4) and gender equality (SDG 5), given that women's empowerment and access to education are key strategies for promoting economic and social development and reducing inequalities. Similarly, climate action (SDG 13) positively influences food security (SDG 2), access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), the protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems (SDGs 14 and 15), responsible production and consumption (SDG 12) and the development of sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). In this sense, the success of one objective can reinforce the progress of the others, generating a multiplier effect that provides a comprehensive framework for guiding policies and actions at local, national and international levels.

In addition, Spain hosted the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), held in Seville from 30 June to 3 July 2025, whose priorities are aligned with the conclusions of COP 30. These include tax policies, international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows and tax evasion, Official Development Assistance (ODA), private finance, trade, debt sustainability, science and technology, as well as governance reform of the international financial system. Its key objective has focused on mobilising financial resources to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

EUROPEAN UNION

In 2023, the European Union (EU) presented its first voluntary review of the 2030 Agenda, reaffirming its commitment to the SDGs. This exercise highlighted the integration of the SDGs into key policies such as the European Green Pact and the Resilience and Recovery Mechanism.

According to the European Sustainable Development Report 2025, produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the EU is the world's leading region in making progress towards the 2030 target. The report identifies a number of key priorities for progress towards this goal. These include strengthening clean energy and digital technologies; adopting social measures to mitigate the consequences of inflation and geopolitical tensions; addressing the negative impacts of unsustainable consumption on health and the environment; transitioning to sustainable diets; and leveraging SDG diplomacy and the European Green Deal with all regions by upholding the principles of the UN Charter and the global financial architecture.

From this European perspective, despite the existence of certain disagreements between Member States in areas such as governance or climate policy, an approach focused on shared challenges should be chosen, with the firm objective of leaving no one behind, taking into account the different challenges and priorities of each country.

In this context, the work of the Working Party on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is important. This group holds monthly meetings to develop common positions for the Council of the EU on sustainable development and to promote coordinated action by the Union at international level, with the aim of strengthening a coherent and effective governance framework.

THE 2030 AGENDA IN SPAIN

The new Sustainable Development Strategy 2025 sets out an ambitious and transformative blueprint for the country as a whole. It is a comprehensive vision that seeks to bring Spain's policies and actions into line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This Strategy expresses Spain's commitment to building a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable future for all citizens, addressing the global challenges posed by sustainable development from a national, regional and local perspective, in which the multisectoral participation of different actors has been key throughout the process.

To this end, Spain has been making progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda since it made this commitment in 2015. Through various strategies and public policies, the country has demonstrated its commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the Agenda. These range from strengthening the legal and strategic framework, creating institutional structures to mobilise the necessary resources, to designing initiatives to raise awareness and sensitise the public. The Government has made numerous efforts to build a sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

The 2025 Sustainable Development Strategy is the result of a continuous process of adaptation and improvement, which aims to consolidate achievements and intensify efforts to address remaining challenges, with the goal of moving towards a more just, prosperous and sustainable future for all.

Institutional efforts to prepare this document began in 2017 with the creation of the first high-level group within the Government and, one year later, with the approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was the first structured effort to align national policies with the SDGs. In the same year, the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda was created as an institutional coordination body, highlighting the relevance of the Agenda throughout the territory. Later, the 2030 Agenda was integrated into the then-named Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda as a State Secretariat, a role it assumed after the High Commissioner was abolished on 12 January 2020, the date on which the State Secretariat was created. From that moment on, it took charge of promoting, monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the SDGs from this new institutional platform.

Concurrently, in January 2020, the Directorate-General for Agenda 2030 was established as a technical support body to strengthen public policy development, carry out regulatory impact assessments, and manage international relations related to the Agenda. Currently, this body continues to operate within the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030, coordinating actions with the Autonomous Communities (AC), local entities (LE), civil society, the private sector, universities and the different public administrations, with the aim of guaranteeing a multilevel and multidimensional approach in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since the start of the process, the Government has submitted Voluntary National Reviews in 2018, 2021 and 2024, as well as annual progress reports in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. This has consolidated a system for tracking, monitoring and assessing progress in Spain regarding sustainable development.

As these reports reflect, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was a major global setback in the fight against poverty and inequality. This situation led the government to develop a social shield, with measures such as the implementation of the Minimum Vital Income (MVI), the increase in the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (Spanish acronym, SMI) and the management of access to European *Next Generation EU* funds to boost economic recovery. The Spanish Government implemented anti-crisis policies to protect the population and the most vulnerable groups. These included direct aid, job protection mechanisms such as temporary layoffs (ERTE), the reinforcement of essential public services, and economic recovery plans geared towards ecological and digital transition, thus ensuring a comprehensive approach to mitigating the social and economic effects of the crisis.

Following the approval of the Sustainable Development Strategy in 2021, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda were adapted to the specific challenges facing Spain. The Strategy was structured into eight Country Challenges, including the eradication of poverty, the fight against climate change, gender equality and the transformation of the production model. In the same year, Spain submitted its second Voluntary National Review to the United Nations, highlighting the labour reform and the measures taken to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in different areas.

With the publication of the 2022 Progress Report, the implementation of this Strategy was assessed for the first time. While the report warned that rising energy prices, as a result of the war in Ukraine, were eroding people's purchasing power, it also highlighted significant progress in areas such as the green transition and digitalisation. Regulations such as the Law on Climate Change and Energy Transition or the Law on Waste and the Circular Economy were decisive in achieving the objectives set.

The 2023 Progress Report analysed the progress made and the remaining challenges in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. A reduction in poverty was noted, with the AROPE rate reaching pre-pandemic levels, as well as the implementation of relevant social policies, including the Housing Act, the LGTBI+ Act and the promotion of renewable energies.

The latest instrument for monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs at the national level was the publication of the Voluntary National Review in July 2024. The report highlights significant progress aimed at leaving no one behind, such as the increase in the SMI by 54% since 2018; the increase in the average net annual income, which went from €11,412 to €14,807 in 2024; the reduction of the gender pay gap to 8.96 points; the decrease in the unemployment rate by more than ten points since 2015; the notable increase in Social Security affiliation, with more than four million additional people; and the adoption of tax measures such as the tax on large fortunes and energy companies. The report also highlighted the significant growth of renewable energies in Spain and the progress made in energy efficiency, reinforcing the country's position as a benchmark in sustainability within the European Union.

Alongside this progress, the Review also identified a number of remaining challenges. These include access to housing, whose high cost and difficulties are undermining the progress achieved in other social areas, as well as inequalities in income and its territorial distribution, resulting from the concentration of wealth and opportunities in large urban centres. Other challenges with room for improvement identified in the Review include a high rate of child poverty; the loss of biodiversity, along with a still limited level of reuse of materials and reduction of resource consumption; the increase in recorded hate crimes and cases of gender-based violence; insufficient resources in mental health; and the lack of sufficient international commitments on climate finance to countries in the global south.

On the other hand, the current international context, marked by profound economic, political and social transformations, has shown that the Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved through a multidimensional, comprehensive and collaborative approach. Spain must seize this opportunity to build a shared vision of the country, capable of mobilising all actors and, in particular, citizens, towards a model that respects the limits of the planet and urgently addresses the social and ecological transition.

Therefore, a key factor in implementing the 2030 Agenda has been the creation of a robust and stable governance system that coordinates the efforts of the different levels of public administration and promotes ongoing dialogue with the social, economic and environmental sectors.

Since this commitment was made, a strengthened institutional architecture has been consolidated and adapted to the existing organisational charts, ensuring effective cooperation and coordination mechanisms. The strengthening of this governance model has been key to responding to the structural changes experienced by society in recent years.

ACHIEVING THE SDGS

Regarding Spain's prospects for achieving the SDGs and their targets, the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) provides detailed data through the SDG Indicators platform, following the framework of 234 global indicators approved by the United Nations. These indicators cover the economic, social and environmental dimensions, and allow for a detailed assessment of Spain's progress on each target, as they represent 74% coverage of the overall SDG indicator framework. In addition, 6% of the indicators are not considered relevant for Spain and 3% are not applicable in the national context.

Spain's situation in relation to the SDGs, according to the *European Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index*, indicates that the country ranks 20th out of a total of 34 European countries. Some SDGs have been achieved or are on track; however, significant challenges remain in others, such as SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 13 (climate action).

SDG	INE (Indicators available)	SDG Index (State)
1. No Poverty	Three of the six targets show significant progress (targets: 1.1, 1.4, 1.a), one target shows moderate progress (target: 1.3), one target is stagnant (target: 1.5), one target shows slight regression (target: 1.2) and one target lacks sufficient information for measurement (target: 1.b).	Moderate progress
2. Zero Hunger	Four of the eight targets show significant progress (targets: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.a), one target shows moderate progress (target: 2.5), two targets show significant regression (targets: 2.3, 2.c) and one target lacks sufficient information for measurement (target: 2.b).	Significant challenges
3. Good Health and Well-being	Seven of the eleven targets show significant progress (targets: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.9, 3.b, 3.c), one target shows moderate progress (target: 3.6), two targets with slight setbacks (targets: 3.4, 3.8), one target with significant setbacks (target: 3.d) and two targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 3.5, 3.a).	Moderate progress
4. Quality Education	Six of the ten targets show significant progress (targets: 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.a, 4.b, 4.c), three targets show stagnation (targets: 4.1, 4.2, 4.5) and one target lacks sufficient information for measurement (target: 4.6).	Achieved
5. Gender Equality	Five of the nine targets show significant progress (targets: 5.1, 5.3, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b), one target shows significant regression (target: 5.2) and three targets lack sufficient information for measurement (targets: 5.4, 5.6, 5.c).	Limited progress
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	Two of the eight targets show significant progress (targets: 6.a, 6.b), three targets are stagnating (targets: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) and three targets lack sufficient information for measurement (targets: 6.4, 6.5, 6.6).	Moderate progress
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	Four of the five targets show significant progress (targets: 7.1, 7.2, 7.a, 7.b) and one target is stagnating (target: 7.3).	Significant challenges
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	Eight of the twelve targets show significant progress (targets: 8.1, 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.a, 8.b), one target shows moderate progress (target: 8.9), one target is stagnant (target: 8.10), one target with significant regression (target: 8.4) and one target without sufficient information for measurement (target: 8.3).	Moderate progress
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Four of the eight targets show significant progress (targets: 9.4, 9.5, 9.a, 9.c), one target shows moderate progress (target: 9.1), two targets are stagnant (targets: 9.2, 9.b) and one target shows significant regression (target: 9.3).	Major challenges
10. Reduced Inequalities	Three of the ten targets show significant progress (targets: 10.1, 10.2, 10.5), one target shows moderate progress (target: 10.7), one target is stagnant (target: 10.4), two targets with significant regression (targets: 10.3, 10.b) and three targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 10.6, 10.a, 10.c).	Limited progress
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities	Four of the ten targets show significant progress (targets: 11.3, 11.4, 11.6, 11.b), one target is stagnant (target: 11.a), one target shows slight regression (target: 11.1), two targets with significant setbacks (targets: 11.5, 11.7) and two targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 11.2, 11.c).	Limited progress
12. Responsible Consumption and Production	Five of the eleven targets show significant progress (targets: 12.1, 12.4, 12.5, 12.8, 12.a), one target is stagnant (target: 12.2), one target with significant regression (target: 12.b) and four targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 12.3, 12.6, 12.7, 12.c).	Significant challenges
13. Climate Action	Two of the five targets show significant progress (targets: 13.2, 13.3), one target shows moderate progress (target: 13.1), one target shows significant regression (target: 13.a) and one target lacks sufficient information for measurement (target: 13.b).	Major challenges
14. Life Below Water	Three of the ten targets show significant progress (targets: 14.2, 14.4, 14.5), one goal is stagnant (goal: 14.3) and six goals lack sufficient information for measurement (goals: 14.1, 14.6, 14.7, 14.a, 14.b, 14.c).	Limited progress

<p>15. Life on Land</p>	<p>Six of the twelve targets show significant progress (targets: 15.2, 15.6, 15.7, 15.8, 15.a, 15.c), two targets are stagnant (targets: 15.1, 15.4) and four targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 15.3, 15.5, 15.9, 15.b).</p>	<p>Significant challenges</p>
<p>16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</p>	<p>Two of the twelve targets show significant progress (targets: 16.5, 16.a), one target shows moderate progress (target: 16.10), one target shows slight regression (target: 16.6), four targets with significant setbacks (targets: 16.1, 16.2, 16.4, 16.b) and four targets without sufficient information for measurement (targets: 16.3, 16.7, 16.8, 16.9).</p>	<p>Moderate progress</p>
<p>17. Partnerships for the Goals</p>	<p>Nine of the nineteen targets show significant progress (targets: 17.14, 17.17, 17.18, 17.19, 17.3, 17.6, 17.7, 17.8, 17.9), one target shows moderate progress (target: 17.2), two targets that have stalled (targets: 17.1, 17.13) and seven targets for which there is insufficient information to measure progress (targets: 17.10, 17.11, 17.12, 17.15, 17.16, 17.4, 17.5).</p>	<p>Moderate progress</p>

SDG 1 No Poverty: Spain has made progress in reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion, especially through the implementation of social protection policies. However, important challenges remain that require more targeted interventions, due to the heterogeneity of the situation in the different autonomous communities and the persistence of a high rate of child poverty.

SDG 2 Zero Hunger: agricultural productivity and access to food have improved but challenges remain in food system sustainability, loss of agricultural biodiversity and sectoral adaptation to the effects of climate change.

SDG 3 Good Health and Well-being: life expectancy has increased and infant mortality has decreased, reflecting improvements in the health system. However, mental health, waiting lists and inequalities in access to health services remain relevant concerns.

SDG 4 Quality Education: Spain has increased school enrolment and access to lifelong learning. Despite this, early school leaving and the digital divide in the education system are persistent challenges.

SDG 5 Gender Equality: significant progress has been made in women's political participation and labour force participation. However, work continues to address stubborn challenges such as the wage gap, gender-based violence and the lack of co-responsibility in the distribution of household tasks.

SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation: access to safe drinking water has improved but sustainable water management and sanitation in rural areas still present challenges. Indicator coverage is 64%, reflecting room for improvement in monitoring.

SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy: Spain has increased the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency, with full coverage of indicators. However, fuel poverty in vulnerable households remains a major challenge.

SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth: the unemployment rate has fallen and working conditions have improved. Work continues to address problems such as job insecurity, inclusive employment of people with disabilities and youth unemployment, which particularly affect the most vulnerable groups.

SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: investment in R&D and digitalisation has been strengthened, although there are still territorial gaps in innovation and connectivity that limit the country's balanced development.

SDG 10 Reducing Inequalities: although progress has been made in social inclusion, income inequality and unequal access to basic services remain significant challenges. In addition, the indicator coverage is 57%, indicating that the mechanisms for obtaining information need to be strengthened.

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities: Public transport and the availability of green spaces have improved, but affordable housing and reducing urban pollution remain major challenges in many cities.

SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production: Spain has made progress in recycling and circular economy but still requires efforts to improve the rate of circular material use, reduce food waste and the ecological footprint, with the aim of achieving a truly sustainable consumption model.

SDG 13 Climate Action: with full indicator coverage, Spain has implemented climate policies and reduced emissions. However, climate change adaptation and extreme event management require greater attention.

SDG 14 Life Below Water: although marine protected areas have been established and the number of fish stocks managed at maximum sustainable yield levels has increased, indicator coverage is 50%, reflecting room for improvement in data collection mechanisms related to marine ecosystem conservation and sustainable fisheries.

SDG 15 Life on Land: Spain has protected natural areas and promoted biodiversity, based on total indicator coverage. Despite improvements, combating desertification and land degradation remain priority challenges.

SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Institutional transparency and citizen participation have improved, although relevant challenges related to institutional quality or access to justice remain.

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals: Spain has strengthened international cooperation and sustainable financing, although there is still room for improvement in terms of inter-institutional coordination and resource mobilisation to meet all the SDGs.

FROM SDS 2021 TO THE UPDATED SDS 2025

Since the approval of the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) in 2021 until its revised version in 2025, Spain has undergone a period of profound social, economic and environmental transformation. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, the war in Ukraine and structural challenges have redefined the country's sustainable development priorities.

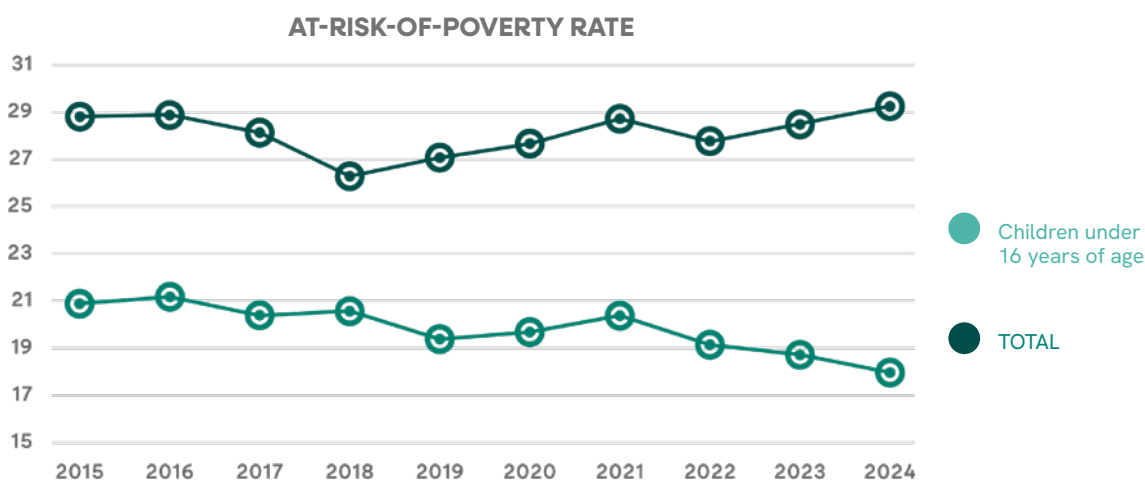
Originally the Sustainable Development Strategy was divided into the following Country Challenges:

1. End poverty and inequality.
2. Address the climate and environmental emergency.
3. Close the gender gap and end discrimination.
4. Overcome the inefficiencies of an over-concentrated and over-dependent economic system.
5. End job insecurity and guarantee decent employment.
6. Reverse the crisis in public services and guaranteeing social rights.
7. End global injustice and threats to human rights, democratic principles and the sustainability of the planet.
8. Revitalise rural areas and meeting the demographic challenge.

After reflecting on the current context and reviewing the interconnections between the various goals set out in the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Country Challenges have been restructured, shifting from eight to four main focus areas. The aim is to better adapt to the new structural challenges associated with the climate emergency, persistent social gaps, the digital transition and geopolitical tensions. In addition to these focus areas, a cross-cutting approach to governance and policy coherence for sustainable development allows for a more integrated, results-oriented approach that is aligned with available institutional capacities.

During the period 2021-2025, which has been heavily impacted by the pandemic, progress has been made in many areas. Social shield policies included direct aid, mortgage moratoriums and reinforcements in those systems under the greatest pressure, such as education and health. At the same time, structural problems such as population ageing, poverty and social exclusion in all its manifestations persist. These exceptional and structural situations have highlighted challenges in the national health system, challenges linked to the strengthening and digitalisation of the education system, as well as the need to move towards a new model of care for dependency and social services.

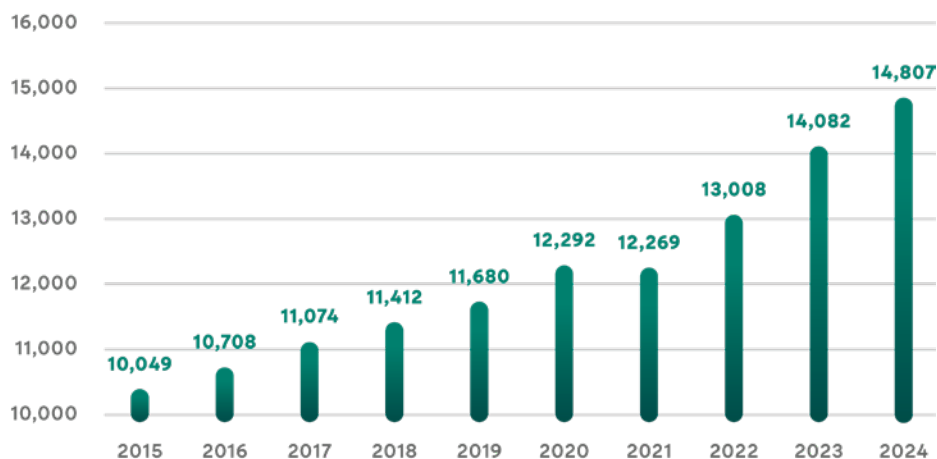
There has also been significant progress in reducing the overall AROPE rate, despite an increase in the risk of poverty or social exclusion among under-16s. Also noteworthy is the improvement in the Gini index, reflected in the increase in annual incomes per person from €11,412 to €14,807 in 2024, as well as the increase in the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (SMI) by 54% since 2018.



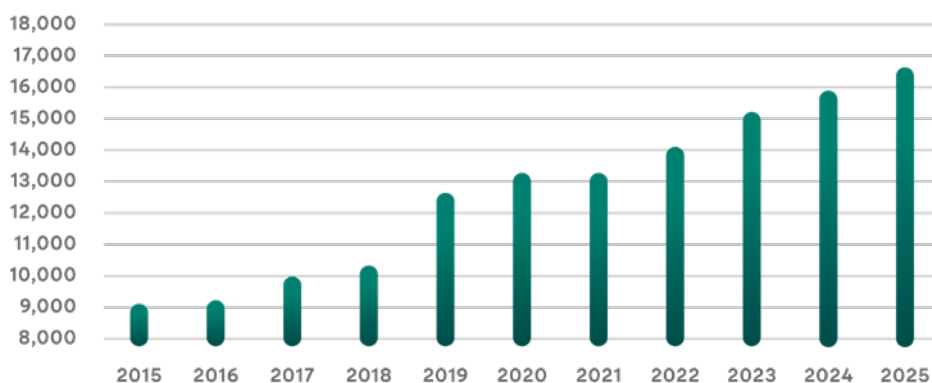
INEQUALITY IN INCOME DISTRIBUTION (GINI INDEX)



AVERAGE ANNUAL NET INCOME PER PERSON AND PER CONSUMPTION UNIT (€)



MINIMUM WAGE (€)

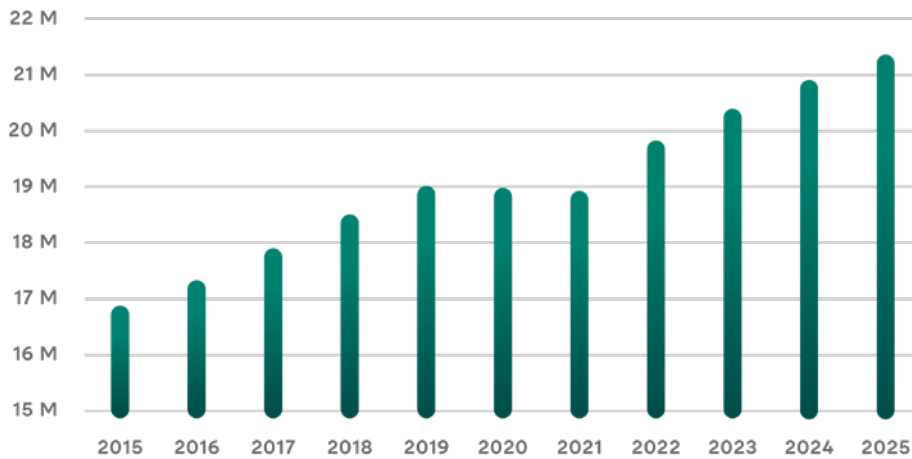


Improvements in job creation are also notable, as there is a clear downward trend in the unemployment rate, with a decrease of more than ten points, as well as a sustained increase in the number of people registered with Social Security, exceeding four million (with the exception of the years most affected by COVID-19).

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

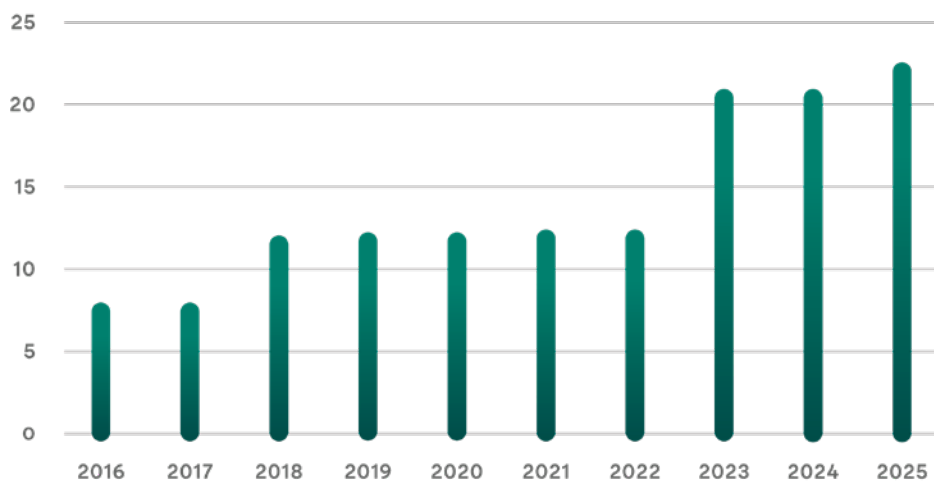


NO. OF PERSONS AFFILIATED TO SOCIAL SECURITY

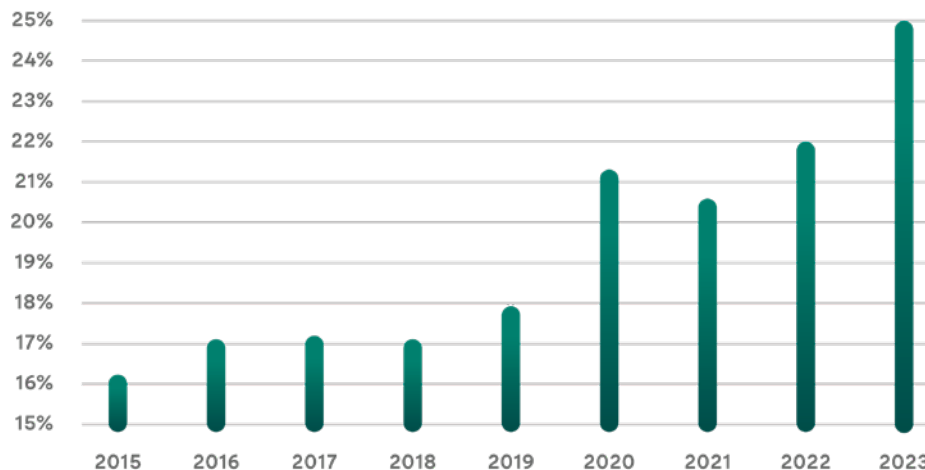


Improvements have also been seen in areas such as the environment and the promotion of renewable energy, with the area of marine protected areas and the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption rising to historic levels.

MARINE PROTECTED AREA (IN %)



% OF RENEWABLE ENERGIES IN FINAL CONSUMPTION GROSS ENERGY



Finally, the updated Strategy, which focuses on public policy implementation to achieve the SDGs in Spain, is linked to the Spanish Cooperation Master Plan 2024-2027, its results framework and the future Multilateral Policy Strategy for Sustainable Development, which act as roadmaps with detailed indicators on Spain's contribution to the fulfilment of the SDGs both in partner countries and on a global scale.

Building on the progress described above and in order to meet the challenges that lie ahead in 2025, the approach is evolving towards the consolidation of a strong and universal welfare state, as set out in New Country Challenge 1. The key to making this happen lies in integrating structural measures aimed at eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities, with a particular focus on the challenges associated with the pillars of the welfare state: healthcare, education, pensions, social services and housing. Another major challenge is to put an end to precariousness in Spain, the most extreme manifestation of which is poverty and social exclusion. In short, these efforts seek to consolidate structural change in public policies that place equality and the protection of the most vulnerable groups at the centre of public action and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Within the healthcare sector, tackling child poverty is essential by promoting balanced school meals and access to fresh produce, as well as mobilising the necessary resources to strengthen mental health care.

The education sector has also benefited from the updated Strategy, which provides a strategic framework for continuing to strengthen digital skills training, consolidate the new vocational training system, and improve funding for the public education system as a guarantee of equal opportunities.

In relation to pensions and social services, the importance of modernising the care system is unquestionable. This requires a more personalised approach, incorporating work-life balance policies and strengthening support for vulnerable families.

Housing is a central pillar of social welfare, as a space for the development of personal and family life and a determining factor in the quality of life. Priorities in this area include increasing investment in social housing, adopting measures to improve access to affordable housing in stressed areas, expanding the supply of rental housing for young people and other groups with special difficulties, and preventing evictions in situations of vulnerability, with a view to making housing policy a new pillar of the welfare state.

Furthermore, the sustainability of the pillars of the welfare state in Spain cannot be achieved without a fair fiscal policy that allows for the effective redistribution of wealth. The aim in this area is to move towards a progressive tax reform that strengthens the financing of the welfare state, as well as to further develop environmental taxation, taking into account the impact on the most vulnerable sectors.

This will require the strengthening of institutions to ensure the cross-cutting implementation of the SDGs, as well as the consolidation and expansion of the pillars of the welfare state.

New Country Challenge 1 thus integrates the previous Country Challenge 1 and Country Challenge 6 - "End poverty and inequality" and "Reverse the public services crisis" respectively. This reformulation responds to the need to avoid partial and fragmented approaches by addressing the current pillars of the welfare state in a comprehensive manner.

The New Country Challenge 2 calls for the creation of a circular economic system that promotes well-being and social and environmental justice. While the 2021 Sustainable Development Strategy emphasised economic modernisation under the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, the recent energy and inflation crises have accelerated the need to move towards a more resilient and inclusive economic model that leaves no one behind.

To achieve social and environmental justice, as well as the well-being of the population, there is a clear need to transform the model of production and consumption. As such, the importance of the social economy, corporate responsibility and the promotion of the circular economy are all central to this approach.

The environmental perspective highlights the decarbonisation of the economy through greater investment in renewable energy, the renewal of high value-added productive sectors, and the development of a green fiscal policy. The ultimate goal is to address the climate emergency in terms of mitigation, through the transition to a new green economic model that concentrates growth in low environmental impact sectors. At the same time, energy poverty linked to the consumption model is being tackled, in order to ensure a fair transition that does not have a negative impact on consumers.

Quality, stable employment that can support the transition to a green and digital economy is a priority of Country Challenge 2 in the area of social transformation. The 21st-century Workers' Statute not only provides for measures aimed at ending job insecurity in the wake of successive crises, but also regulates, from the perspective of labour protection law, aspects such as new forms of employment linked to the digital economy, work-life balance and the right to digital disconnection. This economic transformation also involves consolidating a competitive model that generates high-quality, stable jobs for all citizens, paying particular attention to groups facing greater difficulties in entering the labour market, such as young people, the long-term unemployed and migrants.

The New Country Challenge 3 (sustainable territorial structuring to improve social cohesion and address the climate and environmental emergency) combines the previous Country Challenges 8 (revitalising rural areas and addressing the demographic challenge) and 2 (addressing the climate and environmental emergency).

Social cohesion is closely linked to climate change and adaptation to extreme phenomena such as droughts or floods, as well as to a territorial structuring that adequately articulates relations between urban and rural areas. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the progressive increase in health and even life-threatening risks associated with climate change has highlighted the need to rethink the response model of public institutions, not only from a reactive perspective, but also from a preventive and proactive one.

To meet this challenge, environmental protection and climate change adaptation policies underline the need to promote sustainable territorial approaches that integrate urban policies with those oriented towards the demographic challenge. In this context, the Spanish Urban Agenda is committed to an integrated and transversal strategic planning of towns and cities, based on concrete and effective actions.

On the other hand, the revitalisation of the rural environment requires the promotion of economic activity and social cohesion in those areas affected by population loss. The rural environment is also one of the areas most exposed to both the need for environmental protection and the deployment of renewable energies. Therefore, strengthening the participation of small municipalities in governance frameworks for the reconfiguration of territorial cohesion is essential. Local development therefore involves strengthening the

social fabric, innovation and promoting a sustainable rural economy based on productive diversification and value-added industries.

The New Country Challenge 4 focuses on promoting free, equal lives within communities, placing human rights at the heart of the transformation towards sustainable development. Putting people at the heart of the 2030 Agenda implies a commitment to ensuring the quality of life of the entire population through economic and environmental transformation.

Within this framework, Country Challenge 4 aims to ensure equality for all citizens by combating all forms of discrimination. To this end, it pays special attention to the most vulnerable groups and reinforces the elimination of intersectional discrimination based on sexual orientation and identity, gender expression, racial or ethnic origin, nationality or disability, in order to guarantee equality, dignity, rights and inclusion for all citizens.

Finally, Country Challenge 4 places the concept of citizenship at the centre and promotes both the full exercise of rights and active participation in social life and in the elaboration of public policies that affect people. It also incorporates culture as a key element for the development of a fulfilling life.

COUNTRY CHALLENGES SDS 2021

NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGES

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1: End poverty and inequality.
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 6: Reverse the crisis in public services and guaranteeing social rights.
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 7: End global injustice and threats to human rights, democratic principles and the sustainability of the planet.



NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1: A STRONG AND UNIVERSAL WELFARE STATE TO END POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4: Overcome the inefficiencies of an over-concentrated and over-dependent economic system.
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 5: End job insecurity and guarantee decent employment.



NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2: A CIRCULAR ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT GENERATES WELFARE AND SOCIAL, LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 8: Revitalising rural areas and tackling the demographic challenge.
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2: Address the climate and environmental emergency.



NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3: SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING TO IMPROVE SOCIAL COHESION AND ADDRESS CLIMATE EMERGENCY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3: Closing the gender gap and putting an end to discrimination.
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 7: End global injustice and threats to human rights, democratic principles and the sustainability of the planet.



NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4: FREE, EQUAL AND COMMUNAL LIVES

02

REVISED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (RSDS)

This revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SDS2030) is articulated through the following structure:

CHALLENGE 1

A STRONG AND UNIVERSAL WELFARE STATE TO END POVERTY AND INEQUALITY that brings together policies of redistribution, public services and social protection and specifically includes goals associated with:

1. Eradication of poverty and social exclusion.
2. Tax system efficiency.
3. Child nutrition.
4. Housing.
5. Social rights and benefits.
6. Education.
7. Health.
8. Democratic institutions, citizens' freedoms and global partnerships.

CHALLENGE 2

A CIRCULAR ECONOMIC SYSTEM GENERATING WELFARE AND SOCIAL, LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, which proposes a profound transformation of the production model towards sustainability and includes:

1. Measures against energy poverty.
2. Employment.
3. Decarbonisation of the economy.
4. Innovation and value-added industries.
5. Production and consumption model: Circular Economy Horizon.
6. Digitisation and advanced sustainable technologies.
7. Sustainable mobility.

CHALLENGE 3

SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING TO IMPROVE SOCIAL COHESION AND ADDRESS CLIMATE EMERGENCY, linking territorial equity with climate resilience, from where it is embraced:

1. Territorial adaptation to climate change.
2. Environmental protection.
3. Territorial integration, cohesion and the demographic challenge.
4. The revitalisation of the rural environment.

CHALLENGE 4

FREE, EQUAL AND COMMUNAL LIVES, which puts human rights, structural equality and freedom from violence at the centre through the inclusion of targets on:

1. Gender Equality
2. Gender-based violence.
3. Discrimination.
4. Migrants.
5. Culture.

CHALLENGE 5

POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, which includes the cross-cutting dimension that ensures institutional coordination, social participation and effective alignment of public policies with the 2030 Agenda. Structured in 8 tools:

1. Policy coherence.
2. Budget alignment.
3. Coordination of strategic planning and impact assessment of public policies.
4. Intergenerational impact analysis.
5. Sustainable public procurement.
6. Training of public employees.
7. External coherence.
8. Accountability.

These dimensions not only enable the contents of the Strategy to be organised, but also facilitate its monitoring, assessment and continuous improvement, through a clear and structured interpretation of the sustainable transformation process that Spain is committed to leading.

The revised Sustainable Development Strategy is a forward-looking framework for action to guide public policies until 2030. On the basis of this roadmap, the implementation of these policies will continue, through the corresponding institutional channels and in accordance with the annual budget availabilities, the sustainability of public accounts and the European commitments assumed.

A. CHALLENGES

NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1: A STRONG AND UNIVERSAL WELFARE STATE TO END POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

1. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION



INTRODUCTION

Poverty and social exclusion continue to be major challenges in Spain despite the progress made in recent years. This report analyses the evolution of the main indicators of social vulnerability and provides a clear picture of the current situation and the goals set for 2030.

As part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Union defined the AROPE (*At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion*) indicator by combining three dimensions: risk of poverty, low work intensity and severe material deprivation.

Since 2015, this rate has decreased in Spain from 28.8% to 25.8% in 2024. Despite this improvement, the country remains above the European average, highlighting the persistence of structural inequalities.

Another worrying aspect is child poverty, which has increased slightly in recent years and in 2024 affects 34.7% of children under the age of 16. Factors such as the pandemic and the economic crisis have played a role in this upturn, underlining the need to strengthen social protection policies for children and their families.

POPULATION INCLUDED IN AT LEAST ONE OF THE THREE AT-RISK-OF-POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION CRITERIA BY COMPONENT AND AROPE RATES COMPARED TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Income reference year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Component	2016	2015	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
AROPE rate	28.8	27.5	27.3	26.2	27	27.8	26	26.5	25.8
Risk of poverty	22.3	21.6	21.5	20.7	21	21.7	20.4	20.2	19.7
Severe material and social deprivation	8.5	8.3	8.7	7.7	8.5	8.3	7.7	9.0	8.3
Low employment intensity	14.9	12.8	10.8	10.9	10	11.6	8.7	8.4	8.0

Source: Produced by the authors based on INE and ECV (INE)

In recent years, the AROPE rate has shown a downward trend, from 28.8% in 2015 to 25.8% in 2024, albeit with fluctuations over these years. In 2020, there was a spike to 27.8%, probably linked to the impact of the pandemic.

The risk of poverty has also decreased (from 22.3% in 2015 to 19.7% in 2023), reflecting some improvement although challenges remain for vulnerable groups.

On the other hand, severe material and social deprivation has shown greater instability: from 8.5% in 2015 to 8.3% in 2023, with decreases from year to year, but with a spike in 2022, when it reached 9.0%.

CARE SERVICES: UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT COVERAGE RATE

Since its launch in 2020, the Minimum Vital Income (MVI) has been progressively rolled out and, five years on, has become a solid and consolidated minimum income guarantee system, which is essential for continuing to strengthen our welfare state and tackle poverty and exclusion in our country.

The number of beneficiaries has grown steadily, reaching more than 1.1 million households and 3.4 million people over this period. By the end of 2025, the benefit reaches 800,000 families and benefits 2.4 million people, nearly half of whom are children and adolescents. In this respect, the Child Allowance reaches 563,000 families, an important factor in the fight against child poverty.

CHILDREN AT RISK OF POVERTY OR SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In recent years, the percentage of under-16s at risk of poverty or social exclusion has increased slightly (from 33.2% in 2015 to 34.7% in 2024), without showing significant improvement.

The differences between boys and girls are not striking and the trend in child poverty risk has been upward from 2019, possibly linked to the pandemic, with a noticeable spike in 2023 and 2024 (in 2024 the rate reached 35.2 per cent of boys and 34.2 per cent of girls).

SEVERE MATERIAL AND SOCIAL DEPRIVATION

The incidence of severe material deprivation in childhood has almost doubled since records began in 2008.

In 2014 the rate reached 9.5%, although between 2015 and 2019 this factor underwent a slight correction and decreased progressively year by year. Since 2020, there have been steady annual increases in the rate of children and adolescents experiencing severe material deprivation. During 2023 the rate exceeded its historical highs.

In 2024, there is a notable decrease of 0.6 percentage points to 10.2%. However, this is the second highest figure since records have been kept.

POVERTY IN THE ROMA POPULATION

According to the National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030, the Roma population in Spain has much higher levels of poverty than the general population.

Thus, 85.9% of the Roma population lives at risk of poverty, 65.6% in severe poverty and 46% in extreme poverty, while 92% are at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion compared to 29.3% of the population as a whole. Furthermore, 76.8% of the Roma population suffers from severe material deprivation and 36.2% from low labour intensity.

In the field of employment, only 26% of the Roma population over the age of 15 is employed, compared to 60% of the general population. Moreover, only 6% of unemployed Roma receive unemployment benefits. In terms of access to housing, 16% of Roma households have problems of dampness and 8.9% are in a situation of overcrowding.

Meanwhile, the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024-2030 confirms that the Roma population continues to suffer poverty and exclusion rates of over 80%, requiring specific measures in education, housing, employment and access to social services to ensure equal opportunities.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Homelessness is defined as the situation of people who lack secure, stable and adequate housing and are forced to live on the streets, in temporary accommodation or in extremely precarious conditions. This phenomenon represents one of the most serious forms of social exclusion and affects not only access to housing but also the exercise of fundamental rights.

According to the Survey of Centres and Services for the Care of Homeless People published by the Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE) in 2025, an average of 34,145 people over 18 years of age were accommodated daily in specialised centres during 2024, an increase of 57.5% compared to the data published in 2022. The trend between 2012 and 2021 (with data available until 2022) shows moderate but sustained growth. However, between 2022 and 2024, the increase has been much more pronounced, indicating an acceleration of homelessness in Spain in recent years, which also shows an increasing trend towards feminisation.

The care network consists of 1,376 centres, with an average occupancy rate of 85.6%. The growth of *Housing First/Housing Led* programmes, which prioritise direct access to stable housing, is worth noting, with an average of 1,092 active homes, 65.5% more than in 2022.

In December 2024, the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and Agenda 2030 presented the results of the Night Count Pilot Project, carried out in 27 municipalities. This study identified 6,144 people experiencing homelessness, of whom 1,971 were living on the streets in the strict sense and 875 in special settlements.

Furthermore, regarding access to public financial assistance, such as minimum income support or minimum vital income, the data collected indicates that approximately 14% of those interviewed received some form of this assistance in the last month. An additional 11.5% reported having applied for them in the last year without receiving them, either because they are in the process of being resolved (9.7%) or because they have not yet started receiving them (1.8%). In addition, 5.3% of people were refused assistance following their application. These percentages contrast with the 53.9% who said they had not applied for any of these benefits, and the 15.8% who said they were unaware of them or did not answer the question.

POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In Spain, poverty and social exclusion among people with disabilities continue to be a structural problem, albeit with slight recent improvements. According to the EAPN's 15th Report on the State of Poverty, the AROPE rate fell from 33.7% in 2023 to less than 30% in 2024, although

in 2024, 40.7% of people with disabilities aged 16 to 64 were still living in poverty or social exclusion, compared to only 23.6% of those over 65.

Moreover, in 2022 the employment rate of people with disabilities was only 26.9% (much lower than that of the general population), and unemployment is also significantly higher, according to the ONCE Foundation.

An 8% income gap persists compared to those without disabilities, public supports do not ensure real economic autonomy and the additional costs of care aggravate the situation: 27% of people with disabilities have trouble making ends meet and 41% cannot afford unexpected expenses of €800 or more.

POVERTY AND MIGRATION

Migrants in Spain, especially those in an irregular administrative situation, are among the groups most at risk of poverty and social exclusion due to job insecurity, difficulties in accessing housing and basic services, and the discrimination they suffer.

At the same time, migration is largely a response to economic and social inequalities in the countries of origin, which presents Spain with the challenge of guaranteeing the protection of rights and social inclusion. Furthermore, the territorialisation of informal settlements linked to the concentration of migrant populations in peri-urban settings and agricultural areas reflects structural dynamics of poverty and residential exclusion.

According to data from the Ninth FOESSA Report on social exclusion and development in Spain (2025), 18% of the population of immigrant origin suffers extreme poverty. This figure was as high as 29% in 2014 and fell to 21% in 2019.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 1. ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Population included in at least one of the three at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion criteria by component and AROPE rates compared to the European Union.	↓	↓	More people out of risk.
Comparative AROPE rate for EUROPE and SPAIN.	↗	↗	Similar to European changes.
Unemployment benefit coverage rate.	↑	↑	More coverage with fewer beneficiaries.
Children at risk of poverty and social exclusion	↑	↑	Increased risk of poverty among children.
People lacking a specific number of skills.	↗	↗	Increased deprivation among women and people with disabilities.
Registered homeless people.	↗	↗	Increasing trend in the feminisation of homelessness.
People with disabilities receiving disability, dependency, housing or employment benefits.	↓	↓	Significant reduction in the total number of recipients of cash benefits for people with disabilities.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.1: ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

CHALLENGE 1 / 1. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

1

Reduce the at-risk-of-poverty and exclusion (AROPE) rate by 10% by 2030, prioritising measures aimed especially at single-parent and lone-parent families, those most affected by poverty, bringing Spain below the EU incidence.

Indicator: AROPE rate (Base year 2015 income).

SDG 1.2: Reduce by at least half the proportion of people living in poverty in all its dimensions.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 5.4: Recognise and value unpaid domestic work and promote policies that support shared responsibility in the household and family.

2

Reduce the AROPE rate for under-16s by 30% by 2030, prioritising single-parent families and the most affected families.

Indicator: Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (base year 2015).

SDG 1.2: Reduce by at least half the proportion of people living in poverty in all its dimensions.

SDG 2.2: End malnutrition and address age-specific nutrition needs.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

3

Ensure that 60% of eligible households effectively access welfare benefits by 2030, optimising administrative processes, reducing barriers to access by simplifying them, with a sustained increase to act to reduce the risk of poverty.

Indicator: Number of households accessing IMV-CAPI financial aid.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity

4

Reduce severe material deprivation among 0-16 year olds by 30% by 2030, ensuring universal access to essential goods such as food, clothing and basic supplies, prioritising areas with a high incidence of social exclusion.

Indicator: Rate of children with severe material and social deprivation (base year 2021).

SDG 1.2: Reduce by at least half the proportion of people living in poverty in all its dimensions.

SDG 2.1: End hunger and ensure access to safe and nutritious food.

SDG 12.3: Reduce food waste to improve availability.

5

Improve the living conditions of the Roma population by reducing those living at risk of poverty to 80%.

Indicator: % of the Roma population living at risk of poverty (EU average base year 2021).

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 1.4: Ensure equal access to economic resources and basic services.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

6

Reach a total of 10,000 beneficiaries of financial benefits for persons with disabilities, according to the type of benefit and type of disability.

Indicator: Index of non-contributory pensions by type of benefit, by type of disability.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 1.4: Ensure equal access to economic resources and basic services.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN

In compliance with the commitments made in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Spanish Government has deployed a set of strategies, plans and regulatory provisions aimed at eradicating poverty and social exclusion, especially among the most vulnerable groups.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Since 2021, a number of national strategies aimed at social inclusion, child protection and homelessness eradication have been put in place, many of which are still in place.

The **National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024-2030** is the roadmap for state social policy. It is articulated around four axes: guaranteeing resources, social investment in people, protection against life cycle risks and improving the effectiveness of public policies. Alongside this national strategy, sectoral strategies are being developed that reinforce the rights-based approach.

The **2023-2030 State Strategy for the Rights of Children and Adolescents** therefore consolidates comprehensive protection for minors by promoting safe and inclusive environments. The **State Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee (2022-2030)** guarantees free access for children and adolescents in poverty to essential services such as education, health, housing and healthy food. The **Youth Strategy 2030** guarantees the full inclusion of groups of young people and adolescents at serious

risk of vulnerability, social exclusion or subject to double discrimination (basically, young people with disabilities, LGTBI+ youth, Roma youth, migrant youth and adolescents and homeless youth). Finally, the **Youth Strategy 2030** promotes the social inclusion of youth, with special attention to those in vulnerable situations.

Furthermore, the **Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030** addresses structural inequalities through specific measures in education, employment, health, housing and the fight against anti-Roma peoples.

In the field of homelessness, the **National Strategy to Combat Homelessness in Spain 2023-2030** promotes its eradication through comprehensive housing, social care and mental health policies.

Finally, the **2026-2030 State Strategic Framework on Loneliness** has also been promoted, conceived as a reference tool to guide a coherent and sustained public response to a complex social phenomenon that directly affects poverty, social exclusion and well-being throughout the life cycle. The Framework approaches loneliness from a structural, community and relational perspective, reinforcing the transversality of public policies, the role of proximity services and the social fabric, as well as coordination between systems and levels of government.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Law 19/2021 establishing the Minimum Vital Income is key, as it sets up a structural benefit aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion, guaranteeing a minimum level of income for the most vulnerable households.

Organic Law 8/2021 on comprehensive protection for children and adolescents against violence (**LOPIVI**) stands out. It is currently undergoing reform to consolidate children as active subjects of law.

In addition, several **Royal Decree-Laws (6/2022, 14/2022, 20/2022 and 5/2023)** have been adopted incorporating urgent measures to address the social and economic consequences of the war in Ukraine. These provisions include direct aid, protection against redundancies, reinforcement of the Minimum Vital Income and specific support for vulnerable groups, which helps to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most affected households.

On the other hand, the **Royal Decree-Law 2/2025** was passed to combat child poverty and social exclusion. It approved urgent measures to guarantee the best interests of children and adolescents in situations of extraordinary migratory contingencies. This regulation responds to the unequal impact of the existing migratory phenomenon in Spanish territory, insofar as the situation of unaccompanied foreign minors deserves special protection.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ANDALUSIA: the *Comprehensive Plan for the Roma Community 2017-2020*, multi-stakeholder and multi-level, involves the regional ministries and management centres of the regional government, as well as local entities, social and economic agents, and civil society.

NAVARR: the *Strategic Inclusion Plan (2018-2021)* responds to the political commitment made by the current Government of Navarre to guarantee the right of people in situations of or at risk of exclusion to be supported in their social inclusion processes.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: the *Socio-Educational Care Programme in Areas in Need of Social Transformation (ZTS)* is an initiative aimed at schools located in disadvantaged areas to offer extra educational support to vulnerable students.

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: The *Social Care and Inclusion Plan* is a regional strategy that strengthens primary social care services through technical inclusion teams that work with people in vulnerable situations.

CATALONIA: draft law on the Guaranteed Citizenship Income. This is a regional regulation that consolidates a minimum income guarantee system of its own, complementary to the MVI.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ALICANTE: the first Municipal Plan for Social Inclusion, based on establishing a theoretical framework on exclusion/inclusion for a coordinated intervention, promotes autonomy and community participation and reduces territorial inequalities to strengthen social cohesion.

COUNCIL OF MAJORCA: *IMAS (Institut Mallorquí d'Afers Socials)* offers a permanent shelter programme for people without a home or resources that provides temporary accommodation and professional support for their social integration.

BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: has launched a *cash card* managed by social services to enable vulnerable families to buy food and basic necessities, promoting autonomy, avoiding stigmatisation and offering discounts at local shops.

2. TAX SYSTEM EFFICIENCY



INTRODUCTION

Fair taxation is an essential pillar to sustain a strong welfare state that is accessible to all citizens. A progressive and equitable tax system is the basis for ensuring a more balanced distribution of wealth and strengthening the state's capacity to finance fundamental public services such as education, health, social protection and access to decent housing. According to the OECD's *Taxation and Inequality* report (2024), progressive tax systems are key to reducing inequality and ensuring sufficient resources for inclusive public policies.

The transition to a sustainable economic system requires reconciling growth, environmental protection and social equity. In this framework, green taxation, technological innovation and the expansion of renewable energies are essential tools to meet the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the European Green Deal.

Currently, revenues from environmental taxes represent around 1.8% of GDP, compared to 2.4% in the EU, reflecting scope for action to strengthen the role of taxation in the ecological transition

The European Commission, in its report *Business Taxation for the 21st Century (2021)*, estimates that the European Union loses more than €46 billion annually due to tax fraud, evasion and avoidance. This obviously significantly limits the capacity of Member States to invest in social cohesion and ecological transition. This revenue shortfall has been accentuated since the 2008 financial crisis and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to strains in the financing of social policies.

Both the OECD and the European Commission have stressed the need to strengthen transparency and accountability in tax administration. In its report *Tax Policy Reforms 2023*, the OECD insists on the desirability of reviewing regressive tax exemptions and benefits that favour higher incomes and adapting tax systems to the challenges of the global and digitised economy.

In this context, measures such as the elimination of regressive tax benefits, the intensification of the fight against fraud and evasion, and the creation of taxes that tax the sectors with the greatest economic capacity are essential. Fair taxation not only increases revenue, but also enables resources to be redistributed fairly and ensures that welfare is an effective right for all people. This contributes to a more cohesive, equitable and resilient society.

GINI INDEX

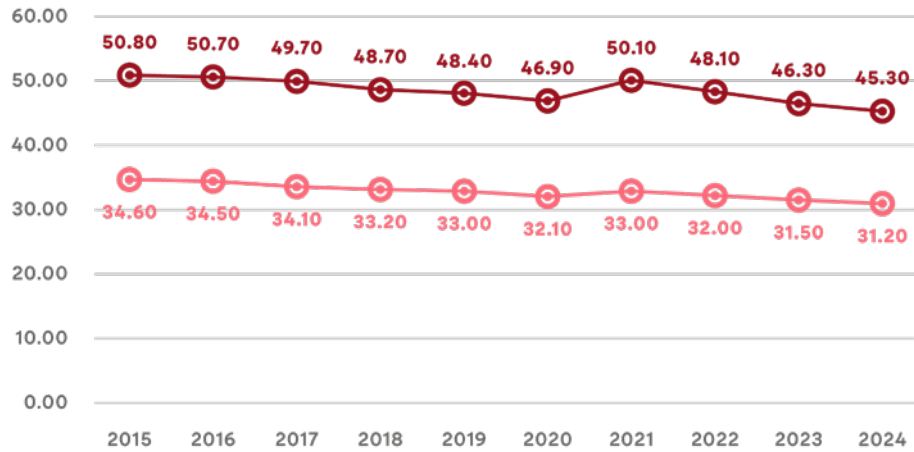
Fair taxation implies a progressive tax system, in which those who have the most contribute the most to sustaining the state and financing public services. Effective redistribution of wealth contributes to reducing inequality, as reflected in the reduction of the Gini Index.

For Spain, the Gini Index has dropped from 34.6 in 2015 to 31.2 in 2024, which is a result of redistributive measures like raising the minimum wage, creating a minimum living wage, increasing contributory and non-contributory pensions, and making progress in dependency and disability.

In addition, the tax system has become more progressive, strengthening the state's capacity to redistribute wealth and reduce child and family poverty.

Although the overall trend has been downward, there were fluctuations throughout the period. Between 2017 and 2020, the index fell significantly to 32.1, its lowest level, while in 2021 it rebounded to 33.0, probably due to the economic effects of the pandemic. Since then, the trend has been downward again, reaching 31.2 in 2024, suggesting an improvement in income distribution driven by social protection policies and economic measures implemented in recent years.

GINI INDEX AND COEFFICIENT IN SPAIN (BY YEAR)



● GINI Coefficient ● GINI Index (Spain) Source: Produced by the authors based on Eurostat.

MATERNITY DEDUCTION: AMOUNT OF DEDUCTION

Between 2015 and 2022, the maternity deduction showed variations in both beneficiaries and amounts, with a downward trend from 2019. The number of beneficiaries increased from 778,732 in 2015 to a peak of 850,891 in 2019, dropping to 779,671 in 2022. This evolution can be linked to changes in eligibility, demographic dynamics and access difficulties. This trend also reflects demographic decline, as births fell by 21.6% over the same period (from 420,290 in 2015 to 329,251 in 2022), influenced by factors such as delayed motherhood, a decrease in the number of women of childbearing age, and difficulties in balancing work and family life.

Likewise, the total amount of the deduction followed a similar pattern, rising from 722.1 million in 2015 to 765.2 million in 2019, before falling to 709.2 million in 2022. Early disbursement also decreased, both in number of beneficiaries (542,976 in 2015 compared to 414,289 in 2022) and in financial amount (520.3 million in 2018 compared to 372.9 million in 2022), due to changes in requirements or lower demand.

The deduction for childcare or nursery school expenses showed variable behaviour: beneficiaries rose from 204,825 in 2015 to a peak of 454,225 in 2018, dropping to 373,984 in 2020 and partially recovering to 404,050 in 2022. The amount evolved from 212.1 million in 2015 to 308.2 million in 2017, falling to 225.5 million in 2022.

**MATERNITY DEDUCTION: AMOUNT OF DEDUCTION
UNIT: PERSONS AND EUROS**

Income reference year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Maternity deduction: beneficiaries	778,732	831,963	830,640	845,780	850,891	787,888	768,103	779,671
Maternity deduction: amount	722,106,626	758,733,673	755,953,213	761,273,481	765,218,788	687,135,600	677,506,403	709,281,440
Maternity deduction: amount of advance payment (no. of persons)	542,976	549,051	531,670	520,149	486,082	434,719	407,042	414,289
Maternity deduction: amount of advance payment (amount)	506,520,484	520,363,651	502,925,829	480,893,615	443,936,300	394,444,159	369,520,580	372,918,591
Maternity deduction: increase for expenses in nursery schools or approved day-care centres (no. of persons)	204,825	278,604	296,924	454,225	451,433	373,984	377,315	404,050
Maternity deduction: increase for expenses in approved day-care or nursery schools (amount)	212,157,638	288,997,872	308,291,694	262,106,549	259,487,471	139,516,746	200,882,725	225,558,777

RISK OF POVERTY

As regards the risk of poverty, according to Eurostat and the INE, a person is considered to be at risk when his/her net income per consumption unit is less than 60% of the national median, indicating an unfavourable economic position with respect to the population as a whole. Between 2015 and 2024, the income threshold determining this risk increased from €5,306 to €8,348 per consumption unit per year.

This increase does not necessarily imply an improvement for those who remain below the threshold. When it grows faster than the income of vulnerable households, the number of people at risk increases, as the most recent data shows: 20.2% of the Spanish population was under this threshold in 2024 according to the INE. The INE data also indicate that the average net annual income of the lowest 40% of households with the lowest income was €11,488.50 in 2021, rising by 25% in 2024 to €14,386.70.

In this context, the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (SMI) has played an important role in improving the disposable income of low-income households. Between 2018 and 2025, the SMI rose from €735.90 to €1,184 per month, with progressive rises contributing to reducing monetary poverty, which by 2026 is set to rise by 3.1% to €1221. According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund, increases in the minimum wage between 2016 and 2023 reduced poverty by 4.3% for all households and by up to 6.9% for those on the minimum wage. This confirms the effectiveness of the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (SMI) as an instrument of equity and in-work poverty reduction in Spain.

GREEN TAXATION

Green taxation, through carbon taxes, incentives for clean technologies and energy efficiency rebates, not only provides a disincentive to polluting practices, but also generates resources to finance the transition and can protect the most vulnerable groups through redistribution mechanisms.

Along these lines, the White Paper on Tax Reform (2022) identified four priority areas for action (electrification, mobility, circularity and water) and highlighted the current fragmentation of the system, its limited progressive nature and the need to provide social offsets. Its success will depend on sound technical design, public acceptance and coordination between administrations.

The Green Paper on Sustainable Finance, a strategic document published by the Spanish Government in November 2024, is a strategic tool to guide policies and generate a regulatory framework to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon and socially inclusive economy.

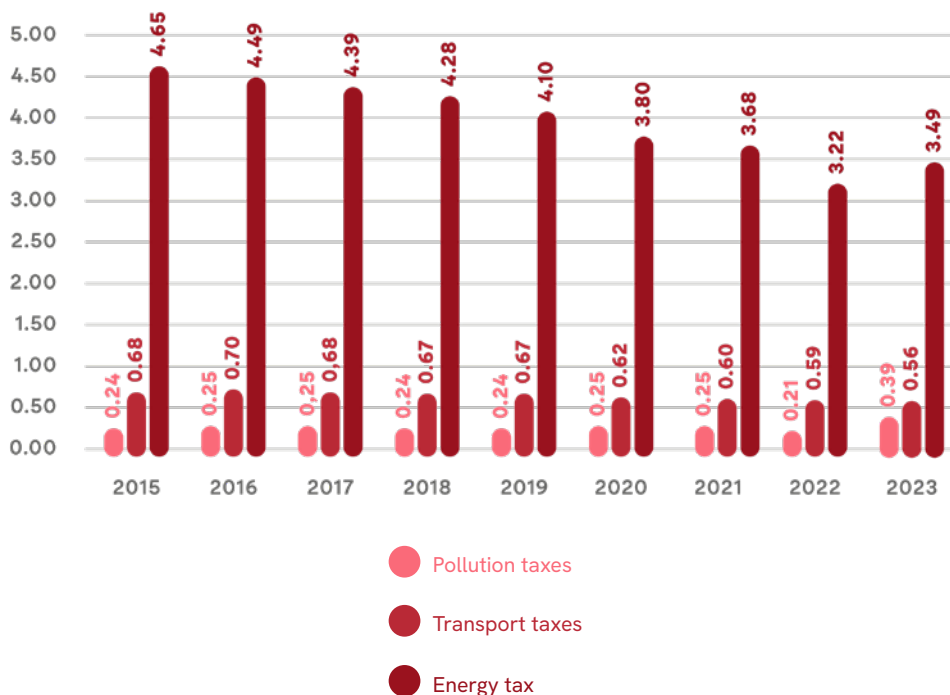
Private finance for climate mitigation projects is still uneven, while external finance linked to environmental commitments has shown an increasing trajectory in recent years.

Ultimately, just transition will require strengthening fiscal, technology and energy policies in an integrated manner, ensuring that the decarbonisation effort contributes to a sustainable, resilient and socially inclusive economic model.

ENVIRONMENTAL TAX REVENUES

Since 2015, environmental tax revenues in Spain have shown a downward trend (from 1.92% of GDP to 1.64% in 2023), after reaching a low of 1.50% in 2022. Although this slight recovery marks a turning point, Spain remains below the EU average (2.03%), which shows a lower collection capacity in terms of environmental taxation compared to the European average.

ENVIRONMENTAL TAX REVENUES
UNIT: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL REVENUE



Source: Eurostat. Environmental taxes by economic activity (Environmental taxes by economic activity.) Filtered by EU27_2020 and ES. Additional filter under "taxes".

Transport revenues have also decreased, while pollution taxes have risen slightly to 0.39% of GDP in 2023, which could indicate an initial effort towards greener taxation.

Despite these partial advances, the environmental tax burden in Spain continues to be lower than in comparable European countries: Italy, Slovenia or Croatia exceed 3%, while Greece reaches more than 4%. These differences show that Spain has ample room for improvement to strengthen environmental taxation, in other words, to advance in the design of a more robust system that combines collection efficiency, the capacity to finance decarbonisation policies and social equity in the ecological transition.

INTERNATIONAL TAX COOPERATION

The role of international tax cooperation in the fight against inequality is crucial. This issue is addressed through taxation in all countries around the world which, if they have progressive tax systems, can help to level the playing field in countries with populations that have fewer opportunities for advancement. The existence of these taxes allows for fairer societies that provide a social safety net for citizens, ensuring their well-being, security and equal opportunities. This is the opposite model to the one that relies on a low tax burden, which leads to a weakening of the capacity of states to redistribute wealth or the possibility of financing public services.

At the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), Spain and Brazil presented the initiative "Effective Taxation of High Net Worth Individuals. Tax the super-rich" to push for greater global taxation of the super-rich and contribute to a greater redistribution of wealth to tackle the growing problem of inequality. To this end, a multilateral debate must be promoted on higher effective taxation of large fortunes to ensure social cohesion in each country.

To advance the Sustainable Development Strategy, the global funding gap for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), estimated at several trillion dollars annually, must be recognised. This requires innovative mechanisms and greater mobilisation of resources.

In this context, the work of the Sustainable Finance Council is key to promote the integration of environmental, social and governance criteria in investments, as well as to promote public-private partnerships to bridge this gap. Furthermore, the reference to the UN Framework Convention on Taxation and the reform of corporate taxation reinforce the need for a fairer international tax architecture consistent with sustainability objectives.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 2. TAX SYSTEM EFFICIENCY

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
GINI Index.	↑	↑	Positive, but below the European average.
Maternity deduction: amount of the deduction.	↗	↗	More deductions than last year but less than in 2019.
Income situation in relation to the at-risk-of-poverty threshold: below 60% of median equivalised income.	↓	↓	Inflation and rising commodity prices.
Environmental tax revenue.	↓	↘	Moderate increase in pollution taxes.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.2: TAX SYSTEM EFFICIENCY

7

Boost the revenue side of our tax system, fairer taxation and the redistributive nature of taxes and social benefits with an environmental and gender focus to reduce economic and social inequalities and support the ecological transition.

Indicator: Multi-year evolution of tax bases in relation to domestic demand.

SDG 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, to achieve greater equality.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

SDG 5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources and financial services.

SDG 12.c: Rationalise inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage overconsumption.

8

Reduce the GINI index by 5 points by 2030 compared to 2015 by including improvements in the minimum wage, employment system, and other public policies.

Indicator: GINI Index Eurostat (Base year 2015).

SDG 10.1: Achieve and maintain income growth for the poorest 40% of the population at a rate above the national average.

SDG 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, to achieve greater equality.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9

Increase the disposable income of the 40% of households with the lowest income by 40% through an increase in the minimum wage, improvements to the labour system and other redistributive and social tax reforms.

Indicator: Average net annual income of the 40% of households with the lowest income in 2021 (base year 2021) collected by INE.

SDG 10.1: Achieve and maintain income growth for the poorest 40% of the population at a rate above the national average.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity.

10

Promote international partnerships to achieve the goal of financing sustainable development through international tax cooperation, including the fight against tax avoidance and evasion, the mobilisation of domestic resources, and the strengthening of tax cooperation between countries.

Indicator: Spain's compliance with the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (OECD) in the exchange of information on request (EOIR) in future reviews (2026/2027).

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity

SDG 17.3: Mobilise additional financial resources for developing countries.

SDG 17.4: Help developing countries to achieve debt sustainability.

SDG 17.16: Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE TAX SYSTEM

Spain has launched a number of initiatives, reforms and regulatory measures aimed at optimising the functioning of the tax system. This strengthens the country's efficiency, equity and capacity to generate sufficient public resources to guarantee the financial sustainability of the welfare state and favour a fairer distribution of wealth.

Green taxation has been consolidated as a key tool in the State's strategy to move towards a sustainable territorial model that promotes social cohesion and tackles climate and environmental emergencies. In recent years, ministries have promoted tax reforms, incentives and regulatory measures that link the tax system to environmental objectives, thereby encouraging sustainable behaviour at both the business and civic level. These actions seek to internalise environmental costs, incentivise energy efficiency, reduce polluting emissions and generate resources to finance the ecological transition, especially in the most vulnerable territories or those most affected by climate change.

Objective 25 of the Spain 2050 Strategy seeks to strengthen environmental taxation and integrates criteria that promote a just ecological transition. It aims for Spain to reach the European average in environmental taxes by 2030 and to increase its ambition in the following decades, in order to achieve decarbonisation, boost the circular economy and strengthen environmental protection.

Green taxation in Spain is aligned with the **PNIEC 2023-2030, the Climate Change Law** and European commitments towards climate neutrality, which promotes coherent, state-wide environmental taxes. It aims to reduce emissions, promote energy transition and finance environmental mitigation, using fiscal policy as a driver of innovation, economic efficiency and sustainability.

In addition, the **Seville Commitment**, adopted at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), sets out an agenda for renewing the global financing framework and strengthening the international financial architecture. Among its priorities, it highlights the need to improve the efficiency of national tax systems as a key tool to ensure sustainable and equitable resources. The measures agreed include strengthening tax collection capacity, combating tax evasion and eliminating illicit financial flows, which are essential elements to increase tax transparency and fairness. It also promotes structural

reform to give developing countries a greater voice in global financial governance, address the debt crisis and facilitate access to sustainable finance.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Recent regulatory measures include **Law 11/2021 on measures to prevent and combat tax fraud**, which transposes **Council Directive (EU) 2016/1164** and strengthens transparency and control in the tax system. The law is a significant step forward in the fight against fraud.

Law 38/2022 is also in force, which establishes **temporary levies on the energy sectors and credit institutions**, with the aim of contributing to the income pact and ensuring a more equitable distribution of the costs arising from the economic and inflationary context following the energy crisis.

In the area of tax reform, **Law 7/2024, which establishes a Supplementary Tax to ensure an overall minimum level of taxation for multinational groups and large domestic groups, a Tax on the interest and commission margin of certain financial institutions and a Tax on liquids for electronic cigarettes and other tobacco-related products, and amends other tax rules**, introduces three new taxes and amends various tax rules, with the aim of strengthening tax fairness, ensuring minimum taxation for large corporate groups and adapting the system to new economic realities.

This has led to the creation of a **Temporary Solidarity Tax on Large Fortunes (ITSGF)** in force in 2023, 2024 and 2025, which affects net wealth exceeding €3 million. Through it, tax is levied on the part of the wealth that has not been taxed by the Autonomous Community.

With regard to green taxation, in recent years, Spain has strengthened its legal framework for green taxation with the approval of new environmental taxes and the modification of existing taxes. **Law 7/2022 on waste and contaminated land for a circular economy** introduced the **Tax on non-reusable plastic packaging and the Tax on the deposit of waste in landfills, incineration and co-incineration** (both in force since January 2023). In addition, measures such as the **Tax on CO₂ emissions** from vehicles, the **Tax on fluorinated gases** and the **Tax on electricity** have been consolidated, all aimed at penalising polluting practices and promoting the use of clean energy. In 2023, **Royal Decree-Law 5/2023** incorporated personal income tax deductions for investments in electric recharging infrastructure and accelerated depreciation in corporate income tax for renewable installations.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE TAX SYSTEM

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CANTABRIA: The *General Guidelines of the Tax Control Plan of the Cantabrian Tax Administration Agency* have made progress in the control, verification and investigation of tax fraud.

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: *Law 1/2023 of 27 January on Administrative, Financial and Tax Measures* introduces a set of tax adjustments aimed at easing the tax burden on lower-income taxpayers and encouraging investment and the household economy.

CATALONIA: has introduced a carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions tax for motor vehicles as part of its environmental taxation strategy. This tax is levied on pollutant emissions from passenger cars, motorbikes and vans.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: *Law 2/2016, of 30 March, on tourist stays in the Balearic Islands:* it taxes the activity of tourist stays and allocates the proceeds to sustainability purposes (environment, housing, territory).

MEASURES BY LE TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE TAX SYSTEM

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÁCERES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *Plan for detecting the risk of financial exclusion* serves to ensure citizens' access to financial services in rural and sparsely populated areas (municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants).

PONTEVEDRA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: The *Co-financing plan for municipal community social services* is mainly dedicated to counselling and attention to social emergencies for the most vulnerable groups.

ORCERA (JAÉN): *tax rebates* to promote the use of sustainable energies by its neighbourhood to encourage solar self-consumption by means of solar panels for own consumption and the energy rehabilitation of the municipality's dwellings.

3. CHILD NUTRITION



INTRODUCTION

Access to adequate nutrition is a fundamental right that directly impacts the population's health, development, and well-being. According to FAO, food security requires that all people have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life.

Significant shortcomings persist in Spain. In 2024, 6.1% of the population, some three million people, could not afford a meal containing beef, chicken or fish at least every other day, while food prices rose by 15.7%, the largest increase in decades (INE, 2023). Despite the existence of social assistance, school canteens and food banks, demand continues to rise, with the Spanish Federation of Food Banks (FESBAL) assisting more than 1.2 million people in 2023.

Eating habits also pose challenges. According to the ALADINO 2023 Study, only 6% of children and adolescents meet the recommendations of consuming 5 pieces of fruit and vegetables daily. In parallel, the consumption of ultra-processed products continues to grow in the population. According to INE data, 28.65% of children aged 5 to 9 are overweight, making childhood obesity a priority public health problem.

The quality of food in school settings is a key to reducing inequalities and improving child health. According to AESAN, 5,095 school canteens were assessed in the school year 2022/2023, of which 82.8 % obtained favourable reports on nutritional compliance. In addition, the indicator on compliance with recommended minimum frequencies shows a positive evolution: compliance increased from 62.67% in 2022 to 78.47% in 2023, reflecting significant progress in improving the quality of school meals.

CHILD MALNUTRITION

Analysis of data between 2015 and 2023 shows a positive trend in the reduction of childhood obesity in Spain. According to the INE, the prevalence in the population aged 5 to 9 years fell from 36.49% in 2017 to 28.65% in 2023. Meanwhile, normal weight increased from 49.32% in 2017 to 57.42% in 2023.

Disaggregating the data by gender, significant differences can be observed. In 2023, 59.19 % of boys were normal weight compared to 55.54 % of girls. As for overweight, it affected 27.97 % of boys and 29.36 % of girls, indicating a slightly higher prevalence in girls. These differences were more pronounced in 2017, when only 45.10 % of girls were normal weight compared to 53.32 % of boys. In the same year, 33.4 % of boys and 39.73 % of girls were overweight.

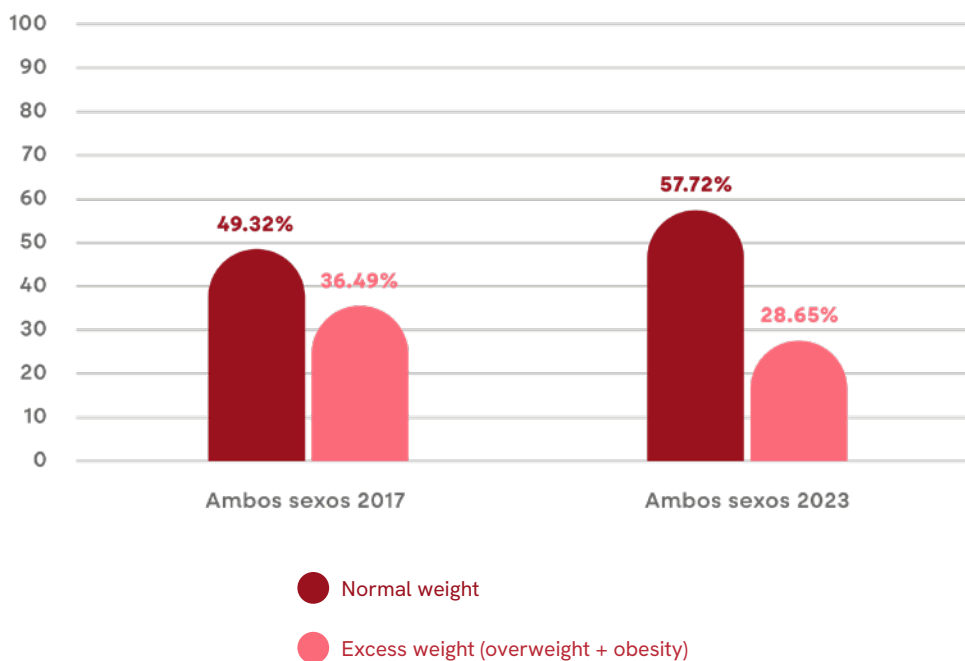
Evidence confirms strong social inequalities: according to the Spanish Health Survey (2023), children from families with fewer resources have significantly higher prevalences of overweight, with differences of up to 54 % in boys and 71.1 % in girls aged 2-17 years compared to households with higher socio-economic status. These gaps are accentuated in vulnerable groups such as migrant children and the Roma population, who have higher rates of obesity and overweight

associated with unfavourable socio-economic conditions and less access to healthy diets (EAPN, 2024; Ministry of Health, 2022).

These results reflect that, despite the positive effect of measures such as the extension of strategies to promote healthy habits, the improvement in the quality of school canteens and awareness campaigns, child malnutrition remains a challenge especially in vulnerable settings. Moreover, according to the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN, 2024), Spain has the highest rate of child poverty in Europe.

Although the reduction of child overweight in Spain between 2015 and 2023 reflects significant progress, important gaps persist in vulnerable groups. Children from migrant families have higher prevalences of obesity and overweight, associated with unfavourable socio-economic conditions and less access to balanced diets. In addition, more than 50% of children from migrant families live at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EAPN, 2024). Similarly, the Roma Health Study (Ministry of Health, 2022) shows higher rates of excess malnutrition in Roma children, linked to environments with limited housing and healthy resources. These inequalities, coupled with high child poverty in Spain, underline the need to reinforce specific policies to ensure equity in health and nutrition.

**NORMAL WEIGHT AND OVERWEIGHT (OVERWEIGHT + OBESITY)
CHILDREN UNDER 5-9 YEARS OLD, BOTH SEXES**



Source: Produced by the authors based on INE.

Approximately 712 million people were living in extreme poverty in 2022 (23 million more than in 2019) and around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023 worldwide, with more than a third of the global population unable to afford a healthy diet. To tackle this global problem, Spain is participating in the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, promoted by the G20 under the Brazilian presidency in November 2024.

From 2025, our country will co-chair the Alliance with Brazil, ensuring the effective implementation of the Alliance and the coordination of the executive board and the support mechanism, which will operate under the framework of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) and will have offices in Rome, Brasilia, Bangkok, Washington and Addis Ababa. The Alliance held its first global summit in Doha in November 2025.

VISUAL SUMMARY COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 3. FOOD AND CHILD POVERTY

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Distribution of food expenditure in households.	↑	↑	Period marked by inflation.
Child weight.	↗	↗	Positive progress in reducing childhood obesity.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.3: FOOD AND CHILD POVERTY

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Ensure that 100% of school menus in public schools meet nutritional quality standards and promote healthy habits by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of compliance in schools with school canteens (Graph 16.3).

SDG 2.1: End hunger and ensure access to safe and nutritious food.

SDG 2.2: End malnutrition and address age-specific nutrition needs.

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.

SDG 4.7: Ensure that all students acquire knowledge to promote sustainable development, including healthy lifestyles.

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Reduce the prevalence of obesity in childhood and adolescence and its gap by social class by at least 20% through comprehensive programmes in school canteens and educational campaigns, prioritising the implementation of prevention policies in communities with a high prevalence of poverty (Base Year 2015).

Indicator: Childhood obesity and overweight rate by age group.

SDG 2.2: End malnutrition and address age-specific nutrition needs.

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.

SDG 4.7: Ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

First, the **National Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Childhood Obesity (2022-2030)**, coordinated by the High Commission on Child Poverty, is based on a comprehensive approach that considers childhood obesity not only as a health problem, but also as a social and equity issue.

The **State Strategy for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (2023-2030)** is also being implemented, which includes among its objectives the promotion of healthy and sustainable food as an essential element in guaranteeing children's well-being.

Likewise, the **Youth Strategy 2030** includes the promotion of healthy eating within its comprehensive health and quality of life framework, as part of policies aimed at prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyles among young people. It recognises the importance of balanced nutrition for physical and mental wellbeing and proposes coordinated action in the educational, community and health spheres to promote access to healthy, sustainable and affordable food.

Moreover, the **State Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee (2022-2030)** includes explicit measures related to nutrition, in particular "healthy eating" and access to school meals. On the one hand, measure 62 refers to programmes for access to healthy food for families in vulnerable situations. On the other hand, measure 64 refers to awareness-raising and dissemination measures on healthy lifestyles (e.g. nutrition and food, physical activity, well-being and sleep), aimed at families with children and adolescents.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the **NAOS Strategy (Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention)**, developed by the Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN), which since 2005 has been promoting a balanced diet and healthy lifestyles with the aim of reducing obesity and associated diseases, especially in childhood and adolescence.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Within the framework of public policies aimed at guaranteeing the right to adequate food for children, various normative provisions have contributed significantly from complementary approaches. Firstly, **Law 16/2021 of 14 December**, which amends Law 12/2013 on measures to improve the functioning of the food supply chain, promotes the configuration of a fairer, more resilient and sustainable food supply chain. This structural transformation generates positive medium- and long-term effects on food security, favouring more equitable access to quality food, especially in contexts of social vulnerability where children are particularly affected.

Likewise, **Organic Law 8/2021 of 4 June** on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence incorporates a rights-based approach that recognises child poverty and exclusion as risk factors that can aggravate situations of lack of protection. As a result, it reinforces the obligation of public administrations to ensure that no child experiences basic deprivation, including food deprivation, as an essential part of their right to a life of dignity, safety and freedom from structural violence.

Finally, **Royal Decree 315/2025**, which establishes rules for the implementation of Law 17/2011, on food safety and nutrition, for the promotion of healthy and sustainable food in educational centres. This regulation reinforces the role of the school as a key environment for the promotion of healthy eating habits from childhood onwards. In particular, it highlights its contribution to the prevention of malnutrition and to equity in access to a balanced diet. The regulations will be extended with regard to the regulation of groups of dependent people or people with special needs through the draft Royal Decree currently in the public information procedure, which will establish criteria for the promotion of healthy and sustainable food for these people in public and private centres.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *2020-2021 school meal grants* earmarked €7 million for this purpose, which doubles the previous year's allocation due to the socio-economic situation resulting from the pandemic.

NAVARE: the *Plan for Children and Adolescents* aims to update the regulatory framework to comprehensively guarantee the rights of children and adolescents.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: the *Third Plan for Children and Adolescents 2024-2027* includes the promotion of a balanced diet and the prevention of childhood obesity among its focus areas.

CANARY ISLANDS: The *Plan for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity in Children under 12 (POICAN)* is a cross-sectoral programme that promotes healthy eating, physical activity and the reduction of sedentary lifestyles.

MEASURES BY LE TO IMPROVE CHILD NUTRITION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *SYGA Plan (Food Management System)* aims to ensure the proper nutrition of schoolchildren at risk of social exclusion, providing them with three meals a day and some food for the whole school week.

HOSPITALET DE LLOBREGAT: the *Sustainable and Proximity Food Plan* encourages responsible consumption and production, supports the consumption of seasonal foods with low environmental impact and the limitation of the consumption of processed products.

4. HOUSING



INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING

Access to housing continues to be one of the main concerns in Spain. According to the latest opinion poll by the Sociological Research Centre (CIS) in December 2025, housing is the main concern for Spaniards, accounting for 39.9% of responses, just one tenth of a percentage point below the November poll, when it reached a high of 40%. Housing took the lead in the December 2024 poll with 22.3% and has remained in first place ever since. According to the INE, the Housing Price Index rose from 96.7 in 2015Q1 to 183.39 in 2025Q3. This path confirms a sustained rise in prices, especially in metropolitan areas and large cities, where demand far exceeds available supply.

In addition, social housing stock is very limited compared to the European average, while rental prices in many areas exceed 30% of household income.

Against this backdrop, the national rental index published by the INE shows a cumulative increase in the price of housing rentals in Spain of 18.7% between 2015 and 2023, highlighting the growing pressure on households and reinforcing the need for measures to ensure affordable access to housing.

This increase has been occurring at a much faster rate than the growth of incomes or GDP per capita, especially since 2022. According to the report *El mercado del alquiler de vivienda residencial en España: evolución reciente, determinantes e indicadores de esfuerzo* (The residential housing rental market in Spain: recent developments, determinants and indicators of effort), published by the Bank of Spain in October 2024, our country ranks among those with the highest level of tenant over-effort: nearly 40% of households living in rented accommodation spend more than 40% of their income on housing costs.

This pressure is compounded by the impact of the growth in tourist and short-term rentals, which between 2023 and 2024 would have absorbed around 5,000 homes, equivalent to approximately 10% of the rental market in some areas. Likewise, the imminent expiry of between 300,000 and 600,000 rental contracts signed at the start of the pandemic is particularly relevant, introducing an additional risk of pressure on prices and residential stability.

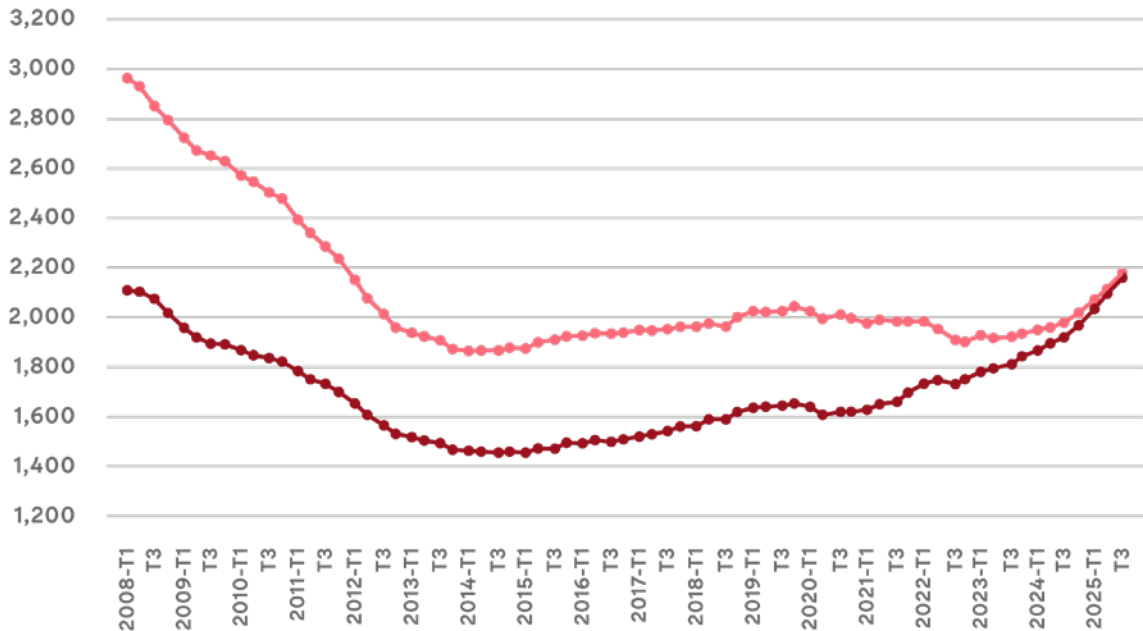
In addition, there is pressure from residential tourism. According to the INE's Statistics on Tourist Accommodation, there are more than 380,000 officially registered tourist accommodations in Spain, a figure that continues to grow in many urban and coastal destinations. Finally, high economic vulnerability is reflected in the significant number of judicial evictions for non-payment of rent, as reported by the General Council of the Judiciary.

Access to decent and affordable housing is one of the main concerns of citizens in Spain. In recent years, prices have been on a steep upward trend, reflecting the pressure of the real estate market and its impact on different sectors of the population.

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda, the price of housing in the third quarter of 2025 stood at €2,153.4/m², representing an increase of 12.1% compared

to the same period last year (€1,895.6/m²). It is important to note that prices are already 2.5% above the highs reached in the first quarter of 2008 in nominal terms (€2,101.4/m²), although they are 27.1% below the highs reached in the first quarter of 2008 in real terms (€2,955.8/m² expressed in 2025 euros).

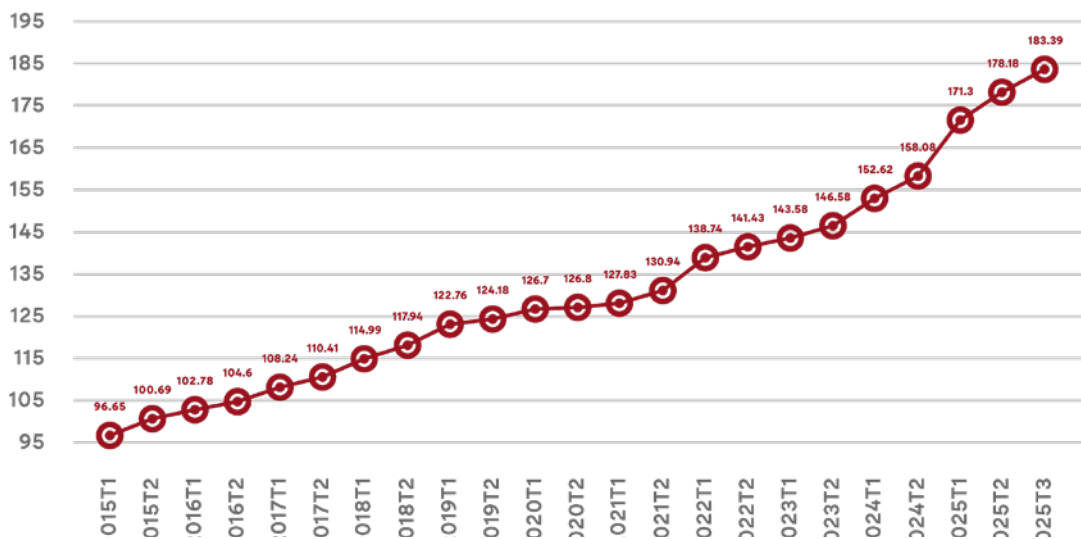
TREND IN PRIVATE HOUSING PRICES APPRAISED VALUE STATISTICS



Source: Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda.

According to the INE, the Housing Price Index rose from 96.7 in 2015Q1 to 183.39 in 2025Q3. This path confirms a sustained rise in prices, especially in metropolitan areas and large cities, where demand far exceeds available supply.

HOUSE PRICE INDEX (HPI)



Source: Produced by the authors based on INE.

The rise in prices is due to structural and cyclical factors. These include sustained growth in domestic and non-resident demand, the formation of new households and the attractiveness of real estate investment as a haven for capital. However, the most relevant underlying cause is a structural shortage of supply, especially of new housing. In this area, the construction sector is reacting, as can be seen in the number of housing completions, which reached 100,980 in 2024 (the highest figure since 2010, although far from the figures prior to the housing bubble), and in the number of housing starts, which stood at 136,187 in 2024 (the highest figure since 2008).

In addition, there remains a strong imbalance between supply and demand in different locations which not only drives up prices, but also increases rental pressure and reduces affordability, in particular for young people and low to middle income households. Financial factors such as low interest rates in recent years and the concentration of land in few hands have intensified these dynamics.

In the medium term, if these constraints are not addressed, rising prices could lead to social exclusion, territorial displacement and urban policy tensions, requiring planning measures, incentives to build affordable housing and fiscal policies that increase supply without creating new speculative bubbles.

On the other hand, the growth of tourist and seasonal rentals, especially in areas of high demand such as Barcelona, the Balearic Islands, Malaga and Valencia, has reduced the housing stock for residential use and strained both the sale and rental market.

In this context, the Bank of Spain warns that one-off actions will hardly solve a structural problem, and that a coordinated and long-term approach is needed, with special attention to land mobilisation, the promotion of rental housing and the reinforcement of the affordable social housing stock, especially public and still limited in size.

Likewise, the diagnosis shows the persistence of housing vulnerability. According to the INE Population and Housing Census, in 2021 there were 7,199 people registered as living in makeshift dwellings or caravans, compared to around 8,000 in 2011, indicating a slight reduction. However, the data confirm the existence of a significant volume of informal settlements, which calls for the reinforcement of policies aimed at guaranteeing access to decent housing and eradicating slums.

Furthermore, the burden of housing costs continues to be a structural problem. Although the percentage of the population spending more than 40% of their income on housing has fallen in Spain from 8.2% in 2023 to 7.8% in 2024 for the population as a whole, and from 30.6% in 2023 to 28.1% in 2024 for households renting at market prices. However, in the latter case, it is still well above the EU average of 19.2% (Eurostat, 2024).

Evictions for economic reasons, although decreasing, continue to affect mainly tenants: 38,266 judicial evictions were registered in 2023, of which 70% were due to non-payment of rent (General Council of the Judiciary).

Accessible housing for persons with disabilities is also limited and many existing dwellings do not meet universal accessibility criteria. The high cost and low income of this group makes access to housing difficult and generates family or institutional dependency.

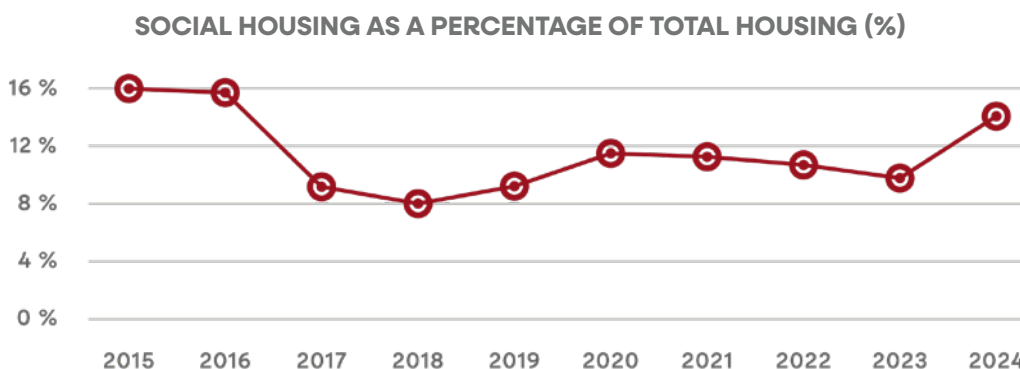
All this highlights the urgent need for public policies to ensure more equitable access to housing, alleviate economic pressure on vulnerable households, strengthen social housing stock and improve inter-institutional coordination in urban planning and housing policy.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN HOUSING AND STRENGTHENING THE PUBLIC AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK

Accessibility to social housing in Spain has historically been limited compared to other European countries. According to the Special Bulletin on Social Housing 2024 of the Housing and Land Observatory, the percentage of social housing in Spain would be between 1.7% of the total number of households (318,000 dwellings), publicly owned, and 3.3% of the total number of households considering the social rental housing stock in the broad sense, which in 2020 was 2.5%. Although this represents an increase of more than 160,000 social rented dwellings from 2019, it is far from the European average of 8% and far from countries such as the Netherlands (29%), Austria (24%) or France (17%).

The 318,000 public social housing units are owned by Autonomous Communities (197,000) and local councils (121,000), highlighting the fragmentation of responsibilities and the need for greater institutional coordination. Between 2005 and 2023, only 19% of new social housing approvals were for renting, compared to 75% for home ownership. Although the percentage of social housing rentals has increased to 28% in 2024, there is clearly limited public capacity to intervene in the rental market.

With regard to social housing construction, from the historical highs of the 1980s (more than 100,000 social housing units per year), production fell drastically, reaching a low of 7,931 in 2015. Between 2015 and 2023, activity remained at low levels, with a cumulative drop of 85% compared to previous decades. A turning point was recorded in 2024, with 14,371 social housing units built, 62% more than in the previous year, the highest value in the last decade, although still insufficient to correct the accumulated deficit.



Source: Produced by the authors based on the Annual Bulletin 2024 of the Housing and Land Observatory.

In terms of public investment, the amounts of initial appropriations for the Access to Housing and Building Development Budget Policy included in the General State Budget show a very strong upward trend in recent years: €587 million in 2015, €481 million in 2018, €2.253 billion in 2021, €3.295 billion in 2022 and €3.477 billion in 2023 (SEPG, 2023). The State Plan for Access to Housing 2022-2025 has mobilised €2.3 billion, with programmes aimed at increasing the public housing stock, rental assistance, accessibility and the eradication of substandard housing.

Among the most important programmes is the programme to increase the public housing stock, which finances up to 60% of the acquisition of housing by public administrations, with the obligation to allocate them to social renting for at least 50 years and prices limited to 5 €/m². It also includes assistance for the transfer of housing owned by the Asset Management Company for Assets Arising from Bank Restructuring (SAREB), (with rents between €150 and €350 per month) and subsidies for innovative models such as cohousing or intergenerational housing.

AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, vacant dwellings accounted for 14.4 % of the total housing stock, equivalent to 3.8 million units. The number of principal dwellings rented amounted to 2,983,619, i.e. 16% of the 18.5 million registered principal dwellings (INE, Census 2021). Since then, a steady growth of the leasing market has been observed. In fact, according to the State Housing Rental Price Reference System (SERPAVI), in 2023, 2,422,617 rental contracts were registered (2,147,789 in collective buildings and 274,828 in single-family homes), representing an increase of 4.97% over the previous year, in the context of the approval of the new state law on the right to housing.

On the other hand, tourist renting poses an additional challenge affecting rental and purchase prices, as it has reduced the stock of housing for residential use and strained the market. This has been particularly true in areas of high demand, such as Madrid, Barcelona, the Balearic Islands and Malaga.

In response to this phenomenon, regulatory measures have been taken, such as giving more power to homeowners' associations in order to limit the proliferation of tourist flats and the regulation of the Single Rentals Register. This Register has contributed to an adequate quantification of the number of dwellings dedicated to temporary rental in our country, both for tourist use and temporary housing rentals. In addition, the rental market offered through online platforms is being purged, leaving out all those advertisements that were being published outside of the applicable regulations, whether state, regional, local or from homeowners' associations.

In this context, Law 12/2023 introduced the figure of stressed residential market areas, applicable in areas where the cost of rent exceeds 30% of the average household income or where prices have grown more than three points above the regional CPI in the last five years. According to data from the Ministry of Housing and the Urban Agenda, up to the third quarter of 2025, 304 municipalities in four Autonomous Communities, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Navarre and Galicia, with a population of more than 9 million inhabitants, have been declared stressed areas.

Finally, it should be noted that most of the subsidised housing built in Spain continues to be oriented towards ownership: between 2005 and 2023, only 20% of the provisionally classified subsidised housing was destined for renting, with marked inequalities between autonomous communities. However, by 2024, this percentage is expected to increase significantly to 28%. Precisely, in relation to social renting, the data estimated from the INE's Living Conditions Survey (2024) put its weight at 3.4% of the main housing stock.

ECONOMIC EVICTIONS (EVICTIONS)

Judicial evictions are evictions ordered by the judiciary when a person or family must leave their home, usually for non-payment of rent or mortgage. They are one of the most serious consequences of economic vulnerability, as they imply the loss of the home and reflect the difficulties of access to a basic right such as housing.

In Spain, judicial evictions have shown a downward trend in recent years. According to data from the General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ), 42,482 proceedings were registered in 2015 with positive compliance. In 2024, the number dropped to 24,306, a decrease of 42.7% in nine years and 24.5% compared to 2021 (32,229), the baseline year for the reduction targets formulated in this RSDS.

Within this generalised fall, the most numerous were the evictions carried out on properties as a consequence of procedures derived from the Urban Leases Law. They went from 35,677 in 2015 to 20,558 in 2024, a reduction of 42.38%, although they still make up the majority of cases. Foreclosure-related repossession fell from 29,225 in 2015 to 5,072 in 2024, a reduction of 82.64%, partly explained by the lower number of risky mortgages granted after the 2008 crisis and the protective measures adopted since then.

In spite of this reduction, the number of judicial releases continues to be significant in regions such as Catalonia, Valencia, Andalusia and Madrid, where most of the procedures are concentrated. This underlines the need to strengthen public policies of prevention, mediation and direct support to households in vulnerable residential situations.

POVERTY AND ACCESS TO HOUSING

There is a clear link between access to housing and situations of poverty and social exclusion. With regard to informal settlements, this phenomenon is considered an extreme form of residential exclusion in Spain. According to the INE (2021 Population and Housing Census), at least 7,199 people are registered as living in makeshift dwellings or caravans, although the actual figure is higher because many settlements are not registered. Other studies raise this estimate even higher. The *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (Roma Secretariat Foundation) calculates that 23,419 people live in makeshift settlements and substandard housing, distributed across 4,584 substandard dwellings in 17 provinces. The social profile reflects a high vulnerability: 77% belong to the Roma population and 50% are under 16 years of age, which shows a critical situation of poverty and social exclusion

Furthermore, the issue of evictions is also closely linked to child poverty. According to the Children's Platform, around 1.5 million of the child population live in households that have experienced rent, mortgage or hire purchase arrears in the last 12 months. This can lead to housing insecurity, risk of eviction and an additional financial burden on families, with negative consequences for children and adolescents. In 2024, 10.2% of children and adolescents live in over-indebted households, a figure that exceeds the 7.8% of the general population in the same situation. This is evidence of children's increased vulnerability to economic crises.

LACK OF ACCESSIBILITY IN HOUSING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Accessible housing remains a major challenge for people with disabilities in Spain. The supply of adapted housing is very limited, especially in urban areas with high demand. According to a study by the *Fundación Mutua de Propietarios* (Mutual Owners' Foundation), only 0.6% of respondents say that their building is accessible 'at all points' from the public thoroughfare to the dwelling.

Many existing dwellings do not meet universal accessibility criteria, such as ramps, adapted lifts or accessible toilets. In addition, the cost of these dwellings is usually higher than that of conventional dwellings, making it difficult to buy or rent them.

VISUAL SUMMARY COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 4. HOUSING

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Housing Price Index (HPI) at the national level.	↑	↑	Nationally, house prices have increased.
Population with high expenditure on housing by type of household.	↓	↓	The impact varies depending on the type of population.
Economic evictions.	↘	↓	There has been a decrease in economic evictions in recent years.
Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP).	↑	↑	The price of rented housing has increased.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.4: HOUSING

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Triple public investment in housing compared to the current Housing Plan (2022-2025), reaching a cumulative total of €7 billion between 2026 and 2030 with the aim of achieving 5% social rental housing.

Indicator: Percentage of social rented housing of the total stock of primary dwellings in Spain. Public investment in housing (public expenditure as % GDP).

SDG 11.1: Ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all people.

SDG 1.4: Ensure equal access to economic resources and basic services, including housing.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

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Ensure the application in areas with a tight residential market of the price containment measures established in Law 12/2023 on the right to housing, as well as the adoption of measures to reverse the problem of access to housing in such areas, ensuring that 100% of areas approve plans of measures to reverse the situation and a development timetable.

Indicator: Number of plans approved by local authorities with designated areas of high demand and their impact on the evolution of rents and prices according to the State Reference System for Housing Rental Prices on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda's website, SERPAVI.

SDG 11.1: Ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all people.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

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Increase the number of homes rented out as permanent housing, especially in areas with a stressed residential market, with the aim of incorporating up to 10% of the number of tourist flats (base year 2021 INE data), and prioritise access to young people in order to reduce their age of emancipation, in collaboration with the different public administrations (National Government, Autonomous Regions and Autonomous Communities).

Percentage of tourist dwellings out of total accommodation as of August 2023.

SDG 11.1: Ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all people.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

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Reduce by 50% the number of judicial evictions for economic reasons by providing direct aid and strengthening mediation services by the competent authorities.

Indicator: number of judicial evictions involving financial matters.

SDG 1.4: Ensure that all people have access to basic services.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 11.1: Ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all people.

SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

Housing policy in Spain is articulated through regulations, programmes and plans that have an impact on access, sustainability and territorial cohesion of the housing stock.

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE HOUSING SITUATION

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The main element is the **Affordable Rental Housing Plan**, promoted by the Ministry of Housing and the Urban Agenda, which promotes the development of a public housing stock for affordable social rental housing, with high energy efficiency standards. This includes

both the construction of new housing and the refurbishment of existing buildings on publicly owned land. This plan foresees the incorporation of more than 184,000 dwellings for social renting at reduced prices.

On the other hand, the **Spanish Urban Agenda** establishes its Strategic Objective 8: Ensuring access to housing, and its Strategic Objective 2: Avoid urban sprawl and revitalise the existing city, with the aim of incorporating urban regeneration as a priority, with interventions in the most socially vulnerable neighbourhoods. These actions are articulated through comprehensive plans that combine re-housing, rehabilitation and access to basic services in order to eliminate slums.

At the conference of presidents held in June 2025, a **State Agreement for Housing 2026-2030** was proposed, with measures such as indefinitely shielding the qualification of protected housing, creating a public database of real purchase and rental prices, and reaching 5% of housing in social rental by 2030 in order to progressively bring Spain closer to European standards. The initial objective is to triple public investment to €7 billion, of which €4 billion would come from the State and €2.7 billion from the Autonomous Communities.

This initiative is being implemented through the new **2026-2030 Housing Plan**, which will replace the 2022-2025 Plan and will incorporate, in addition to the measures mentioned above, others aimed at facilitating youth emancipation, eradicating slums and substandard housing, reducing the financial burden on lower-income households, and containing prices in areas under pressure.

At European level, **ERDF Policy Objective 4 and the European Pillar of Social Rights** direct funding towards socio-economic inclusion and the eradication of marginalised settlements through integrated actions combining housing and social services.

For its part, the **Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR), through the Programme for the construction of social rental housing (C2.I2) and the Residential Rehabilitation Programmes (C2.I1)**, promotes the increase of social housing stock in energy-efficient buildings and the rehabilitation and improvement of housing stock on a triple scale (neighbourhood, building and housing), regulated by Royal Decree 853/2021, which regulates the aid programmes for residential rehabilitation and social housing of the PRTR.

The PRTR also addresses the improvement of housing accessibility under component 2. The **Accessible Country Spain Plan** promoted the financing of reforms in public and private housing stock through Royal Decree 1100/2021 of 10 December. It regulates the direct award of subsidies to the autonomous communities and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla for the development of actions of the investment "New territorial projects to ensure universal accessibility to housing for the elderly, disabled and/or dependent persons". The collaboration between the state and regional administrations once again bore fruit in the improvement of accessibility conditions to their homes for both people with disabilities and the elderly.

In addition, the public housing and land company (SEPES) is to be transformed into the **Entidad Estatal de Vivienda y Suelo (CASA 47)**. This infrastructure will support the public housing system by managing the stock, incorporating housing and land from ministries and the Asset Management Company from SAREB and will contribute to the progressive construction of a new public housing stock that will bring us up to European standards, becoming in the medium term a tool for the State to intervene in the market through the supply of affordable housing.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Law 12/2023 of 24 May on the right to housing is the most relevant regulatory framework to date in terms of guaranteeing universal access to decent and adequate housing. This regulation reinforces this commitment by including the prevention of severe residential exclusion, such as slum dwellings and homelessness, among the objectives of public policy, and provides for specific measures to guarantee decent housing for people in emergency housing situations.

The Law also introduces the figure of stressed residential market areas, applicable in areas where the cost of rent exceeds 30% of the average household income or where prices have grown more than three points above the regional CPI in the last five years. In these areas, the following containment measures are being implemented:

- Price capping through official benchmarks.
- Prohibition of abusive increases in new contracts and renewals.
- Specific obligations for large holders (more than five dwellings).
- Tax benefits for owners who reduce prices.
- Extraordinary extensions of up to three years for tenants.

In addition, a number of measures have been taken to ensure access and protection for the most vulnerable groups. Firstly, Royal Decree 1135/2025 establishes a line of aid on behalf of the State to cover housing rental defaults, aimed specifically at young people and vulnerable groups, which contributes to reinforcing stability in the rental market. Secondly, the Agreement of the Council of Ministers of 13 February 2024 defines the conditions, criteria and requirements applicable for access to the line of State guarantees, aimed at partial financing for the purchase of the first habitual residence by young people and families with dependent minors, thus facilitating the purchase of housing under more favourable conditions.

Royal Decree 1312/2024, which regulates the procedure for the Single Registry of Leases and creates the Digital One-Stop-Shop for Leases for the collection and exchange of data relating to short-term accommodation rental services.

Finally, it should be noted that **Royal Decree-Law 16/2025** extends the suspension of evictions in situations of vulnerability until 31 December 2026, providing greater protection for the most vulnerable households and reinforcing the commitment to social cohesion.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE HOUSING SITUATION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CANARY ISLANDS: the *Canary Islands Housing Plan 2020-2025* facilitates access to housing, promotes affordable rentals, encourages the renovation of existing housing stock and promotes a more sustainable and accessible urban model.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: *Law 5/2018 on housing in the Balearic Islands* guarantees the right to decent housing in the archipelago, recognising its social function and its essential role in social cohesion. The law regulates aspects such as the quality, design and habitability of housing, the conservation and rehabilitation of the housing stock, and establishes measures to promote social renting, especially in cases of empty housing in the hands of large landlords.

MURCIA: *Decree 177/2024 approving the Universal Accessibility Regulations of the Region of Murcia* establishes that for every 25 new dwellings, there must be at least one accessible for people in wheelchairs and another for people with sensory disabilities.

VALENCIA: *Law 8/2024 on universal accessibility of the Valencian Community* requires that at least 7% of newly built subsidised housing must be reserved for people with disabilities (4% if privately developed).

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the *Rehabitare Programme* consists of rehabilitating housing in rural municipalities for social renting. The programme helps to recover disused housing, improve its energy efficiency and expand the public housing stock in rural areas, thus contributing to combating depopulation and promoting social inclusion.

CATALONIA: the Autonomous Community has launched *Plan 50,000*, with the first call for applications for the Public Land Reserve in 2025, included in the Government Plan for the 15th Legislature. This initiative aims to boost the construction of 50,000 public housing units by 2030 by promoting access to decent and affordable housing.

NAVARRRE: the regional government has approved the *Plan of Measures in Stressed Market Areas* in 2025, which establishes specific actions to contain rental prices, expand subsidised housing and promote affordable access. It includes incentives for the supply of public housing, agreements with landlords for social renting and the regulation of areas with higher residential pressure, which reinforces public intervention in the market.

MEASURES BY THE LES TO IMPROVE THE HOUSING SITUATION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

DELTEBRE: *Plan for the mobilisation of unoccupied housing on a permanent basis, including incentives such as an increase in the cadastral value of housing or fiscal support measures.*

CÁCERES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: *Re-activa-Rehabilita Plan in municipalities in the province with a population of less than 20,000 inhabitants for people under 45 years of age to carry out rehabilitation work on their habitual residence for at least 5 years.*

5. SOCIAL RIGHTS AND BENEFITS



INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL BENEFITS

Social benefits are an essential component of the modern welfare state, designed to ensure that citizens are protected against situations of need and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Through these public policies, equity, inclusion and social cohesion are promoted, while ensuring universal access to basic services such as health, education, pensions, unemployment, social services and care for dependent persons.

These benefits, financed mainly through tax revenues and social contributions, aim to redistribute wealth, reduce inequalities and ensure decent living conditions for the entire population, especially in the face of risks such as old age, illness, unemployment, disability or loss of personal autonomy. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), well-designed social protection systems are fundamental for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

In Spain, one of the key instruments is the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency (SAAD), established by Law 39/2006 on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons, which recognises a subjective right to receive care when a person is unable to look after him/herself. By December 2024, the SAAD provided effective benefits to 2,125,145 people, 48% more than in 2020, boosted by the Emergency Plan for Dependency (2021-2023), which increased public funding and reduced the waiting list by 28.6%.

However, structural challenges remain: territorial inequalities in coverage, high dependency on family care (which falls mainly on women) and regional differences in unemployment protection, which reinforce social and gender gaps.

Ultimately, social benefits are not only a safety net for people in vulnerable situations, but also an instrument for reducing poverty, promoting equality and sustaining inclusive economic growth. Its strengthening requires sustained investment and a territorial approach that is sensitive to the different social and economic realities of the country.

SYSTEM FOR AUTONOMY AND CARE FOR DEPENDENCY (SAAD)

Between 2018 and 2024, the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency (SAAD) has experienced significant growth. Claims increased by 22.4% (from 1.77 million to 2.16 million), while the number of people entitled to benefit rose by 25.5% to 1.63 million in 2024. This increase is a response to both an ageing population and an increased awareness of rights. Regarding the degrees of dependency, the group with high dependency (Grade III) increased by 12.5%, compared to higher growth in grades I (37.7%) and II (24.7%), reflecting expanded access for

people with moderate and severe needs. In November 2025, Congress approved the creation of grade III+ with the right to a financial benefit of up to €9,860 per month.

In terms of Individual Care Plan (ICP) resolutions, there was an increase of 44% since 2018, reflecting increased effective coverage. However, grade III had the lowest growth rate (18.7%), which highlights access barriers for the most needy cases.

On a positive note, the number of people with recognised entitlement but no actual benefit has fallen by 52.6% since 2018, a sign of improved management. In 2024, there were 1,494,311 beneficiaries with an effective benefit, out of 1,636,757 persons with a degree of entitlement, i.e. 91.30%. This figure has improved significantly since 2020, when it stood at 79.93%.

Despite quantitative progress, structural deficits in the system persist. A welfare-based approach prevails, with little flexibility to adapt Individual Care Plans (ICPs) to the changing needs of service users, and an imbalance between institutional care and community or home-based support.

On average, a person with Grade III receives only 2.3 hours of home help per day, which forces them to resort to informal support, usually provided by women. This situation perpetuates the feminisation of care and family overload. In addition, there is an increase in the use of low-cost benefits, which compromises the adequacy and quality of support.

On the other hand, according to the National Census of Residential Centres in Spain, the percentage of single rooms is 43 % in centres for the elderly, 40 % in those for the disabled and 49 % in those for the homeless. The National Strategy sets as an objective to make progress on the contents of the Agreement on Common Criteria for Accreditation and Quality of the SAAD, which sets a minimum of 65% single rooms for new homes, guaranteeing the privacy and dignity of users.

The evolution of the SAAD in recent years has shown the need for a thorough review of the catalogue of benefits, more effective multilevel governance and a strengthening of the community and preventive dimension of the system. Only then can it be fully aligned with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

SYSTEM OF CARE: JOBS

In Spain, the care sector combines paid professional work and unpaid informal work, with a majority presence of women in both areas.

Professional work includes home care services, day centres, residential homes and other resources linked to the SAAD. According to Social Security data (CNAE 87, 88 and 97), the number of affiliates increased from 485,690 in January 2015 to 798,886 in April 2025, which represents the creation of more than 313,000 additional jobs in the last decade. The feminisation of the sector is clear: women represent 84.9% in social services with accommodation and 79.2% in services without accommodation, reflecting a historically unequal distribution of care roles.

In addition to this paid work, there is a much higher volume of informal care work. It is estimated that more than 6 million people provide unpaid care for family members, spending an average of 21 hours a week on these tasks. Most are women between the ages of 45 and 64, and the economic value of this work is equivalent to €44.611 billion per year, around 3.6% of Spain's GDP.

In addition, there are 90,114 people registered as non-professional carers with the Social Security, under a special agreement that allows them to pay contributions for retirement, permanent disability and death and survival. 87.6% of these carers are women, reinforcing the feminisation of care and the need for policies that recognise and redistribute this burden.

In this context, the high presence of migrant women in the care sector stands out, especially in domestic work, where they represent around 70% of the workforce, often in precarious conditions.

This scenario underlines the importance of strengthening public policies that promote the professionalisation of the sector, the formalisation of unpaid work and a more equitable distribution of care between men and women.

BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Progress has been made in terms of benefits with the creation of parental leave, which allows employees to care for their children or foster children up to the age of 8, for up to 8 weeks, either continuously or in separate periods, on a full-time or part-time basis, individually and non-transferably. This also applies to leave for childbirth and childcare, which has been extended to 19 weeks of paid leave per parent (6 mandatory weeks immediately after birth or adoption, 11 weeks of flexible leave until the child is 12 months old, and 2 additional weeks until the child is 8 years old), and up to 32 weeks for single-mother and single-father families. Unpaid parental leave is maintained at up to 8 weeks for the care of children under 8 years of age. Both are applicable to employees, the self-employed and public employees.

In addition, the Government has proposed the Universal Child Allowance as part of the Families Act. This measure aims to support families with children, promote the birth rate, improve work-life balance and reduce child poverty. In universal scenarios, i.e. covering the entire population under the age of 18 with a monthly amount of €200, the measure would represent €19.276 billion per year, equivalent to 2.76% of annual public expenditure, with an estimated impact of significantly reducing child poverty (ISEAK, 2024). According to the report *El Impacto de la prestación universal por crianza en la reducción de la pobreza en España* (The Impact of Universal Child Allowance on Poverty Reduction in Spain), if implemented, extreme child poverty would be reduced to 8% (6 points less) and the percentage of children at risk of poverty would fall from 29% to 21% (8% less).

These reforms are moving towards greater co-responsibility and towards the recognition of care as a social right, although its effective deployment and full universalisation have yet to be consolidated in practice.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 5. SOCIAL RIGHTS AND BENEFITS

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Unemployment rate by age and period.	↓	↓	Reduction of unemployment from 2019 onwards.
Minimum vital income.	↑	↑	Increase in people receiving the minimum vital income.
Persons entitled to dependency benefits.	↑	↑	Increase in the number of eligible persons
People with resolutions.	↑	↑	Increased resolutions
Persons entitled without resolution.	↓	↓	Reduction of persons with rights without resolution

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.5: SOCIAL BENEFITS

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Boost the creation of 500,000 additional jobs in the care sector by 2030, with a special focus on professionalising and formalising existing unpaid work.

Indicator: Number of social security affiliates in the dependency sector (CODE 87+88+97) (base year 2015).

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 5.4: Recognise and value unpaid domestic work and promote policies that support shared responsibility in the household and family.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

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Promote privacy in residential facilities by reaching 60% of single rooms and reduce the proportion of institutional care users to 50% in the total mix (residential/household) with the aim of boosting home and community care to the Deinstitutionalisation Strategy by 2030.

Indicator: % of single rooms for elderly, disabled and homeless people. Source: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and Agenda 2030 (Institutionalisation Strategy)

SDG 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential health services.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

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Promote 100% coverage in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and local authorities for people with degree 3 (high dependency) and degree 2 (severe) dependency in the State Care System, ensuring personalised care, its quality and reducing waiting lists.

Indicator: Beneficiaries with effective benefits for persons with a degree resolution entitled to benefits.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential health services.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

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Ensure that 100% of families with children under the age of 18 receive a universal child benefit in order to reduce child poverty.

Indicator: universal child allowance. Source: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and Agenda 2030/ Ministry of Social Inclusion, Social Security and Migration will provide the data.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 1.4: Ensure that all people have access to basic services.

SDG 2.2: End malnutrition and address age-specific nutrition needs.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

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Improve conditions for families by increasing the length of paternity and maternity leave to 20 weeks and to 34 weeks for single-parent families and single-parent families by increasing parental leave pay to 8 weeks.

Indicator: Paternity and maternity leave. Source: The Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration will provide the data.

SDG 1.3: Implement appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and achieve broad coverage.

SDG 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential health services.

SDG 5.4: Recognise and value unpaid domestic work and promote policies that support shared responsibility in the household and family.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Various strategies and plans have recently been promoted with a comprehensive and rights-based approach in the area of public policies aimed at strengthening social protection and guaranteeing equal opportunities. Firstly, the **Spanish Disability Strategy 2022-2030** establishes a roadmap for the effective protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities and their families. Using an intersectional approach and a clear gender perspective, this strategy addresses emerging challenges such as the climate emergency, demographic challenges and inclusion in rural areas. By doing so, it contributes to a structural improvement in social benefits aimed at this group.

In parallel, the **Social Economy Strategy 2023-2027** reinforces the role of the social economy as a driver of sustainable development, territorial cohesion and inclusive employment. This strategy promotes more equitable production and distribution models, which have a direct impact on improving the living conditions of people in vulnerable situations, while strengthening social protection systems from a community perspective.

Meanwhile, the **Spanish Disability Strategy 2022-2030** includes a series of measures aimed at promoting social benefits that guarantee personal autonomy and independent living. These measures include the development of the provision of personal assistance through the approval of a state regulation with unified criteria or the incorporation of aspects such as personalisation and flexibility to facilitate independent living in the community.

Spain's ratification of **ILO Conventions 189 and C190** (on decent work for domestic workers and on the elimination of violence and harassment at work) reinforces the commitment to formalisation, improved rights and protection from violence, which are key to ensuring a fairer and more inclusive care system.

Finally, the **State Strategy "Towards a new model of care in the community: a process of deinstitutionalisation" (2024-2030)** proposes a profound transformation of the care system, aimed at promoting care in the home environment for elderly people, dependent disabled people and other groups in need of assistance. This strategy promotes the strengthening of services such as home care, remote assistance and day centres, while improving the working conditions and salaries of care staff. These efforts are aimed at providing care in a more dignified, sustainable, and person-centred manner.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Firstly, **Law 21/2021 of 28 December on guaranteeing the purchasing power of pensions and other measures to reinforce the financial and social sustainability of the public pension system** plays an important role. Its main measures include the introduction of the intergenerational equity mechanism and new conditions for early retirement.

On the other hand, **Law 19/2021 establishes the Minimum Vital Income (IMV)** as a non-contributory economic benefit of the Social Security managed by the National Institute of Social Security (except in the autonomous communities of the foral regime and in those of the common regime that have signed an agreement with the General State Administration (AGE) for the management of the MVI), aimed at protecting individuals and families from poverty and social exclusion. The regulation defines access criteria, amounts according to family composition and control and review mechanisms, while promoting social inclusion through employment incentives and coordination with social services.

In addition, **Royal Decree-Law 6/2022**, **Royal Decree-Law 20/2022** and **Royal Decree-Law 5/2023** establish urgent measures to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the war in Ukraine, support the reconstruction of La Palma, address situations of vulnerability and transpose European directives on commercial companies and family reconciliation.

Furthermore, **Royal Decree-Law 5/2023** introduced relevant measures on work-life balance and adapted Spanish legislation to **Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance**. Key measures include the creation of parental leave (Article 48 bis of the Workers' Statute), which allows employees to care for their children or foster children up to the age of 8, for up to 8 weeks, either continuously or in separate periods, on a full-time or part-time basis, individually and non-transferably.

In addition, the resolution of 24 May 2023 of the Secretary of State for Social Rights, publishing the **Agreement of the Territorial Council of Social Services and the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency**, defined and established the specific conditions for access to personal assistance in the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency.

Royal Decree-Law 2/2024 should also be mentioned, which adopts urgent measures to simplify and improve the level of unemployment protection, and to complete the transposition of **Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers** and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU. This regulation articulated the transposition of Directive (EU) 2019/1158 by amending Article 37.4 of the Workers' Statute to allow workers to accumulate the paid hours of leave for infant care, eliminating the condition that it be provided for in a collective agreement or agreement with the company. This was a step towards fulfilling the requirement for paid parental leave as set out in Article 8(3) in conjunction with Article 20(2) of Directive (EU) 2019/1158.

Subsequently, **Royal Decree-Law 9/2025** extended leave with the aim of strengthening co-responsibility. Childbirth and childcare leave was extended to 19 paid weeks per parent (6 compulsory immediately after birth or adoption, 11 flexible up to 12 months and 2 additional weeks up to the age of 8), rising to 32 weeks for single-mother and single-father families. Unpaid parental leave was maintained at a duration of up to 8 weeks for the care of children under 8 years of age. Both are applicable to employees, the self-employed and public employees.

Royal Decree-Law 11/2025, approved unanimously in Congress, establishes measures to strengthen the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency, especially for people with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and other complex illnesses, enshrining the extension of degree III+ of dependency.

In the future, the **Families Act** aims to recognise the diversity of family structures in Spain, strengthen the social protection of families and guarantee the right to reconcile work and family life, and includes the creation of the **Universal Child Allowance** in order to support families with children, promote the birth rate, improve work-life balance and reduce child poverty.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ASTURIAS: the *General Regulation of Law 4/2005, of 28 October, on Basic Social Wages in Asturias*, establishes the Basic Social Wage as a periodic financial benefit aimed at guaranteeing a minimum income for people and families in a situation of economic and social vulnerability.

CANTABRIA: the *Diversity Attention Plans and the Inequality Compensation Programmes for full educational inclusion*, aimed at socio-educationally disadvantaged students, with the objective of guaranteeing inclusive, equitable and quality education.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CANARY ISLANDS: the *Canary Islands Early Intervention Plan 2024-2029* establishes a strategic framework aimed at prevention, early detection and intervention in warning signs and risk situations in child development.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the *Strategic Plan for Social Services 2026-2029 of Castilla y León* aims to modernise the regional social services system in order to improve care for dependent persons and move towards a person- and community-centred model.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST SOCIAL UNPROTECTION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

IGUALADA (BARCELONA): *Local Youth Plan (2023-2026) of the Igualada Town Council*, which is being developed with the aim of improving the situation of the young population of the municipality from a cross-cutting perspective.

RIBA ROJA DEL TURIA (VALENCIA): in the *Ribaroja del Turia Social Emergency Aid Plan*, the town council establishes aid aimed at covering basic and urgent needs in situations of social crisis, catastrophes or accidents for people or families in a situation of vulnerability.

6. EDUCATION



INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION

Education is one of the fundamental pillars for the social and economic development of any country. In Spain, significant progress has been made in recent years in extending access and improving quality, although challenges related to equity, equal opportunities and adaptation to demographic and social changes persist.

In the 2023/24 academic year, the education system enrolled more than 8.3 million students in non-university education under the General Regime, of whom 5.57 million attended public schools and 2.76 million attended private schools, most of them subsidised (2.05 million). Ownership distribution varies according to school level. In early childhood education, public schools predominate, although non-subsidised private schools also play a significant role. In primary education, the public system accounts for two-thirds of pupils.

The schooling effort is underpinned by public investment. Education spending increased significantly in 2020 in response to the pandemic and has grown significantly in the following years in absolute terms, as have scholarships and study grants. At the same time, the fall in the birth rate has reduced enrolment in pre-primary and primary education in recent years, with differences depending on the Autonomous Community.

Education indicators show a positive evolution, although there are still areas for improvement. The rate of early school leavers has fallen steadily over the last decade, standing at 13.6 % in 2024 (INE), although there are differences by gender, nationality and territory. The proportion of 25-34 year olds with tertiary education will also reach 52.6% in 2024 (Eurostat), with a higher proportion of women.

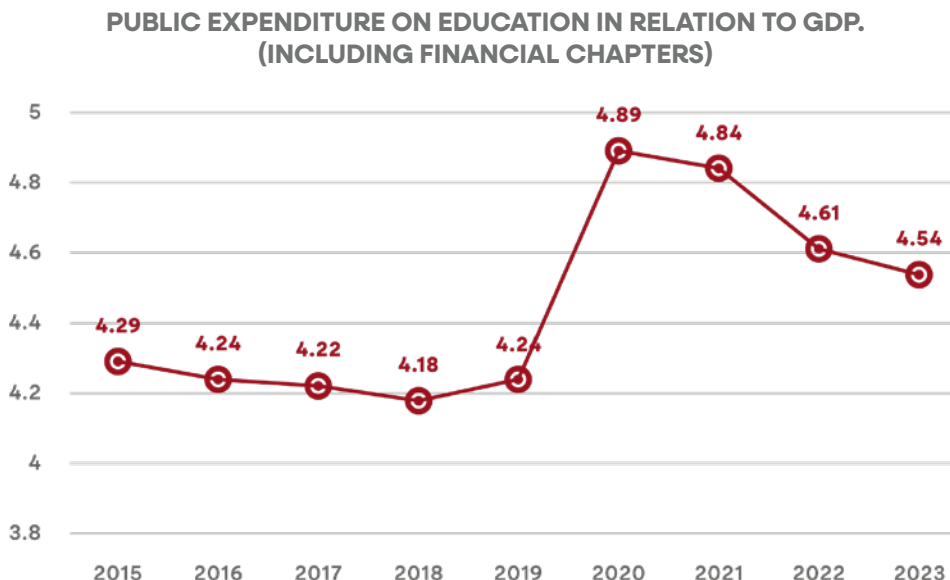
From the perspective of Spanish children and young people, the current education system shows limitations in addressing the diversity of intelligences and learning profiles, which impacts on equity and school retention. Homogenous approaches persist which, from the students' perspective, do not favour the comprehensive development of cognitive, socio-emotional and creative competences, leading to gaps in academic success and contributing to the aforementioned drop-out rates.

The pupil/teacher ratio in non-university education has decreased (from 11.8 in 2015/16 to 10.6 in 2023/24), with a more pronounced reduction in public schools. Finally, training aimed at the unemployed has increased, especially among women and the over 45s, consolidating itself as an effective resource for improving employability.

On the other hand, it should be noted that, in Spain, the education of people with disabilities has been progressively integrated into the mainstream education system. LOMLOE (2020) and previous laws establish the right to inclusive education and specialised support. According to the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport, more than 85 % of students with disabilities attend mainstream schools, while the rest attend special schools, usually because of complex needs. Challenges remain: teacher training, availability of adequate resources, physical and technological accessibility of the centres and coordination with social and health services.

Furthermore, it is important to note that bullying continues to be a significant concern in terms of educational quality and school life, particularly from the perspective of children and young people. According to the first State Study of School Coexistence in Primary School, 9.53 % of Primary School pupils reported having been bullied, and 9.2 % said they had been victims of cyberbullying. This reinforces the need to consolidate safer and more inclusive educational environments.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION IN RELATION TO GDP.



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from EDUCABase statistical platform of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.

The evolution of public spending on education in Spain between 2015 and 2023 reflects the country's responses to different economic and social challenges. During the first years of this period, expenditure remained relatively stable at around 4.2% of GDP. In 2020, in parallel to the health crisis caused by COVID-19, there was a significant increase reaching 4.89% of GDP. This increase responded to the need for extraordinary measures, such as the recruitment of additional teaching staff and the adaptation of infrastructure to ensure educational continuity. The COVID-19 Fund, with a budget of €2 billion (of which €1.6 billion was allocated to non-university education), enabled the financing of a large part of these initiatives.

From 2021 onwards, spending stood at 4.61% of GDP in 2022 and 4.54% in 2023. This reduction reflects the termination of exceptional measures and a progressive return to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, in absolute terms, spending continued to rise: in 2022, it reached €63,380.5 million, 6% more than the previous year, and in 2023, it rose to €68,065.9 million, 7.2% more.

The distribution of this expenditure shows the priorities of the system: 33% for pre-primary and primary education, 30.4% for secondary and VET, and 18.8% for university by 2023. Scholarships and study grants accounted for 5% of the total and grew by 57.2% year-on-year, reflecting efforts to mitigate inequalities. In parallel, investment in accredited vocational training for workers increased by 70.8%, thereby strengthening employability in a context of increasing digitalisation and rapid labour transformations.

Within this framework, the eighth additional provision of Organic Law 3/2020, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education (LOMLOE), established a plan to progressively increase public spending on education to at least 5% of GDP by 2030, in coordination with the

Autonomous Communities. This objective seeks to ensure that the education system has the necessary resources to advance equity, inclusion, personalisation of learning and continuous quality improvement.

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN THE 18-24 YEAR-OLD POPULATION BY SEX AND TIME PERIOD

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL	20.0%	19.0%	18.3%	17.9%	17.3%	16.0%	13.3%	13.9%	13.7%	13.0%
MEN	24.0%	22.7%	21.8%	21.7%	21.4%	20.2%	16.7%	16.7%	16.0%	15.0%
WOMEN	15.8%	15.1%	14.5%	14.0%	13.0%	11.6%	9.7%	9.7%	11.3%	10.0%

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN THE 18-24 YEAR-OLD POPULATION BY NATIONALITY

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL	20.0%	19.0%	18.3%	17.9%	17.3%	16.0%	13.3%	13.9%	13.7%	13.0%
SPANISH	17.8%	16.4%	15.9%	15.3%	14.7%	13.6%	11.4%	11.3%	11.0%	10.4%
FOREIGN (EU)	35.8%	35.8%	38.4%	33.5%	28.7%	28.3%	26.3%	28.6%	25.4%	21.2%
FOREIGN (REST OF THE WORLD)	37.4%	38.2%	34.7%	35.8%	38.2%	33.9%	26.1%	31.5%	33.0%	31.9%

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN THE 18-24 YEAR-OLD POPULATION BY POPULATION AREA

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL	20.0%	19.0%	18.3%	17.9%	17.3%	16.0%	13.3%	13.9%	13.7%	13.0%
DENSELY POPULATED AREA	17.0%	15.8%	15.5%	15.5%	15.3%	13.6%	11.4%	12.2%	12.8%	11.3%
MODERATELY POPULATED AREA	20.5%	20.0%	21.6%	21.0%	19.5%	18.6%	15.4%	16.2%	15.0%	15.1%
SPARSELY POPULATED AREA	24.6%	23.8%	20.8%	19.7%	19.6%	19.6%	15.5%	15.1%	14.4%	14.6%

Since 2015, the early school leaving rate in Spain has been on a downward trend, from 20 % in 2015 to 13 % in 2024 (MEFD, educational analysis by EPA). In recent years, the reduction has been slower, which could make it more difficult to achieve the 9% target by 2030 if more effective strategies are not implemented, especially targeting the most vulnerable groups.

The sharpest decline occurred between 2015 and 2021, with an average annual reduction of close to 1 percentage point. From 2021 onwards, the pace has slowed down: between 2021 and 2024 the rate dropped by only 1.2 points, suggesting a possible stagnation. To reach 9% in 2030 would require a reduction of 4 points over the next six years, which requires a minimum annual decrease of 0.67 points.

When the analysis is broken down by gender, the gap persists: men register a rate of 15.8%, higher than that of women (10.1%). By nationality, the dropout rate among the foreign population continues to be much higher than the national average, with non-EU nationals more than double the rate among Spaniards.

Territorial differences in early school leaving persist. According to the Labour Force Survey (INE) – Educational analysis by MEFD, Educabase, in 2024 the national rate stood at 13%, with variations depending on the degree of urbanisation: 11.3% in densely populated areas, 15% in moderately populated areas, and 14.4% in sparsely populated areas. At the regional level, the highest rates are in Ceuta, Melilla, Murcia, the Balearic Islands and Andalusia, while Navarre, the Basque Country, Cantabria and La Rioja have the lowest values. Although disparities have narrowed compared to 2015 (when they stood at 17% in densely populated areas and up to 24.6% in sparsely populated areas), nine autonomous communities still have figures between 15% and 21%, which shows that territorial gaps persist.

Internationally, the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training 2021-2030 establishes reducing early school leaving as a priority, given its negative impact both at the individual level (limiting access to job opportunities and economic and social progress) and at the collective level (increasing public costs and reducing social cohesion).

TRAINING AIMED PRIMARILY AT UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

Training aimed primarily at unemployed people has become increasingly important in the education and employment system in Spain, as a tool to improve employability and reduce social and generational gaps in access to the labour market. The Education and Training 2024 Monitor notes that, despite progress, the coverage and effectiveness of these programmes remains limited.

In 2022, only 6.6% of the unemployed participated in training actions, reflecting a low penetration in a group that requires priority attention. The most recent data show a positive evolution in this situation. Between 2020 and 2022, participation grew by 86.6%, equivalent to 101,536 more people. Since 2021, the increase has been 6.6%, a moderate but steady progression, marking a trajectory towards the target of a 30% increase in participation by 2030. To achieve this target, it would be sufficient to maintain an annual rate of 3.3%.

There has been significant growth in women's participation. In 2022, they accounted for 56.8% of the total enrolment, with 114,237 women participants. This represents an increase of 6.4% over the previous year and a cumulative increase of 110% since 2020.

For young people under 30, participation increased by 96% between 2020 and 2022, reaching 63,775 enrolled in 2022. However, compared to 2021, there was a slight decrease of 0.9%, mainly due to a fall in the 20-24 (-4.2%) and 25-29 (-7.7%) age groups, while the under-20 age groups grew by 17.9%.

The 45+ age group also shows progress in participation in training for the unemployed, with an overall increase of 9.2 % between 2021 and 2022, with a 19.9 % increase in the 50-54 age group.

Overall, although challenges remain in terms of coverage and effectiveness, progress in terms of participation and diversity of profiles is significant. Consolidating this trend and adapting it to the needs of each group will be the key to making training an effective instrument to tackle structural unemployment.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 6. EDUCATION

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Public Expenditure on Education in relation to GDP.	↓	↓	Since its peak in 2020, the budget has been reduced.
Early drop-out from education and training.	↓	↓	There is less early drop-out.
Training aimed primarily at unemployed people.	↑	↑	Training for the unemployed has increased.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 1.6: EDUCATION

22

Reduce the early school leaving rate to 9% by 2030, with special attention to vulnerable groups (migrants, Roma population, people with disabilities).

Indicator: Rate of dropouts.

SDG 4.1: Ensure that all children and young people complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

SDG 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

23

Gradually increase public investment in education to at least 5% of GDP by 2030, in accordance with the provisions set out in Additional Provision 8 of the LOMLOE (Organic Law on the Modification of the Organic Law on Education) of GDP in 2030, promoting free access for children aged 0-3.

Indicator: Public Expenditure on Education in relation to GDP.

SDG 4.2: Ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood care and development and pre-school education.

SDG 4.a: Build and improve education facilities that are inclusive and safe.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity.

24

Reach 1.5% of unemployed people belonging to vulnerable groups receiving training actions compared to the rest of unemployed people belonging to special groups by 2030.

Indicator: Number of participants in training and employment programmes for the unemployed.

SDG 4.4: Substantially increase the number of young people and adults with technical and vocational skills for employment.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport, within the framework of the European Commission's DG REFORM TSI tool and with technical assistance from the OECD, presented the **Report Proposals for an action plan to reduce early school leaving in Spain** in 2023, several of the measures contained therein having already been implemented.

On the other hand, the **Plan for the Digitalisation and Digital Competences** of the Education System (Plan #DigEdu) is in force, which aims to advance the digital transformation of the education system by improving the digital competence of students, teachers and schools, providing technological resources, creating digital educational resources and implementing innovative methodologies.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The main law that reflects progress in improving the quality of and access to education is **Organic Law 3/2020**, which amends Organic Law 2/2006 on Education (LOMLOE). This regulation seeks to guarantee inclusive, equitable and quality education, to reinforce attention to diversity and coeducation, and to introduce measures and actions aimed at reducing early school leaving. It also promotes digitalisation, sustainability and democratic participation in schools.

As a consequence of this law, a new competence-based curriculum has been established which is contributing to educational improvement. The new curricula implemented at all educational levels and in all Autonomous Communities are regulated by various royal decrees: **Royal Decree 95/2022**, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Pre-school Education; **Royal Decree 157/2022**, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Primary Education; **Royal Decree 217/2022**, of 29 March, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Compulsory Secondary Education; and **Royal Decree 243/2022**, of 5 April, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of Baccalaureate.

In accordance with the fifth additional provision of the LOMLOE, and in order to achieve the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda, the Government, in collaboration with the education administrations, will promote territorial cooperation

programmes as a strategic line of action during the period of implementation of this Law.

The main territorial cooperation programmes implemented from 2021 linked to these priorities have been:

- Financing of textbooks and teaching materials.
- Promotion of schooling in the first cycle of infant education.
- Programme for Educational Guidance, Advancement and Enrichment (PROA+).
- Support and Guidance Units.
- Digitisation of the education system.
- Improving digital competence in education.
- Emotional well-being (from 2022).
- Inclusive education (from 2023).
- Reinforcement of reading skills (from 2024).
- Reinforcement of mathematical competence (from 2024).

In addition, other relevant legislation is in force, especially with regard to vocational training:

- **Organic Law 3/2022, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training**, which aims to regulate a vocational training system that responds to the needs of the labour market and people's qualification expectations.
- **Royal Decree 659/2023, which develops the organisation of the Vocational Training System**. The royal decree creates a single, integrated VET system that provides for different grades (A - E), the orientation towards the acquisition, maintenance and adaptation of professional competences throughout life, the regulation of training in companies or similar bodies, and the establishment of governance, assessment and accreditation mechanisms.
- Various royal decrees establishing, updating and modifying certain qualifications of the different professional families of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CASTILLA LA MANCHA: the *Second Plan for Educational Success and Prevention of Early School Leaving in Castilla La Mancha* aims to improve academic performance and reduce early school leaving, especially among students in vulnerable situations.

NAVARRA: the *ikasNOVA Digital Education Transformation Strategy* is a comprehensive plan to modernise public education through the use of digital technologies.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CATALONIA: the *Microcred.Cat Programme* is a pioneering initiative that allows Catalan universities to offer officially recognised micro-credentials and short training courses, adapted to the demands of the labour market.

NAVARRRE: looking ahead to 2028, the regional government is promoting the development of educational inclusion as an inalienable right within the framework of the Challenge for Education and Non-Discrimination.

MEASURES BY THE LES TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ALCÁZAR DE SAN JUAN (CIUDAD REAL): start-up of the Hotel and Catering School, a strategic infrastructure to boost employment, tourism and training in the municipality.

DOS HERMANAS (SEVILLE): the *Project for the Promotion of Dual Vocational Training* involves companies in the municipality, together with local public administrations, in the promotion and strengthening of dual vocational training and in the training of company tutors.

7. HEALTH



INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH

Spain has a healthcare system that is widely recognised for its universal coverage and accessibility, guaranteed through the Spanish National Health System (SNHS), which serves 96.6% of the population. However, this model faces significant challenges, including the progressive ageing of the population, the increase in mental health problems, territorial inequalities in access to specialised services and long waiting times for certain medical specialities.

The General Healthcare Law (Law 14/1986) established the principle of universality of healthcare in Spain. However, Royal Decree-Law 16/2012, on urgent measures to guarantee the sustainability of the Spanish National Health System and improve the quality and security of its benefits, introduced restrictions that limited access to certain groups, such as foreigners in an irregular administrative situation, reducing coverage to emergency care, pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. Subsequently, Royal Decree-Law 7/2018, on universal access to the Spanish National Health System, re-established the universal nature of the system, decoupling the right to healthcare from the condition of being insured. At present, the draft bill for the Law on the Universality of the SNHS (2024) is being processed. Its aim is to protect health coverage and definitively eliminate situations of exclusion, extending rights to groups such as people seeking international protection, regrouped ascendants and people who are not registered or authorised as residents.

A key indicator of social well-being is life expectancy, which in 2022 reached 83.1 years (80.4 years for men and 85.7 years for women). After the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when it fell from 83.6 to 82.3 years, the trend has progressively recovered, with improvements in 2021 (83.0) and a further increase in 2022 (+0.1).

Total healthcare expenditure amounted to €142.773 billion in 2023, representing 9.5% of GDP. From this figure, 73.6% corresponded to public expenditure (€105.145 billion, equivalent to 7% of GDP), mainly allocated to curative care, rehabilitation and long-term care, in addition to €14.278 billion on medicines. Private healthcare expenditure reached €37.628 billion (2.5% of GDP), mainly concentrated in dental care, rehabilitation, lenses, hearing aids and medicines subject to co-payment.

Among the system's most significant challenges is mental health. In 2022, the prevalence of mental and behavioural disorders stood at 343 cases per 1,000 population, with a higher incidence among women and older people. Despite the opening of new care facilities and the increase in the number of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and therapists, significant territorial inequalities persist and the insufficient number of child and adolescent psychiatry units is particularly worrying.

The health infrastructure has experienced growth in the number of hospitals, rehabilitation centres and specialised staff; however, access to services is still conditioned by territorial factors. In rural areas, low population density, ageing and geographical dispersion hamper the availability of resources, especially in the field of mental health. To mitigate these inequalities, remote healthcare is becoming established as a strategic tool, facilitating remote consultations

and clinical follow-up, reducing travel and bringing healthcare closer to groups with greater access difficulties.

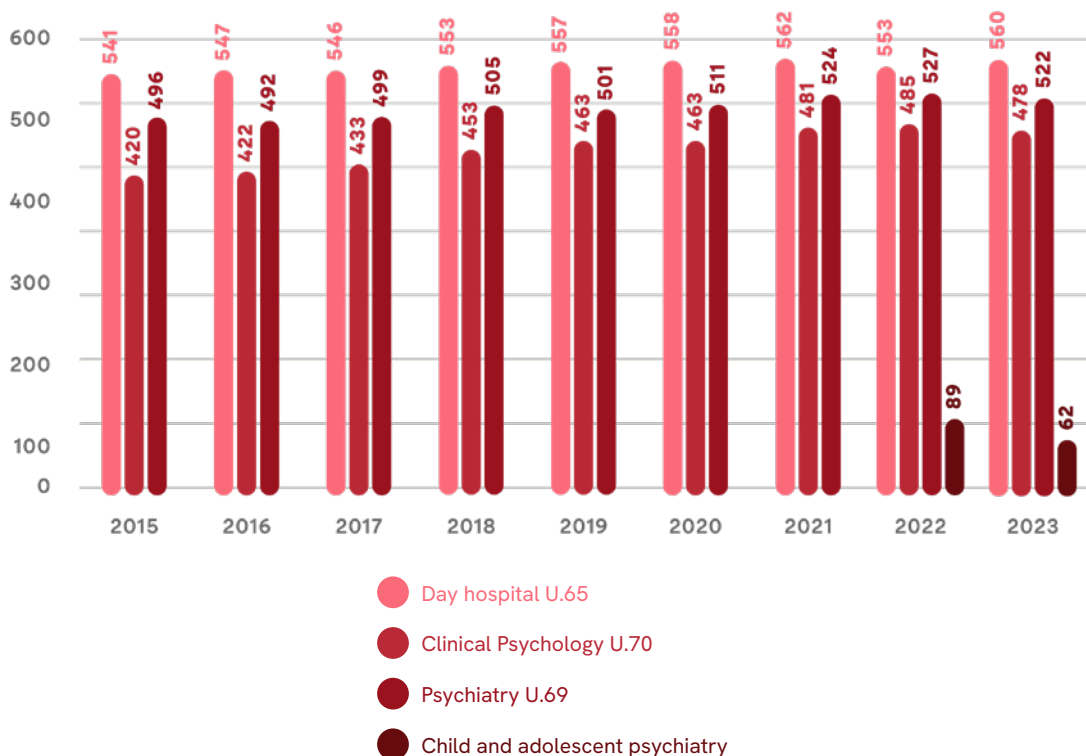
Overall, the Spanish health system maintains a strong position in terms of universal coverage and responsiveness, although it faces structural challenges related to its sustainability, territorial equity and mental health care. The consolidation of remote healthcare, long-term planning, and investment focused on quality and accessibility are essential to ensuring that healthcare remains a universal and effective right for all citizens.

At the international level, Spain has strengthened its role in global health through the Spanish Global Health Strategy 2025-2030, aimed at promoting universal, equitable and resilient healthcare systems. The country actively participates in international health governance as a member of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization, in the negotiation of the International Pandemic Agreement, and in amendments to the International Health Regulations. This commitment is also reflected in international cooperation, where the Cooperation Law and the Master Plan 2024-2027 prioritise health as a global public good, supporting the work of multilateral agencies such as WHO, the Global Fund, GAVI, UNITAID and the Pandemic Fund, as well as initiatives aimed at strengthening healthcare systems and emergency preparedness.

NUMBER OF SPECIALISED MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES IN OPERATION BY TERRITORIAL AREA

The Spanish National Health System (NHS) has a network of 3,042 health centres and 9,998 local clinics, designed to guarantee access to primary care throughout the country. This is in addition to a network of specific mental health resources that has shown moderate growth between 2015 and 2023, albeit with territorial differences.

NUMBER OF SPECIALISED MENTAL HEALTH CENTRES IN OPERATION BY TERRITORIAL AREA



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from the Specialised Care Information System (SIAE).

In the case of mental health day hospitals, the number has increased from 541 centres in 2015 to 560 in 2023, an increase of 3.5% in eight years. Hospitals with clinical psychology services have experienced a more notable advance (from 420 in 2015 to 478 in 2023), with particular growth in communities such as Andalusia (from 48 to 61) or Catalonia (102 in 2023), compared to regions such as Asturias or Cantabria that have barely registered changes. As for general psychiatry units, the number of hospitals offering them has grown from 496 in 2015 to 522 in 2023 (+5%). However, one of the most relevant data is the drop in the number of child and adolescent psychiatry services, from 89 in 2022 to 62 in 2023, with significant decreases in communities such as Madrid and Galicia.

Despite these advances in infrastructure, territorial inequalities persist, both in the availability of centres and in the provision of specialised staff. According to the INE, the rate of psychologists with a health speciality has risen from 69.72 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019 to 82.27 in 2023, an increase that reflects a strengthening of care capacity. For its part, the Spanish Society of Psychiatry and Mental Health (SEPSM) estimates that in 2024 the ratio of psychiatrists in the public network will be 11.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, which places Spain still below the European average.

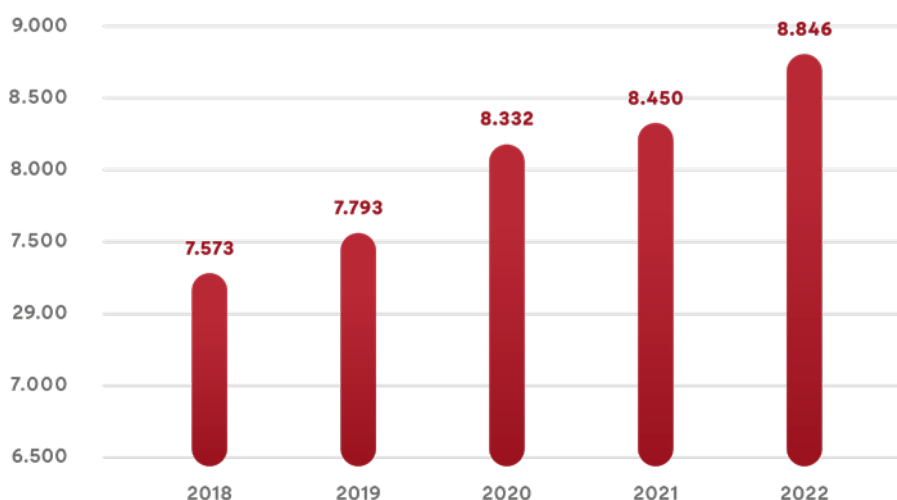
Overall, the data show a sustained effort to expand the network of mental health resources and increase the number of professionals, although these advances have been uneven across territories and significant deficits persist, especially in the care of children and adolescents, which require a priority response in terms of planning, resources and territorial equity.

SUICIDES

Data on suicide mortality in Spain show an increasing trend in recent years. In 2023, the national rate reached 8.5 deaths per 100,000 population, up from 7.6 in 2018, the first year with consolidated data available from the INE. In absolute terms, the number of deaths by suicide increased from 7,573 in 2018 to 8,512 in 2023.

This sustained increase is a major public health concern and highlights the need to strengthen suicide prevention policies, with comprehensive approaches that incorporate mental health care, early detection, stigma reduction and specific strategies adapted to different territorial, social and demographic contexts.

SUICIDE DEATH RATE BY PERIOD (NATIONAL TOTAL)



Source: Produced based on INE.

At the regional level, the differences in suicide mortality are significant. In 2022, Asturias had the highest rate, with 12.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Galicia (12.1), the Canary Islands (10.5) and Castilla y León (10.1). At the other extreme, the lowest rates were recorded in Ceuta (2.4) and Melilla (1.1). However, in both autonomous cities there are marked oscillations, predictably associated with their small population size and greater statistical volatility.

The analysis by gender and age shows a marked structural inequality. Suicide mortality is significantly higher in men than in women in all age groups, with the gap widening markedly after the age of 45 and reaching its peak at older ages. In 2022, the highest rates were for men aged 90-94 (49.1 per 100,000) and 85-89 (43.9). Even in the over 95 age group, the male rate reached 49.9, compared to 8.8 for women in the same age group.

In the intermediate age group, men aged 45-54 years recorded rates between 16.3 and 18.6 per 100,000 inhabitants, while among women in the same age group the rates were around 5 per 100,000. In the young population group, aged 15-29 years, suicide continues to be a relevant cause of mortality. Particularly noteworthy is the evolution among young women, whose rate increased from 1.87 in 2018 to 3.19 in 2022.

In children under 15 years of age, suicide mortality rates are low in absolute terms, although they show an upward trend. In 2021, there were 0.43 deaths per 100,000 males. Although these figures are small, their evolution points to an emerging phenomenon that requires the strengthening of strategies for prevention, early detection and attention to psychosocial risks in the educational and community spheres.

MENTAL HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE

In Spain, the mental health of the young population has become a priority area of concern. According to the Fourth Youth Opinion Poll 2023, 59.3% of young people aged between 15 and 29 report having experienced mental health problems, and 27.1% of those who cannot afford professional care say they suffer from them on an ongoing basis. In a complementary manner, a UNICEF Spain report indicates that 41% of adolescents admit to having had, or believing they have had, a mental health problem in the last year, and that more than half have not sought help, mainly due to stigma or lack of resources.

This deterioration in emotional well-being is also reflected in the evolution of care indicators. Hospitalisations for psychiatric disorders in the adolescent population (11-18 years) have almost doubled in the last two decades, from 3.9% in 2000 to 9.5% in 2021, with a post-pandemic increase of 51%. This trend is evidence of an intensification of mental health care needs among young people and adolescents, and underscores the urgency of a coordinated and sustained public response.

The available evidence also highlights the growing incidence of unwanted loneliness and social disconnection among young people, in a context marked by complex life transitions, job and residential precariousness, social pressure and profound changes in the forms of relationships. These dynamics can exacerbate emotional distress and weaken protective factors associated with social, community and family ties.

Therefore, strengthening preventive mental health policies with a comprehensive approach that incorporates the relational dimension of wellbeing is essential. This involves promoting educational, community and health care environments capable of early detection of risk situations, offering proximity accompaniment and reducing the stigma associated with mental health problems. This should be done in coherence with national mental health strategies and community-based approaches aimed at strengthening young people's resilience, participation and sense of belonging.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In Spain, people with disabilities continue to face inequalities in access to health and rehabilitation services. The availability of therapies, specialised resources and care centres varies significantly between Autonomous Communities, leading to substantial differences in the quality and continuity of care. These inequalities are exacerbated when access to such services is conditional on prior administrative recognition of the degree of disability, which delays early intervention and hinders the continued provision of essential support.

Likewise, the procedure for the recognition of the degree of disability presents significant delays in a large part of the territory. Regional management of the process is characterised by lengthy and heterogeneous administrative procedures, resulting in long waiting lists and delaying effective access to disability-related rights, benefits and services. The uneven implementation of the biopsychosocial approach of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), together with differences in the staffing, training and organisation of assessment teams, makes it difficult to reduce processing times homogeneously.

The administrative recognition of the degree of disability is a determining requirement for the effective exercise of rights and access to public support measures. The state regulatory framework establishes a maximum period of six months to issue and notify the decision from the submission of the application. However, the administrative information available at regional level shows that, in practice, the average processing times exceed this legal limit in a significant part of the territory, with a high variability between autonomous communities. This gap between the normative standard and its effective application translates into delays in access to economic benefits, social services and specialised support, prolonging situations of vulnerability and reinforcing territorial inequalities in the exercise of rights.

In this context, strengthening the capacity of the assessment system and moving towards greater standardisation of administrative procedures is essential. The progressive convergence of processing times towards effective compliance with the maximum legal deadline would ensure a more equitable, timely and homogeneous access to disability-related rights and supports throughout the territory.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Organic Law 1/2023, which amends Organic Law 2/2010 on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary termination of pregnancy (VTP), strengthens the framework for monitoring, reporting and guaranteeing access to these services within the Spanish National Health System. In Spain, health centres where voluntary terminations of pregnancy are performed are obliged to systematically notify the regional health authorities of the data corresponding to each intervention.

This information is managed through a national online platform of the Ministry of Health, which guarantees the confidentiality of personal data and reporting centres. The system is governed by statistical confidentiality and is aimed at ensuring principles of equity, quality and participation within the framework of the Spanish National Health System.

Furthermore, the official VTP 2024 report from the Ministry of Health shows that terminations of pregnancy carried out after the 23rd week of gestation (allowed exclusively for medical reasons) represent a very small proportion of the total. However, this type of intervention requires a high level of clinical specialisation and specific hospital resources, and is concentrated in accredited centres. This situation highlights the need to reinforce the capacity of the public sector to guarantee homogeneous, safe and equitable access in all autonomous communities, in line with the obligations derived from Organic Law 1/2023.

According to official statistics from the Ministry of Health, there is a progressive increase in the number of reporting centres and in the total volume of voluntary terminations of pregnancy. In 2021, 210 centres were counted, with a total of 90,189 VTPs performed, while in 2024 the number of centres rose to 248, with 106,172 interventions. However, there is still a clear predominance of private rather than public schools. In 2024, only 21% of the reporting sites were publicly owned, compared to 15% in 2021.

Despite these positive developments, the limited role of the public sector in the provision of abortion remains a major challenge. Strengthening the participation of public centres is key to ensuring territorial equity, the effective guarantee of rights and the full integration of voluntary termination of pregnancy as an accessible and homogenous service within the Spanish National Health System.

VISUAL SUMMARY COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 7. HEALTH

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Mental health, mental and behavioural disorders.	↑	↑	Mental and behavioural disorders have increased.
Number of specialised mental health centres in operation by territorial area.	↗	↘	It has increased between 2015 - 2021. But reduced or maintained in later years.
Staff linked to psychiatry per 1,000 inhabitants by Autonomous Community.	↔	↔	The number of related staff has remained the same in 2022 and 2023.
Hospitals with Physical and Mental Rehabilitation.	↔	↔	The number of hospitals has increased slightly.
Suicide mortality rate.	↑	↑	Significantly higher in men.

2030 RSDS TARGETS 1.7: HEALTH

25

Increase the coverage of mental health services in public centres by 2030, so that there are at least 120 professionals (psychiatrists and psychologists) per 100,000 inhabitants throughout the territory.

Indicator: number of registered psychologists per 100,000 people and ratio of psychiatrists in the public mental health network.

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.

SDG 3.c: Substantially increase funding and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

26

Reduce the suicide rate by 20% by 2030 through prevention and early detection programmes in collaboration with Autonomous Communities.

Indicator: Suicide mortality rate by suicide by Autonomous Community by period (base year 2018).

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.

SDG 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential health services.

SDG 16.1: Reduce all forms of violence and related deaths.

27

Reduce the average number of months to issue the decision on the recognition of the degree of disability to reach the six months stipulated in Royal Decree 888/2022 establishing the procedure for the recognition, declaration and qualification of the degree of disability by 2030.

Indicator: Average number of months to issue the decision on the recognition of the degree of disability. Source: The Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and the 2030 Agenda will provide the data.

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, including suicide prevention.

SDG 3.8: Achieve universal health coverage and access to essential health services.

28

Advance efforts to protect sexual and reproductive health rights, guaranteeing effective and equitable access to abortion services in the public health system for cases of advanced pregnancy, increasing the proportion of abortions performed at ≥ 23 weeks in publicly owned centres (hospitals and outpatient clinics) to 70% by 2030, in line with Organic Law 1/2023.

Indicator: % of abortion at ≥ 23 weeks performed in publicly owned facilities.

SDG 3.7: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

SDG 5.6: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

One of the main lines of strategic action in the healthcare sector is articulated through the **Spanish National Health System's Strategic Framework for Primary Care**, which defines the strategic lines, objectives and measures aimed at reinforcing the quality, equity and resolution capacity of primary care in Spain. Within this framework, the **Primary and Community Care Action Plan 2025-2027** has been approved, incorporating 48 measures structured around nine strategic areas. The plan prioritises a comprehensive approach to chronic diseases, the strengthening of the community approach and the effective implementation of longitudinal care as a central element of continuity and quality of care.

In the specific field of mental health, the **Mental Health Strategy of the Spanish National Health System 2022-2026**, promoted by the Ministry of Health, stands out. The fundamental objectives of this strategy are to improve the autonomy and rights of people with mental health problems, to move towards a person-centred care model and to strengthen the promotion of mental health, prevention and early detection of suicide in all areas, with special attention to children and adolescents.

As an instrument for the operational deployment of this Strategy, the **Mental Health Action Plan 2025-2027** has been approved, which specifies the priority actions to be carried out by the General State Administration in coordination with the Autonomous Communities. The plan also incorporates a system of indicators and expected results to evaluate the degree of implementation of the defined strategic lines.

In a complementary way, there are other strategies and plans that address specific areas related to health and disability. The **Spanish Strategy on Autism Spectrum Disorders**, approved in 2015, constitutes the reference framework for the design of policies and actions aimed at people with ASD at state, regional and local levels, and has been developed with the active participation of organisations representing the disability field. In compliance with this Strategy, the **First Action Plan of the Spanish Strategy on Autism Spectrum Disorder 2023-2027** has been produced, coordinated by the Spanish Centre on Autism Spectrum Disorder, advisory body of the Royal Board on Disability, attached to the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030.

Likewise, the **Healthy Well-being Plan for People with Disabilities 2022-2026** aims to guarantee the highest possible level of health for people with disabilities, promoting prevention, personal autonomy and universal accessibility to health services. This plan is structured along lines of action aimed at child development in healthy environments, disease prevention, healthy ageing and reducing the intensification of disabilities, incorporating a comprehensive rights-based and life-cycle approach.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Law 7/2025 stands out in this area, **establishing a key regulatory framework for public health in Spain**. It created the State Agency for Public Health, which is responsible for coordinating and strengthening health policies at the national level. It also amends Law 33/2011, General Law on Public Health.

Although it is in the process of being approved, it is worth highlighting the **Draft Bill on Measures for the Equity, Universality and Cohesion of the Spanish National Health System**, which seeks to guarantee equal health care throughout the country. It strengthens citizen participation, improves coordination between Autonomous Communities and promotes the evaluation of the health impact of public policies to ensure equitable access to health services.

Furthermore, the **Resolution publishing the Agreement of the Territorial Council for Social Services and the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency**, which establishes the "State Consensus for the Improvement of Early Intervention. Deployment of the Roadmap: objectives, measures and general quality standards", is also noteworthy. This resolution recognises early care as a subjective, universal, public and free right for all children under the age of six, and defines an operational framework that sets out a roadmap with objectives, measures and general quality standards. The text establishes that early care should be an agile, comprehensive and coordinated response to risk factors or alterations in child development, with preferential intervention from the health, social services and education systems.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ASTURIAS: the *Active Ageing Strategy* of Asturias promotes a healthier, more autonomous and participative life for older people. It also recognises ageing as an opportunity for social development.

CATALONIA: the *Interdepartmental Public Health Plan (PINSAP)* of Catalonia seeks to improve the health of the population through collaboration between all the departments of the autonomous government.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CATALONIA: The aim of the Draft Bill of the *Integrated Social and Health Care Agency of Catalonia* is to create a new autonomous agency to respond to the needs of social and health care in an integrated manner.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *Digital Health Strategic Plan 2025-2029 of the Balearic Islands* aims to guarantee patients and professionals an innovative, personalised and precision healthcare system.

MEASURES BY THE LES TO IMPROVE HEALTH

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BADAJOS PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the programme *Envejecer en mi casa* develops different actions in municipalities with a population of less than 20,000 inhabitants, to make it possible for the elderly to remain in their homes with the necessary care.

HOSPITALET DE LLOBREGAT: the *Friendly City* programme aims to create a more inclusive city that is also friendly for the elderly and improves their quality of life.

8. DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, CITIZENS' FREEDOMS AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



INTRODUCTION

Strengthening institutions is a key element in moving towards sustainable, equitable and resilient development. Against a backdrop of climate crisis, persistent social inequalities and economic instability, strong, effective and transparent institutions are essential for designing and implementing public policies aimed at inclusion, social cohesion and the well-being of citizens, with a perspective of global justice.

When institutions have adequate organisational capacity and effective coordination mechanisms, governance, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making are strengthened. These elements contribute to strengthening trust in the democratic system and to building more cohesive and resilient societies.

At the international level, one of the main indicators of institutional commitment to sustainable development and cooperation is Official Development Assistance (ODA). Following the reduction experienced during the economic crisis, Spain has progressively increased its level of ODA in recent years, reaching 0.30% of Gross National Product (GNP) in 2022. However, in 2023 the contribution fell to 0.24%, its lowest level since 2019.

This percentage keeps Spain below the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) average of around 0.37% in 2022 and 2023.

CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Citizen participation and the exercise of fundamental rights are essential elements for democratic functioning. Title I of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognises freedoms such as freedom of expression (Art. 20), the right to peaceful assembly (Art. 21) and the right to participate in public life (Art. 23). In the European context, debates have arisen over the rollback of these freedoms in some countries, including the criminalisation of peaceful protest, with more restrictive responses to citizen mobilisations.

In Spain, the Organic Law for the Protection of Citizen Security establishes a regulatory framework aimed at guaranteeing coexistence and public security, regulates aspects related to the exercise of fundamental rights and establishes procedures for their development in orderly conditions. In recent years, reform proposals have been promoted to adapt this norm to international standards and strengthen the protection of citizens' rights, in line with democratic principles and the rule of law.

In this context, the CIVICUS Index on the state of civic space classifies Spain as a country with "restricted civic space" since 2018, with a score of 72 out of 100 in 2023. Although a slight improvement over previous years, the country is not fully open in rights such as freedom of expression, assembly and access to information. CIVICUS points to the application of the

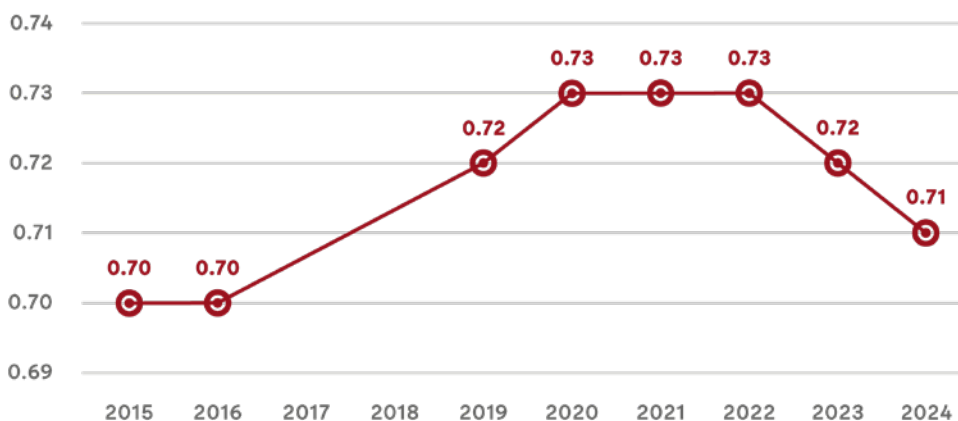
Citizen Security Law, the use of intrusive technologies such as facial recognition and barriers to transparency on sensitive issues as the main limitations.

RULE OF LAW INDEX

The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index is an international tool that measures annually how the rule of law is perceived and applied in more than 140 countries. It assesses factors such as accountability, the absence of corruption, respect for fundamental rights, the functioning of justice and security, based on more than 214,000 household surveys and 3,500 interviews with legal and social experts.

In the 2024 edition, Spain ranks 25th out of 142 countries worldwide and 18th out of 31 in Europe and North America. Its score was 0.71 out of 1, reflecting a slight decrease from previous years. Since 2015, when the index was 0.70, Spain had improved to 0.73 in 2020, although in recent years there has been a decline. This development is part of the overall trend of erosion of the rule of law, which affects 57% of the countries surveyed.

CHANGES IN THE RULE OF LAW INDEX IN SPAIN (2015-2024)



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the WJP Rule of Law Index | Spain Insights.

In the different factors assessed by the index, Spain is ranked as follows:

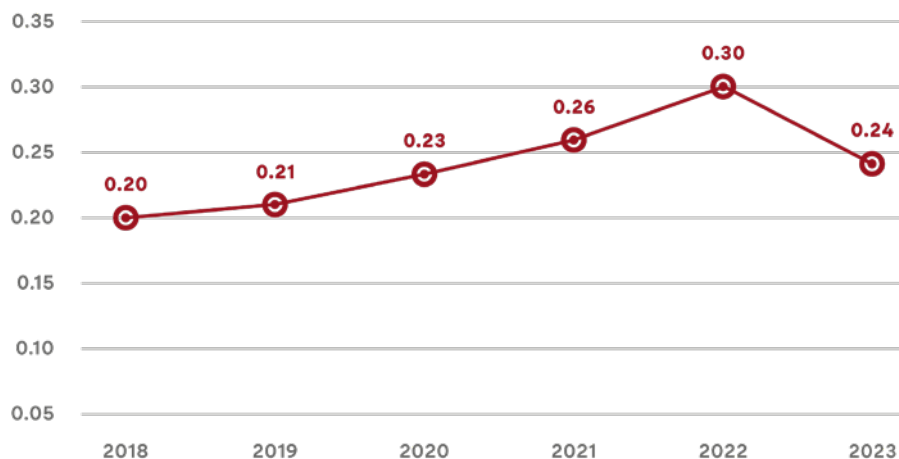
- Constraints on Government Powers: 27°.
- Absence of Corruption: 22°.
- Open Government: 25°.
- Fundamental Rights: 19th, with a decline in recent years, in line with the 77% drop of countries in this area between 2016 and 2024.
- Order and Security: 35th, a medium-low position compared to other European countries.
- Regulatory Enforcement: 28°.
- Civil Justice: 31°.
- Criminal Justice: 25°.

On the other hand, according to the methodology used by the *Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU)* local expert groups, Spain's democratic situation (electoral processes, governance, political participation, political culture and civil liberties) is even better than that of 167 other countries. Therefore, the Democracy Index 2024 ranks Spain 21st out of the remaining 167 countries. In this index, our scores in the area of electoral process and political pluralism (9.58) and civil liberties (8.82 points) are particularly noteworthy. This performance shows strengths in fundamental rights and the absence of corruption, but also challenges in citizen security and civil justice.

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is one of Spain's most important international commitments. After years of decline, in 2022, ODA reached €4,065.6 million, equivalent to 0.30% of Gross National Income, the highest figure since 2011 and an increase of 32% over the previous year. This rise placed Spain in twelfth place in absolute volume of ODA among OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries, with cooperation focused on sectors such as humanitarian aid, social infrastructure and multisectoral programmes.

% OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)/GROSS NATIONAL INCOME (GNI)



Source: Produced based on data from INE ODS - OECD.

In 2023, the contribution stood at 0.24% of GNI, mainly due to lower reception costs for refugees and asylum seekers and the change introduced by the *Development Assistance Committee (DAC)* of the Organisation for *Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)* regarding the calculation of the donation of vaccines. Even so, in terms of volume, Spanish ODA has doubled since 2015 (from \$1,603.77 million in 2015 to \$3,879.84 million in 2023, at current prices), in a context marked by post-COVID recovery, increased humanitarian needs and the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine.

Bilateral ODA accounts for a significant portion of Spanish cooperation, with \$1.558 billion in 2023, mainly channelled in the form of grants. Multilateral aid has remained more stable, between 1.8 billion and 2.2 billion annually, with constant contributions to the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank, although there have been declines in regional development banks.

By 2023, 47% of new Spanish Development Cooperation interventions incorporate positive effects on gender equality and women's empowerment. The figure is calculated considering new bilateral and multilateral interventions that have identified the gender marker as a "priority" or "significant".

In 2024, Spanish ODA grew by 12% compared to the previous year, exceeding €4 billion (an increase of €430 million). With these figures, Spain once again ranked twelfth in the OECD in terms of absolute volume of ODA. More specifically, the volume of ODA managed by the General State Administration increased by 14% to €3.595 billion. The ODA volume of AECID's budget increased by almost €20 million in 2024, to over €591 million, the highest figure since 2011. Since 2021, the volume of ODA managed by the AECID has more than doubled (from €275 million to €592 million), accounting for 9% to 15% of total Spanish ODA.

Since 2020, Spain has strengthened its commitment to the peacebuilding programmes of the United Nations system, both through financial contributions and the deployment of military, police and civilian personnel in international operations.

The UN-Mi index (*Index of Countries Support for UN-based Multilateralism*) assesses the degree of countries' commitment to multilateralism based on international law and the principles of the UN Charter. The index is based on six dimensions: ratification of treaties, agreement in General Assembly votes, membership in UN organisations, participation in conflicts and militarisation, use of unilateral coercive measures, and contribution to the UN budget and international solidarity. It measures both formal adherence to and effective practice of multilateralism and global cooperation.

In the 2025 report, the countries with the highest commitment are Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, which occupy the top three positions. Among the advanced economies, Chile (7th) and Brazil (25th) stand out as regional leaders, while the United States ranks last. Spain is in the upper-middle position, which shows a strong commitment to the UN, above the US and the EU. The EU is in line with the US and in line with other EU countries (although below Nordic and some Latin American countries).

According to the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (*UN CEB*), Spain's contributions have remained above €500 million per year in recent years, with a positive trend: from €447 million in 2021 to €558 million in 2023, representing an increase of 25%. These contributions are channelled through various instruments:

- Compulsory contributions: \$80-100 million per year, allocated to the basic functioning of UN organisations and agencies.
- Basic voluntary contributions: \$20-30 million per year, allocated to the general budget of agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, and UNHCR.
- Specific voluntary contributions: \$60-90 million annually, dedicated to programmes for peacebuilding, gender equality, humanitarian aid and sustainable development, with a special focus on Latin America, the Sahel and Palestine.
- Other: \$5-10 million per year derived from trust funds or services provided by UN agencies with Spanish participation.

Specifically, Spain has contributed a total of US\$2,936,094 to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) between 2020 and 2025.

Although the amount is modest compared to donors such as Germany or Sweden, Spain maintains a constant presence in the group of countries supporting this strategic fund. The target set for 2030 is to reach at least US\$1.53 million per annum.

In parallel, Spain has deployed significant contingents in UN peace operations:

- UNIFIL (Lebanon): 600-700 blue helmets.
- Presence in the verification mission in Colombia and MINUSCA (Central African Republic).
- The Logistics Support Base in Valencia, which reinforces the one in Brindisi, Italy, and facilitates the deployment and sustainment of peace operations around the world.

This commitment is part of the Spanish Strategy for Humanitarian Diplomacy 2023-2026, which prioritises conflict prevention, the promotion of international humanitarian law and the protection of people in situations of vulnerability. Moreover, Spain's recent election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council (2025-2027) reinforces this role.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 8. STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Official Development Assistance as a percentage of Gross National Income.	↑		Twelfth in ODA volume among OECD Development Assistance Committee countries.

2030 RSDS TARGETS FOR 2030: STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

29

Reach 0.80% of the Rule of Law Index WJP ensuring that no law in Spain infringes on the right to assembly, expression, information and citizen mobilisation.

Indicator: Rule of Law Index.

SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice. ↑

SDG 16.10: Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

30

Reach 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) for Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2030, ensuring that at least 10% is allocated to humanitarian action.

Indicator: % of GNI for ODA.

SDG 17.2: Ensure that developed countries meet their official development assistance commitments.

SDG 17.3: Mobilise additional financial resources for developing countries.

SDG 17.9: Increase international support for capacity building in developing countries.

31

Increase Spain's role in conflict prevention and mediation to resolve conflicts within the framework of Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter by increasing Spain's financial contribution to the United Nations system's peacebuilding programmes, taking into account all financial instruments, by 30%, provided that budgetary conditions allow.

INDICATOR:

Spain's contributions to:

1. United Nations System, for all financial instruments.
2. Fund for peacebuilding.

SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

SDG 16.8: Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in global governance institutions.

SDG 16.A: Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, to build capacity at all levels.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity.

SDG 17.16: Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

32

Ensure that at least 60% of new Spanish Development Cooperation interventions incorporate positive effects on gender equality and women's empowerment, with a progressive increase towards the 85% proposed by the EU.

INDICATOR: % of new Spanish Development Cooperation interventions that incorporate positive effects on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation will provide the data.

SDG 5.C: Adopt and strengthen policies for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

SDG 17.17: Foster effective partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.

SDG 16.B: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

The approval of **Law 1/2023, on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity**, was a fundamental milestone, replacing the previous law of 1998, to adapt the legal framework of international cooperation policy for sustainable development to the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The law also set in motion a process of regulatory reform of Spain's international cooperation architecture, with a new Statute for Cooperating Persons, a new Statute for the AECID, which strengthens its capacities, and the creation of the Spanish Fund for Sustainable Development (FEDES) for more robust financial cooperation, the approval of Royal Decrees 140/2025 and 898/2025, which regulate the Interministerial Commission and the High Council for Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity, and the launch of the new Sectoral Conference on Cooperation for Sustainable Development.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Spain's External Action Strategy 2025-2028 sets out the priorities and orientations of Spanish foreign policy for the next four years. It is divided into three main areas:

- Strengthening a cohesive and autonomous Europe.
- Reaffirming commitment to international law, human rights, more inclusive international governance, strengthening multilateralism, a feminist foreign policy and boosting climate diplomacy.
- Consolidating peace and security through collective defence, the fight against terrorism, protection of Spanish citizens abroad, protection of international humanitarian law and mediation.

On a more specific level, the following stand out:

- **The Spanish Development Cooperation's Master Plan 2024-2027**, which defines the roadmap for the coming years within the framework of Law 1/2023, orients its action towards sustainable, inclusive and feminist development, promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships and results-based accountability.
- **Spanish Strategy for Humanitarian Diplomacy 2023-2026**, which establishes as priorities the prevention of conflicts, the promotion of respect for international law and the protection of people in situations of vulnerability.
- **Feminist Cooperation Strategy**, considered a milestone in Spanish cooperation policy as it marks a shift towards a transformative, intersectional and structural approach.

Additionally:

- Spain's election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council (2025-2027), which strengthens its role in multilateral spaces and consolidates its presence in key bodies of the UN system, which contributes to improving its position in the UN-MI index.
- Future Multilateral Policy Strategy for Sustainable Development, in compliance with the provisions of Law 1/2023.
- Future Strategy for Culture and Sustainable Development, a preview of which was presented at Mondiacult 2025, which places cultural rights at the centre.
- Future Right to Food and Peacebuilding Strategies of Spanish Development Cooperation.

On citizenship rights:

- **Spanish Charter of Digital Rights**, published within the framework of the **Spain Digital Agenda 2025**, consolidated as a reference for guaranteeing **fundamental rights in the digital environment**.
- In 2025, the government has strengthened its implementation through the **Conventions Programme**, which promotes its application in **employment, education, healthcare and justice**.
- Creation of the **Digital Rights Observation Space**, which makes it possible to monitor compliance and collect proposals for improvement.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Law 1/2023, passed on 20 February 2023, establishes the legal framework for Spain's international cooperation, and promotes sustainable development and global solidarity in line with the 2030 Agenda. Its objective is to update and strengthen Spanish cooperation policy in the face of current global challenges, based on principles of solidarity, inclusion and sustainability, and to improve the effectiveness and transparency of international action. It is based on key principles such as policy coherence, the participation of various actors—in particular, NGOs, Autonomous Communities and the private sector—and transparency in the management and evaluation of cooperation programmes.

With regard to the defence of citizens' rights, the **future Law on the Protection of Human Rights, Sustainability and Due Diligence in Business Activities**, currently at the preliminary draft stage, stands out. This regulation seeks to ensure that Spanish companies respect human rights and the environment throughout their value chain, in coherence with the European Due Diligence Directive (2024/1760), approved in June 2024, and will establish binding obligations for large companies, as well as support mechanisms for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises).

In terms of access to information and transparency, Spain has made progress in recent years with the consolidation of its **Transparency Act**, although it still faces challenges in the effective implementation of the right of access to public information, especially on sensitive issues such as state surveillance and the use of facial recognition technologies in public spaces.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *Fourth Master Plan for Development Cooperation 2020-2023* establishes the strategic lines to promote international cooperation committed to human rights, gender equality, sustainability and the fight against poverty.

CANARY ISLANDS: the *Canary Islands Smart Governance Strategy*, formalised through the *Strategic Plan for Governance and Public Innovation (PEGIP)*, aims to transform internal processes, drive administrative innovation and improve citizens' quality of life.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: *Castilla y León Solidaria Seal*, which is awarded to cooperation entities and stakeholders that stand out for their commitment to sustainable development and human rights.

VALENCIA: the *Volunteering Law of the Valencian Community* (approved in May 2025) aims to update and strengthen the regulatory framework for solidarity action in the region.

MEASURES BY THE LES FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

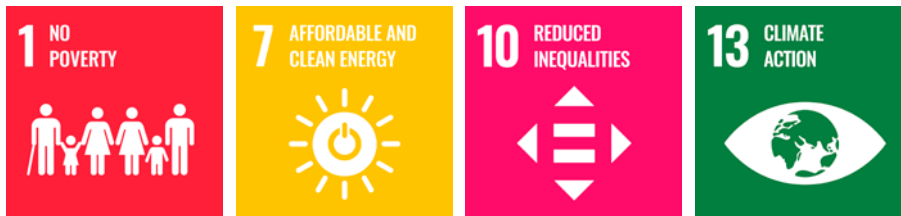
MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *Procurement Centre* for municipalities in the province of Córdoba is a body specialising in the negotiation and awarding of joint contracts for the municipalities participating in the project.

PONTEVEDRA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *+ Xuventude Scheme* distributes financial aid to youth associations and groups that carry out initiatives in which young people from municipalities across the province actively participate.

NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2: A CIRCULAR ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT GENERATES WELFARE AND SOCIAL, LABOUR AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

1. MEASURES AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY



INTRODUCTION

Access to affordable and sustainable energy is an essential pillar for ensuring well-being and social justice. However, energy poverty persists as a structural challenge in Spain and affects the poorest households most severely. Not having adequate heating and cooling, or spending a disproportionate share of the household budget on gas and electricity bills, limits the ability to maintain decent living conditions and has a direct impact on health, quality of life and social integration.

The evolution of this situation since 2015 shows a trend marked by progress and setbacks. Improvements were made in certain periods, although the global energy crisis that began in 2021 reversed some of this progress. This economic situation led to higher gas and electricity prices, which had a particular impact on the most vulnerable households.

However, during the period 2018-2024, the measures adopted have made it possible to contain the worst effects of these exceptional situations on consumers, in particular on vulnerable households and especially in these highly complex years, characterised by unprecedented crises with severe impacts on the economy and society as a whole. Both the short-term measures implemented in response to the energy crisis and the structural reforms linked to the energy transition have helped to keep energy costs in Spain in check. In particular, energy prices for household consumers have gone from being 15% above the EU average in 2018 for electricity and 23% above the EU average for gas, to levels 16% and 27% below the EU average in 2024, respectively. This has led to a substantial improvement in the competitiveness of energy prices for Spanish households.

The increase in income by 41.9% in the lowest income decile and 37.1% in the second decile has meant that energy expenditure for the most vulnerable consumers has fallen substantially to 24.7% and 10.2%, respectively, while for the general population, it is similar with a downward trend of 3.5%. Thus, vulnerable consumers have a higher income and lower energy costs in 2024 compared to 2018, despite the significant distortions in markets, especially energy markets, at the beginning of this decade.

However, despite this progress, according to INE data for 2024, more than 12.5 million people in Spain are at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, representing 25.8% of the population, according to the AROPE index.

Fuel poverty therefore becomes a factor of social exclusion that also restricts equal access to educational and employment opportunities and reinforces other pre-existing inequalities. Tackling it requires a comprehensive approach that combines direct support measures for households with structural reforms in the energy system. The transition to a more sustainable

model must go hand in hand with public policies that ensure that no one is left behind and that the right to affordable energy becomes a reality for the entire population.

HOUSEHOLDS WITH HIGH ENERGY EXPENDITURE IN RELATION TO THEIR INCOME

Access to affordable and sustainable energy is a fundamental pillar for ensuring well-being and social justice. Fuel poverty particularly affects the most vulnerable households, limits their ability to maintain decent living conditions and has direct consequences on the health and social inclusion of its members.

According to the National Energy Poverty Strategy 2019-2024, as proposed by the *EU Energy Poverty Observatory* (now EPAH), the indicator "disproportionate expenditure" reflects the percentage of households whose actual household energy expenditure, relative to their total income, is at least twice the national median. On the other hand, the adjusted expenditure indicator is measured with respect to the average of the medians of the last five years, providing the following results:

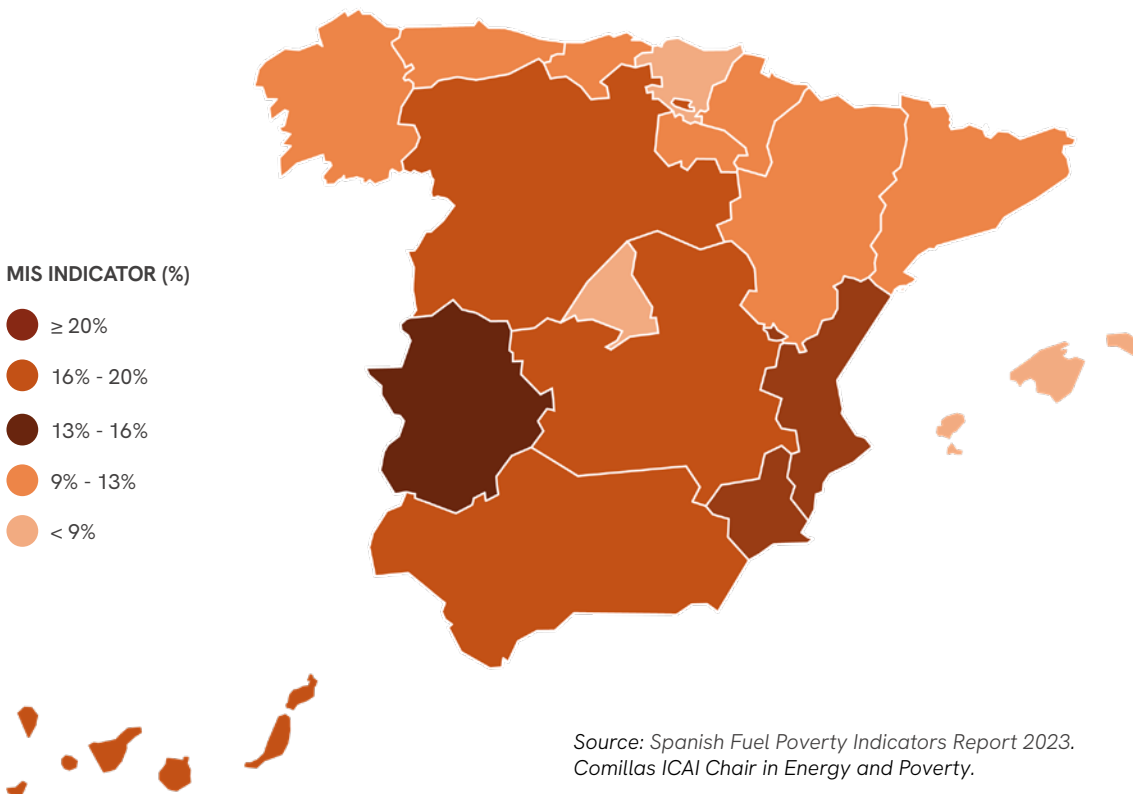
Indicators of Energy Poverty in Spain	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Disproportionate Expenditure 2018-2024							
Disproportionate expenditure 2M (% households)	15.56%	15.60%	16.00%	15.60%	16.90%	17.00%	17.20%
Disproportionate expenditure adapted 2M ¹ (% households)	14.86%	14.90%	14.40%	14.20%	18.70%	13.90%	12.70%
Additional fuel poverty indicators							
Disproportionate expenditure indicator based on MIS ¹		15.30%	16.60%	14.62%	13.14%	12.74%	
Energy load per average household (% of total expenditure)	4.67%	4.64%	5.29%	5%	5.38%	4.56%	4.23%
First decile (%)	4.83%	5.01%	5.88%	5.69%	5.31%	4.36%	3.37%
Second decile (%)	4.45%	4.75%	5.41%	5.28%	5.28%	4.20%	3.81%

Source: Assessment of actions against fuel poverty and update of indicators 2018-2024, MITECO and Report on Energy Poverty Indicators in Spain 2023. Comillas ICAI Chair in Energy and Poverty.

The average energy expenditure per household shows that, after the energy crisis and the rebound in 2022, the most recent values in 2024 are even lower than in 2018. This trend extends to the lowest income deciles (decile 1 and decile 2), where the average energy expenditure per household is 16.47% lower in 2024 compared to 2018.

On the other hand, the Chair of Energy and Poverty at the University of Comillas ICAI-ICADE proposed an alternative: *Minimum Income Standard (MIS)*, to measure the "disproportionate" nature of expenditure by identifying the threshold at which energy expenditures strain household finances to the point of having to limit other basic supplies, rather than using relative values such as the median for the population as a whole).

According to this MIS indicator, the disproportionate expenditure rate in Spain has improved in recent years, falling from 13.14% to 12.74% from 2022 to 2023, and below the 2019 values (15.30%).



The MIS indicator reveals large territorial differences in energy poverty: in 2023, Extremadura (21.9%), Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha recorded the highest incidence, compared to 6.3% in the Balearic Islands. These disparities are related to income, climate, quality of housing and access to subsidies.

EQUAL ACCESS TO THERMAL COMFORT AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY

Another element to be taken into consideration is the guarantee of sufficient thermal comfort in the dwelling. To measure it, the hidden energy poverty indicator (HEP, which reflects the percentage of households whose energy expenditure, in absolute values, weighted per unit of consumption, is less than half the national median), the indicator of inadequate temperature in the dwelling in winter and the delay in the payment of housing supply bills are taken into account. The data show how the HEP decreases in 2021, however, this indicator is strongly affected by the high discount values of the social electricity bonus in the period 2021-2024 or the deployment of individual and collective self-consumption, not representing key elements such as self-rationing.

Indicators of Energy Poverty in Spain	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ENPE indicators 2019-2024							
Hidden energy poverty HEP M/2 (% households)	10.57%	10.60%	10.30%	9.30%	11.30%	11.80%	12.60%
Hidden energy poverty adapted HEP' M/2' (% households)	9.06%	9.10%	9.60%	8.90%	7.90%	12.80%	14.40%
Inadequate temperature in the dwelling in winter (% population)	9.10%	7.60%	10.90%	14.30%	17.10%	20.70%	17.60%
65 and over	8.9%	5.8%	9.4%	13.8%	16.4%	18.2%	14.2%
Under 18 years of age	9.2%	8.5%	10.6%	13.1%	16.1%	19.9%	17.9%
From 18 to 64 years old	9.2%	7.8%	11.4%	14.7%	17.6%	21.7%	18.5%
Men	8.9%	7.4%	10.9%	14.0%	16.5%	20.2%	17.4%
Women	9.3%	7.7%	10.9%	14.5%	17.7%	21.2%	17.7%
Delayed payment of household utility bills (% population)	7.20%	6.60%	9.60%	9.50%	9.20%	9.60%	9.70%
Additional fuel poverty indicators							
Severe hidden energy poverty³		5.26%	4.80%	10.32%	10.58%	9.35%	

Source: Balance of actions against energy poverty and update of indicators 2018-2024, MITECO and report on energy poverty indicators in Spain 2023. Comillas ICAI Chair in Energy and Poverty.

The data show homogeneous trends for all age ranges and a favourable evolution in the post-energy crisis period, extensible for the indicators of inadequate temperature and late payment of bills, which use a direct question from the Living Conditions Survey (LCS), with a positive trend in the last year and, for late payment of bills, a strong stability since 2020.

Significant progress has been made in this respect, such as the increase in income, contained energy costs and greater protection of the social shield (prohibition of supply cuts until 31 December 2026 by Royal Decree-Law 16/2025).

However, there is still a need to strengthen the tackling of fuel poverty through a combination of structural and assistance policies. These include energy rehabilitation policies, extending the scope of the social bonus, promoting local energy communities and ensuring equitable access to decent and sustainable energy.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 1. MEASURES AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Disproportionate revenue expenditure on energy.	↔	↓	Progressive decrease in disproportionate energy expenditure, with a slight rebound in 2021.
Cannot afford to keep the dwelling at an adequate temperature.	↑	↑	Steady increase since 2015, with a more pronounced rebound since 2021.
Beneficiaries of the electricity social voucher by category.		↑	More coverage in all regions

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.1: MEASURES AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY

33

Reduce the incidence of fuel poverty in line with the existing National Fuel Poverty Strategy*.

Indicator: percentage of current ENPE targets met, as reported in progress reports and at the end of the period of each strategy ENPE.

SDG 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

SDG 1.4: Ensure equal access to economic resources and basic services, including energy.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies, promoting energy efficiency.

* in the process of approval for the period 2026-2030.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT FUEL POVERTY

Reducing fuel poverty has become a cross-cutting priority for the State Administration in recent years. It is particularly relevant in the context of the Country Challenge, which seeks to move towards a sustainable territorial model, improve social cohesion and address the climate and environmental emergency. In recent years, ministries have deployed a range of policy, strategic and financial support measures to ensure fair and affordable access to energy, protect vulnerable households and promote energy efficiency throughout the territory, with a particular focus on rural and disadvantaged areas. These actions not only alleviate situations of energy exclusion, but also contribute to ecological transition and social justice.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **National Strategy against Fuel Poverty (ENPE) 2019-2024**, emerged to comply with Royal Decree-Law 15/2018. The document established a clear definition of energy poverty and vulnerable consumers and identified more than 3.5 million people affected in Spain. The strategy set specific lines of action and targets to reduce energy poverty, incorporated a system of annual updating of indicators (based on INE data and studies on household energy consumption and expenditure) and incorporated the monitoring of energy vulnerability through surveys and measurements.

In continuity with the National Fuel Poverty Strategy 2019-2024, and as part of its regular review and update, the development of the **National Fuel Poverty Strategy 2026-2030** was initiated in 2025. The Strategy, pending approval, includes 12 main measures and four main lines of action, highlighting an Energy Poverty Observatory, the protection of vulnerable consumers, the improvement of structural housing conditions and communication and awareness-raising measures. This second ENPE aims to lay the foundations for this transformation, together with the Social Plan for Climate (PSPC), and to be a vector for change towards energy efficiency and improving the environmental conditions of vulnerable consumers. Among the key measures of the **Fuel Poverty Observatory**, it is worth highlighting the definition of indicators, agreed with the sector, in order to have adequate knowledge to characterise and effectively tackle fuel poverty.

To this end, four areas of focus have been defined, centred respectively on promoting knowledge and information sharing on energy poverty, improving direct protection, structurally improving the energy conditions of homes, and increasing the involvement of the different agents in the system to achieve greater communication, awareness and transfer of the policies implemented to vulnerable consumers. These areas are divided into up to 13 measures and a total of 32 actions.

The **National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) 2023-2030**, framed within the Strategic Energy and Climate Framework, is the national strategic orientation tool that integrates energy and climate policy with a time horizon up to 2030, aligned with national and European regulations. Its main objectives include job creation, boosting the competitiveness of the productive fabric, Spain's leadership in renewable energies and technologies, the development of the rural environment, the improvement of people's health and the environment, as well as social justice.

In addition, the EU's "Target 55" package seeks greater climate and energy ambition by extending the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS2) to road transport and buildings, sectors that have so far been difficult to decarbonise. This system, which will come into force in 2027, is accompanied by the Social Climate Fund, created to mitigate the impact of carbon pricing on vulnerable households, micro-enterprises and transport users. Each Member State must present a Social Plan channelling the Fund, with an approach combining sustainability, mobility, housing, social justice and cost-efficient measures, with the reduction of energy poverty in vulnerable households as a central focus.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Royal Decree-Law 10/2022 is particularly noteworthy, as it temporarily establishes a mechanism for adjusting production costs to reduce the price of electricity in the wholesale market, approving measures to strengthen the protection of energy consumers and contribute to reducing natural gas consumption. It establishes a temporary mechanism to adjust marginal fossil electricity production costs, with the aim of reducing the wholesale electricity price in Spain and Portugal.

It is also worth noting the extension until 31 December 2026 (provided for in **Royal Decree-Law 16/2025, which extends certain measures to address situations of social vulnerability and adopts urgent measures in tax and Social Security matters**) and the increase in the discounts of the social bonus applicable to domestic electricity consumers that were included in article 6.3 of **Royal Decree 897/2017**.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT ENERGY POVERTY

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BASQUE COUNTRY: *Law 14/2022 on the Basque Income Guarantee and Inclusion System:* establishes a comprehensive framework for social protection and minimum income guarantees, which indirectly contributes to reducing the likelihood of these households suffering severe forms of exclusion, including energy poverty, by improving households' basic economic capacity to meet essential expenses such as energy, housing and services.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: *Strategic Energy Development Plan, Horizon 2030*, which sets out the regional roadmap for an inclusive energy transition, mobilises investments of over €19 billion and estimates the creation of up to 16,000 jobs per year by 2030.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY

LOCAL ACTIONS 2021-2025

GATA DE GORGOS (ALICANTE): in 2022, the town council, together with a private company, set up an energy community to promote self-sufficiency, sustainability and significant savings on electricity bills.

BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: provides tariff advice to adjust supply contracts to the real needs of households, and carries out an energy study in the home to improve its energy efficiency and reduce energy supply costs.

BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL: through the *Energy Advice Points (PAE)* they attend to vulnerable households and offer personalised attention that includes tariff advice, processing of social aid, revision of bills and energy audits to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs.

2. EMPLOYMENT



INTRODUCTION

Employment is fundamental to sustainable development with welfare and social justice. Strategy 2030 insists on transforming the labour system for decent jobs adapted to the digital and green age.

According to INE's Labour Force Survey (EPA) for the second quarter of 2025, the Spanish labour market continues to develop positively. The labour force stands at 24.8 million and continues to grow (1.6% more than in the previous year). The number of employed persons reached 22.27 million, exceeding 22 million for the first time. In the same period there was a job creation of more than 503,300 persons compared to the previous quarter. The number of unemployed persons stood at 2,553,100, bringing the unemployment rate to around 10.3 %, the lowest level since 2008.

From a sectoral perspective, employment growth was spread across the main sectors of activity. In the second quarter of 2025, the Labour Force Survey recorded increases of about 364,800 employed persons in services, 90,300 in industry and 45,400 in construction, while the primary sector maintained a more limited and stable contribution in terms of employment. There was also a significant upturn in branches with higher value added, such as professional, scientific and technical activities and information and communications.

However, this trend is part of a productive structure characterised by the high relative weight of the tertiary sector (which accounts for around 76.2% of total employment, compared to approximately 21% for the secondary sector) and around 2% for the primary sector, according to the EPA. This breakdown is also reflected in the contribution to GDP. According to National Accounts, the service sector accounts for around 75% of Gross Value Added (GVA), the secondary sector (industry and construction) accounts for approximately 21%, and the primary sector accounts for around 3-4%.

Other structural imbalances in the labour market also persist: the temporary employment rate remained at 15.6% in the third quarter of 2025, despite being at historical lows for the period, which shows that there is still a high share of less stable jobs. This is due to the temporary nature of the public sector, as the temporary nature of the private sector is below European levels (12.9% in the second quarter of 2025). The unemployment rate stood at 10.3%, and gender data shows that the female rate remains several points above the male rate (11.5% versus 9.2%).

Furthermore, the interplay between employment, poverty and migration is a critical issue. The migrant population experiences higher levels of job insecurity (temporary employment, informal work and less contractual stability), which translates into higher rates of in-work poverty. These dynamics are concentrated in key sectors, but with low average job quality (care, agriculture, hospitality and some services).

In this context, moving towards an employment agenda that combines the progressive reduction of working hours (both for welfare reasons and to redistribute employment) and the promotion of the social economy model is a strategy that is coherent with the productive transformations demanded by the ecological and digital transition. Strengthening policies for re-skilling, vocational training and strategic sectoral skills is also essential to increase employability and to meet the challenges of productivity, automation and sustainability. At the same time, ensuring labour inclusion and a more balanced distribution of living and working time is a necessary condition for a fairer, more equitable and inclusive production model.

At the international level, Spain has consolidated in recent years a comprehensive approach to promoting decent work and inclusive economic growth, in line with SDG 8 of the 2030 Agenda. The labour market policies adopted have combined the improvement of labour income, the reduction of precariousness and the strengthening of workers' rights with sustained economic growth. This approach has been articulated through structural reforms of the labour market, the promotion of the social and solidarity economy and new measures aimed at reconciliation, equality and health and safety at work.

Spain places decent work and universal social protection at the heart of its external action and cooperation, reflected in the Law on Cooperation for Development and Global Solidarity and in the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2024-2027, as well as in its active support for multilateral initiatives led by the United Nations and the International Labour Organization.

WORKING HOURS IN SPAIN

Working hours in Spain are basically governed by the Workers' Statute, which establishes a maximum working week of 40 hours per year, in addition to other provisions such as Law 31/1995 on the prevention of occupational hazards. This general regulation must also be complemented by Royal Decree 1561/1995 on special working hours (which provides for extensions or restrictions on working hours for certain sectors of activity or types of work), by the rules of the different special employment relationships and by the regulations affecting certain professional groups (such as public employees). Collective agreements supplement and clarify the (general or special) regulations at the level of the company or sector of activity concerned.

In 2023, according to the Statistics on Collective Labour Agreements of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, 5,162 agreements affecting 12,965,321 workers had an average working week of 38.3 hours, with notable variations between sectors and areas of negotiation.

On the basis of these agreements, the agreed annual working hours were around 1,740-1,760 hours, equivalent to approximately 34-35 hours per week on an annualised basis. This adjustment reflects a progressive trend towards a reduction in working time with respect to the legal maximum, although this evolution is not homogeneous, especially in sectors with lower productivity or high seasonality.

In this context, the draft law on the reduction of the maximum length of the ordinary working week, approved by the Council of Ministers on 6 May 2025, proposed to reduce the legal working week from 40 to 37.5 hours without any reduction in wages. Although the text was rejected in Congress, the government reiterated its commitment to push this reform again. If approved, collective agreements with working hours in excess of 37.5 hours will have to be adapted by 31 December 2025, by setting up specific negotiating committees.

Likewise, the strategic objective of moving towards an agreed average working week of 35 hours is aimed at improving the well-being of workers, promoting work-life balance and contributing to a more equitable distribution of employment. Currently, the average agreed working time is around 37-38 hours, with significant differences according to sector, company size and type of

contract. Although certain agreements are already approaching this threshold, their generalisation requires accompanying the process with organisational improvements, digitalisation, support measures for SMEs and bargaining frameworks that avoid negative impacts on competitiveness.

Progress towards a sustained and balanced reduction in working time is a key lever for promoting a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable production model, aligned with the principle of decent work and a more balanced distribution of life and care time.

SOCIAL ECONOMY

The social economy is a business model that puts people before capital, investing all or most of its profits and surpluses in generating more and better jobs, achieving its social goals and developing activities of interest to its members or to society in general.

At the international level, two Resolutions on the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development were approved at the United Nations Assembly in 2023. These resolutions constitute a historic milestone in recognising the role of the Social Economy as an engine for decent job creation, inclusive territorial development, social innovation and the transition towards sustainable economic models. In addition, they urge Member States to strengthen regulatory, statistical and public policy frameworks to measure and enhance their impact in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the improvement of data systems, the promotion of enabling ecosystems and the strengthening of international cooperation.

According to the report *The most relevant companies in the social economy (2023-2024)*, prepared by the Spanish Social Economy Business Confederation (CEPES), the Spanish social economy includes 74,606 companies (cooperatives, labour companies, insertion companies, mutual societies, foundations, among others) that generate 2,505,607 jobs. Of this total, 336,510 correspond to workers in cooperatives and 51,034 in worker-owned companies, which shows the key role of these entities in the creation of stable employment and social cohesion.

In addition, the Statistics on Social Economy Entities registered with Social Security (ESI) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy show that, in September 2025, there were 18,354 cooperatives and 6,021 labour companies registered with Social Security. These figures form the baseline for the target of increasing the number of social economy entities by 10% by 2030. Achieving this objective would mean reaching approximately 20,189 cooperatives and 6,623 worker-owned companies, thereby moving towards a more robust, democratic economic fabric that generates quality employment.

In 2025, Spanish public administrations have allocated significant resources to the social economy, consolidating it as a strategic axis of inclusive and sustainable development. This commitment is particularly evident in the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR), which includes the PERTE for the Social and Care Economy, with a budget of over €2.5 billion, managed in a coordinated manner by ten ministries. Its aim is to promote projects that foster social inclusion, sustainability, social innovation and the strengthening of networks between social economy organisations, orienting the production and care model towards one that is more focused on people and the territory. This PERTE also includes, as a strategic objective, the creation of the Social Economy Vanguard Hub, launched in September 2024 and conceived as a pioneering think tank at international level in the study, foresight and replicability of projects and good practices of the social economy in the provision of innovative solutions to current eco-social challenges.

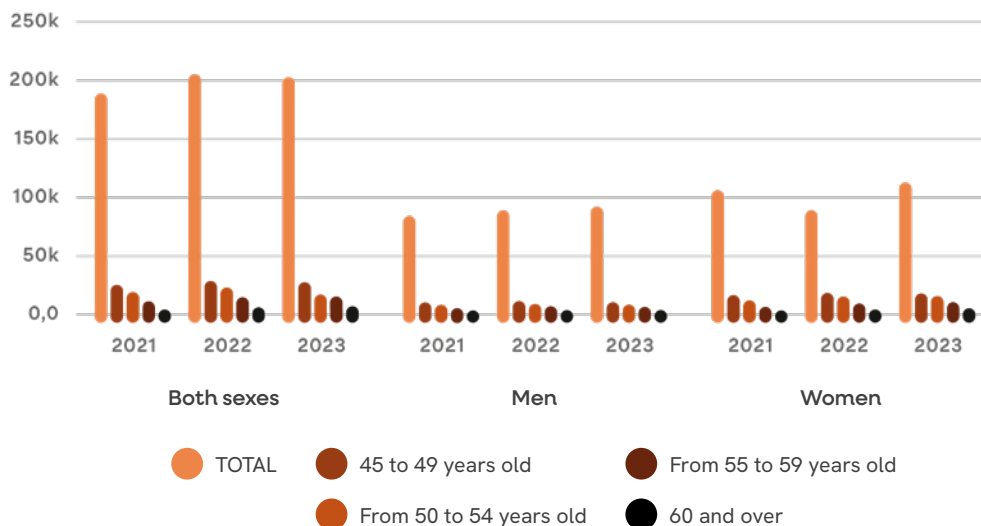
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The participation of unemployed people in Vocational Training for Employment (VET) in Spain remains low, at only 6.6% in 2022. This figure is even lower among the most vulnerable groups, such

as people over 55 or those with primary education. In addition, more than half of the courses are of short duration, which limits their scope for improving competences. These data underline the need to strengthen access to quality training as a way to improve employability and reduce social exclusion.

Between 2021 and 2023, the participation of people over 45 years of age in training programmes increased, especially in the group of people over 60, which doubled its presence. In absolute numbers, the number of people will increase from 188,621 in 2021 to 202,402 in 2023, an increase of 7%. While this progress is positive, it still falls short of the target of an additional 30% by 2030.

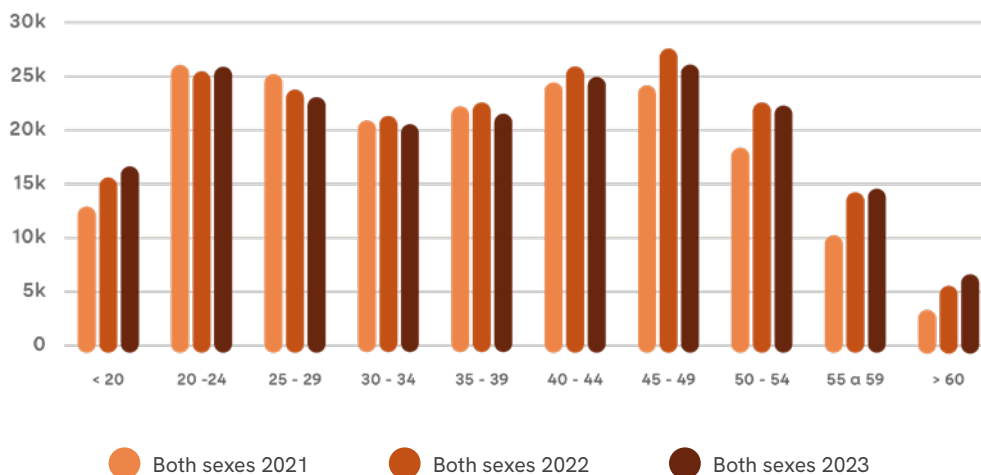
TRAINING AIMED PRIMARILY AT UNEMPLOYED WORKERS (BY SEX AND AGE)



Source: Produced by the authors based on the report Vocational training for employment (VET). Ministry of Labour and Social Economy.

Women have been in the majority in all age groups and show a higher participation in training policies. The participation of people with primary education has also increased, although gaps persist for groups such as men in technology or renewable energy sectors. People over 50 years of age increased their presence from 16.9% to 21.4%, reflecting an improvement in their situation, although still insufficient to balance their position in the labour market.

PRIORITY TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED WORKERS (BY AGE)



Source: Produced by the authors based on the report Vocational training for employment (VET). Ministry of Labour and Social Economy.

Barriers such as age discrimination, temporary employment and lack of adaptation of training programmes persist. To improve the effectiveness of training, policies targeting the over-50s should be strengthened, Dual Vocational Training (Dual VET) should be expanded and equitable access to retraining and lifelong learning programmes should be ensured, with a focus on strategic sectors.

Specifically, Dual Vocational Training has been consolidated as a key instrument for improving employability and adjusting the skills of young people to the needs of the productive fabric.

After a recent period of expansion, enrolment increased from 45,612 students in 2021 to 60,018 students in the 2023-2024 academic year, an increase of 31.58%. However, this progress, although significant, is still far from the target of increasing enrolment by 60% by 2030, which would imply reaching at least 72,979 students.

Sustained growth requires strengthening cooperation between educational centres and companies (especially in strategic sectors), improving the quality of training projects, the availability of tutors and the stability of the places offered, as well as guaranteeing monitoring mechanisms capable of assessing the real impact on labour market insertion.

YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

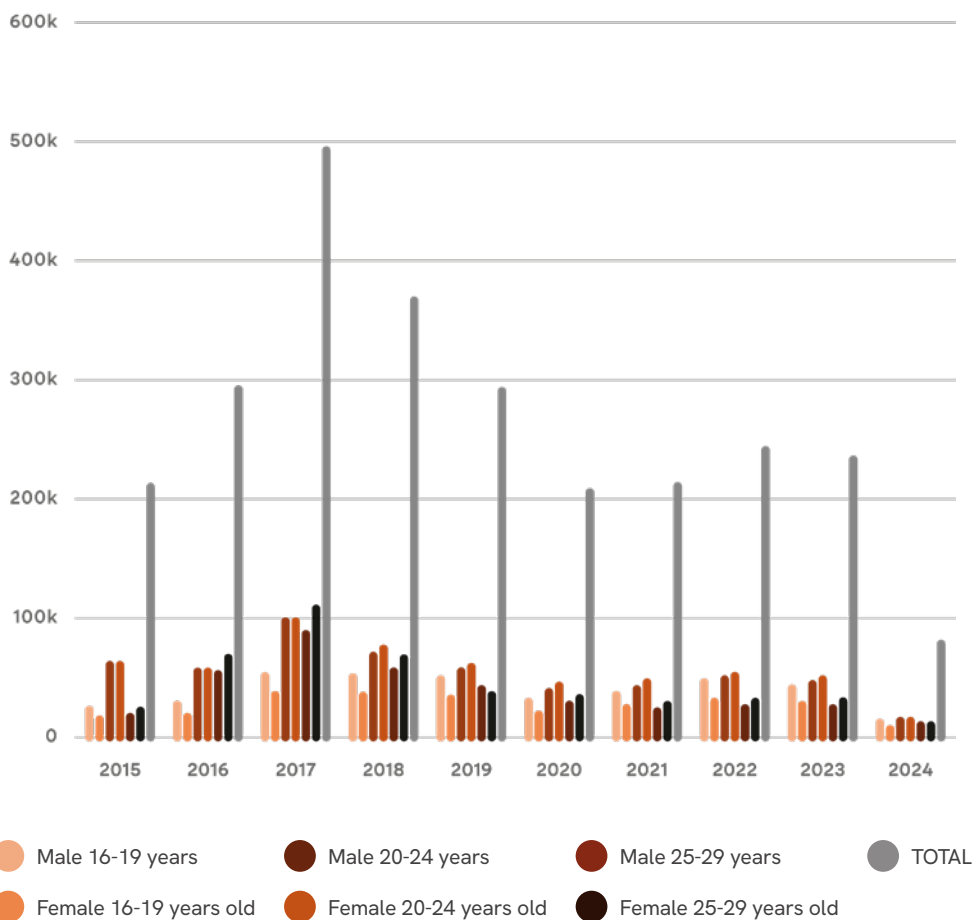
Employment among people under 30 has grown by 137,500 employed persons, rising by 4.12% more than in the second quarter of 2025; while among people under 25, employment has grown by 93,800 employed persons, i.e. 6.77% more.

The National Youth Guarantee System (SNGJ) is one of the main instruments to facilitate the labour and training integration of young people in Spain. Since 2015, enrolment figures have shown oscillations, with a peak in 2017 (497,905 enrolled) and a downward trend in subsequent years.

In 2024, the number of young people registered in the SNGJ was 253,946. During the same year, 274,844 young people accessed training through the system, of which 217,776 received services from the Common Portfolio, representing 79.24% of the total. These figures show broad participation in training activities, although there is still some way to go to achieve the objective of ensuring that 100% of those registered have access to programmes tailored to their needs.

The most represented age group continues to be 20 to 24 years, followed by 16 to 19 and 25 to 29 years. In terms of gender, there was an even distribution: men accounted for 50.65% of the registrations, compared to 49.35% of women.

YOUNG PEOPLE ENROLLED IN THE NATIONAL YOUTH GUARANTEE SYSTEM



Source: National Youth Guarantee System (SNGJ). (2024). SNGJ Statistics. Monthly report. December 2024.

OLDER PEOPLE

The participation of people over 45 years of age in training and retraining programmes is decisive in favouring their continuity in employment and reducing the generational gaps in a labour market marked by the digital and ecological transition.

Since 2021, the number of participants in training activities has increased from 188,621 to 202,402 persons in 2023, an increase of 7%, which is still insufficient to reach the target of raising this participation by 30% by 2030 (to 245,207 persons).

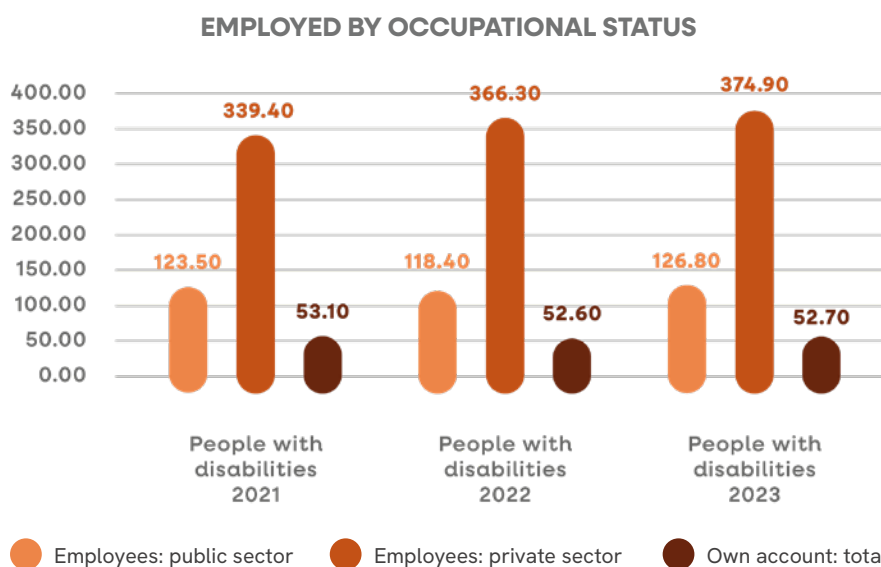
Although progress can be observed among people over 50 and 60, structural obstacles persist, such as age discrimination, the lower availability of specialised programmes and the limited adaptation of part of the training offer to sectors with a higher demand for skilled labour.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace in Spain is still a reality despite regulatory and social advances. Many of these people face barriers in accessing employment, such as prejudice about their ability to perform certain tasks, lack of reasonable accommodation in the workplace, or lack of awareness on the part of employers about the benefits of a diverse workforce.

Since 2021, the employment rate of people with disabilities in Spain has increased from 26.8% to 28.5% in 2023, although it remains below that of the non-disabled population. In parallel, the activity rate reached 35.5% in 2023, reflecting a slight improvement in labour force participation. The unemployment rate also fell from 22.4% in 2021 to 19.7% in 2023, indicating progress, although still far from the overall average.

Regarding the situation of employed persons, since 2021 the employment of people with disabilities has grown in both the public and private sectors, although at different rates. In public administration, the number of employed persons with disabilities increased from 123,500 in 2021 to 126,800 in 2023 (+2.7%). However, this increase has not been sufficient to strengthen the relative weight of the group in the public sector, in a context marked by the limited application of the 10% reserve in public employment offers.

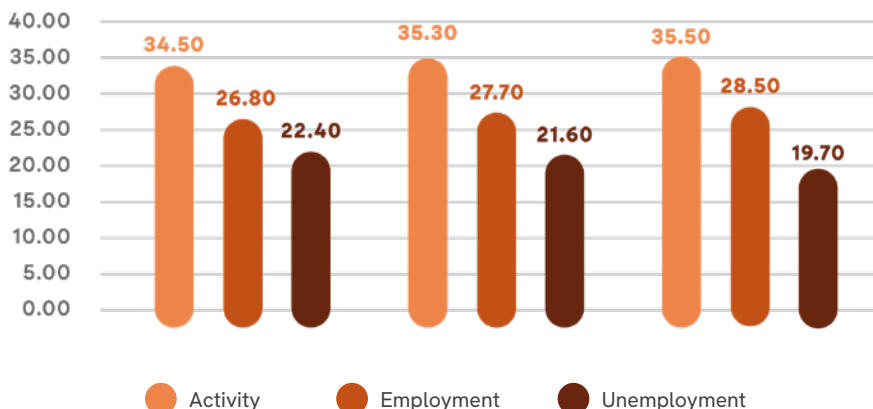


Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

In the private sector (employees), growth has been more dynamic: from 339,400 employed in 2021 to 374,900 in 2023, an increase of 8.9%, driven by tax incentives and inclusive policies. However, problems persist with temporary employment, part-time contracts, lack of compliance controls and a strong concentration in low-skilled activities. This limits the employment stability of people with disabilities. Self-employment, on the other hand, maintains a reduced weight, with a slight fall in its share of the total number of employed people with disabilities. This reflects the difficulties in accessing finance and the limited implementation of programmes to support entrepreneurship.

Overall, employment of people with disabilities remains highly concentrated in the services sector (more than 82.2%), while the presence in industry, construction and agriculture is very limited. This occupational segmentation highlights the need to reinforce compliance with the reserve quota, extend incentives for hiring in the private sector and develop policies to support self-employment and sectoral diversification.

ACTIVITY, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY GENDER



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

Internationally, Spain has one of the highest unemployment rates in the EU for this group, with 29.2% for people with severe disabilities and 22.6% for people with disabilities as a whole, compared to an average of 9.5% in the EU-27 (Eurostat, 2023). This gap is largely due to insufficient recruitment incentives and the lack of support policies comparable to those in countries such as Germany or the Netherlands, where more inclusive models have led to better labour market integration outcomes.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 2. EMPLOYMENT

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Average working hours as agreed in the collective agreement.	↘	↘	In 2023 the average was approximately 38.3h. Slight reduction compared to previous years, but still above 37.5 h.
Social economy entities.	↗	↗	Around 74,600 entities; sustained growth and strong heterogeneity (cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations and associations that carry out economic activity, labour companies, insertion companies, special social initiative employment centres, fishermen's guilds, agricultural transformation companies and singular entities governed by the principles of the Social Economy.
Unemployment rate of people with disabilities.	↘	↘	One of the countries with the highest unemployment rate of people with disabilities in Europe.
Employment rate of people with disabilities.	↗	↗	Very large difference with the non-disabled population.
Training aimed primarily at unemployed people.	↗	↗	Increased participation of women.
Participation rate of young people in education and training (including NEET rates).	↗	↗	Above the European average.
Young people registered in the National Youth Guarantee System.	↗	↘	Significant drop in 2024.
Activity rate of people with disabilities.	↗	↗	There is still a big gap in access to work for members of this group.
Persons with disabilities employed in the private sector.	↗	↗	More employees than in the public sector.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.2: EMPLOYMENT

34

Increase the employment rate of people with disabilities to 34.5% by 2030 and specifically the employment rate of women by 15%, with specific support measures in recruitment and adaptation of jobs, prioritising sustainable and strategic sectors (base year 2021).

Indicator: Employment rate of people with disabilities.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 5.5: Ensure the full and effective participation of women on equal terms at all levels.

35

Increase by 30% the number of people with disabilities hired in the public administration and in private companies with more than 50 employees by means of tax incentives and strict compliance with the minimum 7% reserve quota, of which 2% is for people with intellectual disabilities (base year 2021).

Indicator: Number of recruitments of persons with disabilities in the public and private sector.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

36

Ensure that 100% of young people (aged 16-29) registered in Youth Guarantee programmes participate in programmes, training and employment tailored to their needs by 2030.

Indicator: Number of young people enrolled in Youth Guarantee programmes who access training.

SDG 4.4: Substantially increase the number of young people and adults with technical and vocational skills for employment.

SDG 8.6: Reduce the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

37

Increase participation by 30% among people over 45 in professional retraining and continuing education programmes, with a focus on strategic sectors.

Indicator: Number of people over 45 participating in training and retraining programmes.

SDG 4.4: Substantially increase the number of young people and adults with technical and vocational skills for employment.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

38

Increase the number of students enrolled in dual vocational training by 60% by 2030, by strengthening collaboration between companies, chambers of commerce and educational institutions, ensuring sufficient training places and especially promoting the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Indicator: Students enrolled in dual-mode vocational training programmes.

SDG 4.3: Ensure equal access to higher education.

SDG 4.4: Substantially increase the number of young people and adults with technical and vocational skills for employment.

SDG 8.6: Reduce the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training.

39

Reduce the average agreed working week to 35 hours per week on an annual basis.

Indicator: Statistics on Collective Labour Agreements from the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy.

SDG 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and healthy working environments.

SDG 3.4: Reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases.

SDG 5.4: Recognise and value unpaid domestic work and promote policies that support shared responsibility in the household and family.

40

Increase the number of Social Economy entities and their jobs by 10%.

Indicator: Social economy entities registered with Social Security.

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 9.3: Increase small businesses' access to financial services and markets.

SDG 12.6: Promote sustainable practices in companies.

41

Increase budgetary resources allocated to social economy entities by 50%.

Indicator: Annual budget allocation for Programme 241N "Development of the Social Economy and Corporate Social Responsibility". (Volume IX, programmes 241N, 28WF)

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 9.3: Increase small businesses' access to financial services and markets.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT

Within the framework of the country's challenge to build an economic system that generates well-being and social and environmental justice, the General State Administration has deployed various initiatives to strengthen employment in Spain. These contributions have taken the form of regulatory reforms, sectoral strategies, plans to promote youth and rural employment, and support programmes for vulnerable groups. Taken together, these measures aim to generate inclusive, sustainable job opportunities adapted to the challenges of the 21st century.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Spain ratified ILO Conventions 189 and C190 on decent work for domestic workers and on violence and harassment at work, guaranteeing rights such as unemployment benefits, fair working conditions and protection against unjustified dismissal. In addition, it protects all workers and people linked to work, defines violent and harassing behaviour, and requires the implementation of prevention policies, complaint mechanisms, training and protection of vulnerable groups. These historic measures respond to years of demands and correct previous discrimination, although they still face challenges in their effective implementation. The ratification represents a significant step forward in dignifying domestic work and improving the working conditions of this historically vulnerable group, as well as strengthening equality and job security.

The **Spanish Active Employment Support Strategy 2025-2028** constitutes the regulatory framework for the coordination and execution of active employment and labour intermediation policies in the whole of Spain and is the first multi-annual planning carried out within the framework of Law 3/2023, consistent, therefore, with the consideration of active employment policies as public policies associated with the exercise of guaranteed rights for citizens and companies. In this sense, the Strategy not only responds to the recommendations of the European Social Pillar and international reference frameworks on the role that public employment services should assume to ensure fair and efficient labour transitions, but also guarantees the effective exercise of legally established rights through stable and sufficient resources and actions.

On a more specific level, the **Spanish Strategy for Safety and Health at Work 2023-2027** seeks safe and healthy working environments, to reduce accidents and occupational diseases, with a special focus on SMEs, vulnerable groups and emerging risks such as digitalisation and climate change. It is structured in six strategic objectives, incorporates aspects such as mental health, gender perspective and sustainability, and is implemented through **action plans 2023-2024 and 2025-2027** that include prevention, training and monitoring measures. Coordination between administrations, social partners and INSST ensures efficiency and continuous adaptation to new labour and social challenges.

The **National Strategy for the Promotion of Self-Employment (ENDITA) 2022-2027**, which seeks to strengthen self-employment in Spain by promoting inclusive economic growth, gender equality, digitalisation and sustainability, is also in force. It is structured in six strategic axes covering social inclusion, population fixation, modernisation, training and equal opportunities, with measures implemented in two phases (2022-2024 and 2025-2027) to improve the environment and development of more than 3 million self-employed people.

In terms of strategic contributions to employment, the **Spanish Social Economy Strategy 2023-2027** also stands out. This strategy promotes a people-centred economic model that fosters inclusion, sustainability and social innovation. It also strengthens the role of cooperatives, mutual societies and other entities in this entrepreneurial ecosystem in areas such as public procurement, generational change, social entrepreneurship and digitalisation, which directly contributes to decent and quality employment.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

At the national level, the application of **Royal Decree-Law 32/2021** on urgent measures for labour reform, the guarantee of employment stability and the transformation of the labour market is noteworthy. The legislative text reforms the Spanish labour market to reduce **temporary employment** and promote **employment stability**, through the elimination of work and service contracts and the promotion of permanent and discontinuous contracts.

Law 10/2021 regulates remote work as voluntary, reversible and with rights equivalent to face-to-face work, establishing rules on formalisation, compensation of expenses, occupational health and digital disconnection.

Subsequently, it is **Law 3/2023 on Employment** that modernises the Spanish labour framework to promote **decent, inclusive and stable employment**, reinforcing the **coordination of the National Employment System** and **active** training, guidance and employability **policies**. In the context of the **Recovery and Resilience Plan**, it promotes the transformation of the SEPE into the **Spanish Employment Agency**, promotes gender equality and the digitalisation of the system, and consolidates a model of **collaborative governance** between administrations, social agents and private entities.

In its development, **Royal Decree 438/2024**, which develops the Common Portfolio of Services of the National Employment System and the guaranteed services established in Law 3/2023, on Employment, regulates the aforementioned Common Portfolio and the guaranteed services aimed at both individuals and companies, with the aim of developing the common regulatory framework to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities and a comprehensive and permanent offer of common services for employment provided by a professionalised and stable body of technical staff.

Also noteworthy is **Royal Decree 1065/2025**, which implements the training contract regime provided for in Article 11 of the Workers' Statute. This regime promotes the inclusion of this group in the labour market through more flexible conditions, such as the extension of deadlines and the consideration as a protected group, which allows exceptions to the maximum hiring limits per workplace. In addition, both contracts are aimed at facilitating the acquisition of professional skills and the attainment of certifications, strengthening employability and integration into work environments.

Looking to the future, the **Working Time Reduction Bill** proposes to reduce the maximum working time to 37.5 hours per week without affecting wages, through a gradual implementation. It is a regulation that seeks to improve work-life balance, well-being and productivity, and incorporates tools such as digital time recording and the right to digital disconnection, adapting the labour framework to the new social and technological challenges.

From the perspective of the social economy, the Draft Comprehensive Law for the Promotion of the Social Economy, which amends three different laws on the subject and updates the legal system to strengthen and adapt the social economy to the current digital, social and environmental context, is nearing completion in Parliament. It also highlights the **Integral Plan for the Promotion of the Social Economy 2024-2025**, with a budget of €100 million. The Plan seeks to strengthen an inclusive and sustainable economic fabric in Spain based on the social economy, by promoting the implementation of inclusive employment projects, youth and women's entrepreneurship, technological modernisation, cooperative networks and sustainability. The grants, which have been awarded to around 350 projects in three competitive calls for proposals, finance up to 50% of SMEs and 15% of large collaborating companies, with projects ranging from €10,000 to €3,500,000, promoting innovation, cooperation and support for vulnerable groups.

Royal Decree-Law 1/2023 establishes rebates on social security contributions, including training contracts, for companies that hire people with disabilities. It also introduces specific tools for people with borderline intellectual disabilities, thus strengthening their protection and access to employment.

Finally, **Royal Decree-Law 6/2023**, (approving urgent measures for the implementation of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan in the public service of justice, civil service, local government and patronage) increases the reserve of positions for people with disabilities in the public employment offer to 10%. In addition, it establishes the creation of disability inclusion units in each ministerial department, in order to provide the management body to which they report with the specialised administrative support required for the inclusion of staff with disabilities. It also aims to ensure job adaptation measures and ensure the full incorporation and professional development of such staff in their area of work, the monitoring and evaluation of measures in favour of people with disabilities in public employment offers, and the preparation of statistics on the effective occupation of positions in their corresponding area.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the Autonomous Community promotes *permanent employment* through aid aimed at companies and the self-employed who hire people from certain groups. Specifically, the recruitment of unemployed people from vulnerable groups such as young people, people over 45 years of age, women, people with disabilities, immigrants and victims of gender violence is encouraged.

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: the main objective of the *Operational Programme for Youth Employment 2014-2020 in Castilla La Mancha* was to reduce unemployment among young people aged 16-30 who were neither employed nor in training. To this end, it offered this population group training resources, guidance and job opportunities.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: in 2025, the regional government has promoted the *INCOFI Programme (Itinerarios de Cualificación, Prácticas e Inserción Laboral)*, to improve the employability of unemployed people, especially university graduates, through training itineraries in key skills and professional competences, non-labour internships and labour intermediation actions.

CATALONIA: the *Operational Plan 2026-2028* is a regional strategy that organises the annual programming of services and programmes aimed at improving employment and promoting social, labour and environmental justice. This instrument coordinates public policies for sustainable economic development, aligning them with the Government of Catalonia's objectives of inclusive growth and ecological transition.

NAVARRA: the region will implement the *Integral Social Economy Plan 2025-2028 of Navarre*. It is a plan that articulates measures for organisational innovation, digitalisation, sustainable financing and responsible public procurement. The Plan consolidates the social economy as a driver of inclusive employment, territorial competitiveness and sustainability, and strengthens social cohesion and the balanced development of the region.

MEASURES BY LES TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT

LOCAL ACTIONS 2021-2025

MÓSTOLES (MADRID): in 2023 the city council promoted the *MIEB (Móstoles Impact Entrepreneurship Booster)*, a business acceleration project that promotes collaborative exchange between long-established *Móstoles* companies and recently created start-ups.

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: *Diputación Contrata 2024* programme to improve the labour insertion and employability of groups in the province that have greater difficulties in accessing the labour market, in municipalities with less than 50,000 inhabitants.

3. DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY



INTRODUCTION

The decarbonisation of the Spanish economy is an essential condition for ensuring sustainable, competitive and resilient growth. Spain maintains a historically foreign-dependent energy structure, with an energy dependence of 68.4% in 2024 (MITECO), although this figure has decreased from 72.8% in 2015, driven by the expansion of renewable energies and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption. Macroeconomically, the energy transition is part of a production model where energy and emissions remain closely linked to the performance of carbon-intensive sectors: in 2023, transport accounted for 32.5% of emissions, followed by industry (18.6%), agriculture (12.2%) and electricity generation (11.4%), according to the National GHG Inventory.

Between 2015 and 2023, gross GHG emissions fell by 18.7%, from 332 to 270 MtCO₂eq, while primary energy consumption fell to 115,036 ktoe (-2.8% year-on-year). In parallel, renewable production has experienced structural growth: installed capacity has increased by 43.6% since 2015, with renewables accounting for 56.9% of gross electricity consumption and 24.9% of final energy consumption in 2023, although this is still far from the European target of 42.5% by 2030. This evolution has made it possible to reduce coal use to residual levels (2,829 ktoe), decrease natural gas consumption by 11.4 per cent, and increase renewable primary energy by 14.9 per cent.

Despite these advances, Spain continues to face significant structural challenges: high energy dependence on the EU-27 (approximately 40%), insufficient rates of renewable deployment in heating and transport, energy intensities still above European averages, and the need to strengthen investment in networks, storage, and electrification. Compliance with the PNIEC 2023-2030 requires a gradual increase in final energy savings (-1.3% per year until 2025 and up to -1.9% from 2028 onwards), the deployment of 19 GW of self-consumption, increased efficiency in the residential sector and ensuring a fair transition for vulnerable regions and sectors.

Overall, decarbonisation not only responds to a climate obligation, but also represents a strategic vector for economic modernisation, capable of reducing structural energy costs, improving industrial competitiveness, promoting new value chains (renewable hydrogen, storage, electrification) and generating skilled employment in line with the climate neutrality targets for 2050.

GROSS GHG EMISSIONS IN SPAIN

Since 2015, gross greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Spain have fallen by 18.7%, from around 332 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2015 to 270 million in 2023, according to the 2025 edition of the National Emissions Inventory (MITECO/UNFCCC).

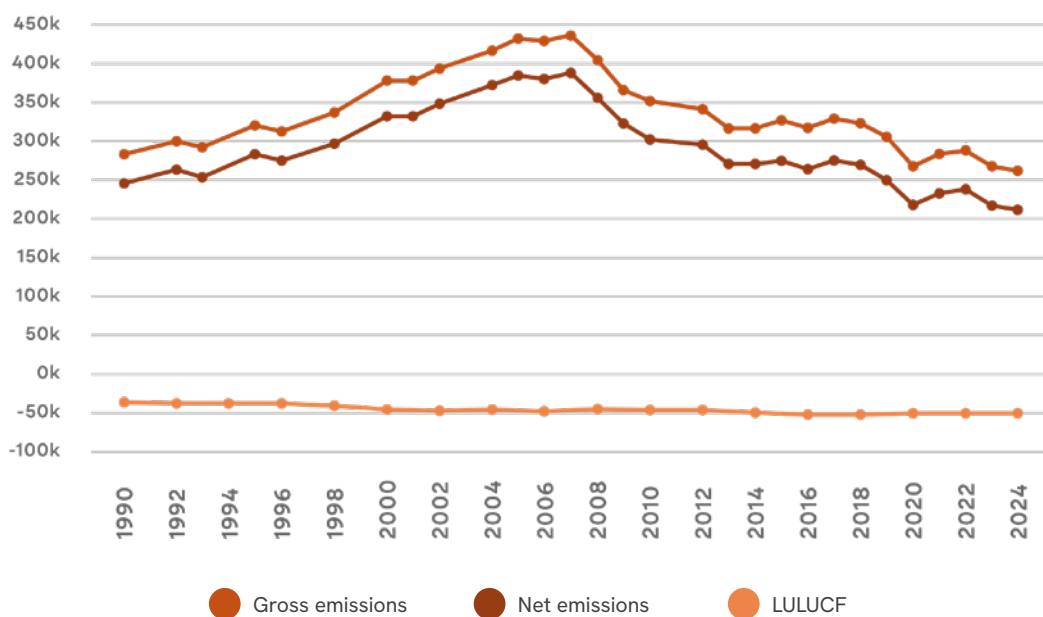
The minimum was reached in 2020 (269.8 Mt CO₂eq), marked by the pandemic, although emissions rebounded in 2021 and 2022 due to economic recovery and increased use of fossil fuels in a context of low hydroelectric production. In 2023, a further reduction was recorded, standing at around 270 Mt CO₂eq, which meant returning practically to the 2020 minimum.

ALLOCATION OF ETS/DIFFUSE EMISSIONS

	GHG EMISSIONS (kt CO ₂ -eq)		CONTRIBUTION IN 2024	CHANGES (%)
	2023	2024		2024 VS 2023
GROSS INVENTORY	269,968	268,518	100%	-0.5%

Source: Produced by the authors based on data from MITECO (National GHG Inventory, advance 2024).

EVOLUTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS EVOLUTION GHG EMISSIONS, KT CO₂-EQ



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from MITECO (National GHG Inventory, advance 2024).

CHALLENGE 2 / 3. DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

SPAIN'S ENERGY DEPENDENCE

The evolution of Spain's energy dependence between 2015 and 2023 shows a trend towards progressive reduction, although a high dependence on external sources, especially fossil fuels, still persists. It should be noted that Spanish production of this type of fuel is negligible, and only production from renewable and nuclear energy sources can be considered predominantly Spanish.

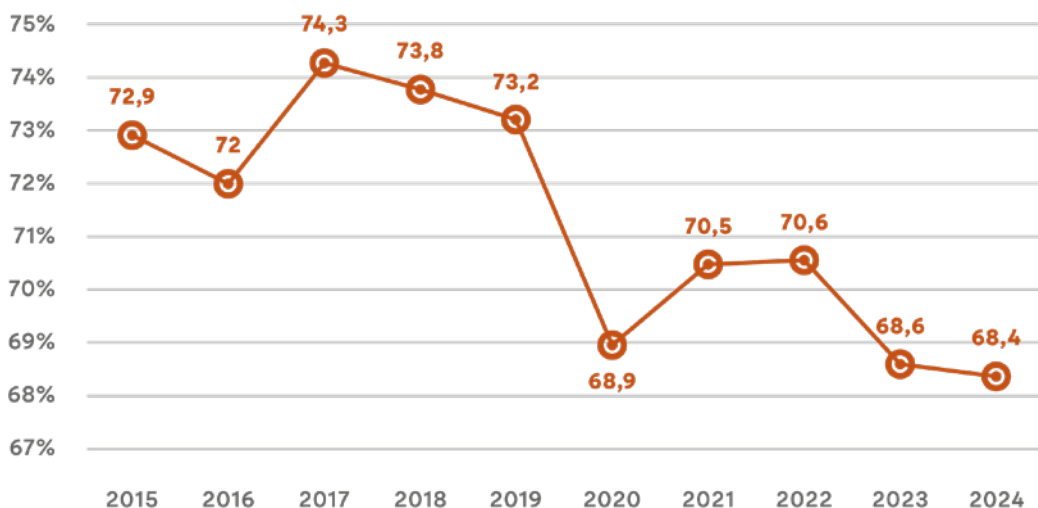
In 2015, primary energy consumption in Spain was approximately 122,507 ktoe (kilotonnes of oil equivalent). Energy dependence stood at around 72.8%, meaning that almost three quarters of the energy consumed came from abroad. Oil products dominated the energy mix, followed by natural gas and coal. Renewables and nuclear energy had a significant but still limited share compared to fossil fuels.

By 2020, primary energy consumption declined to 110,830 ktoe, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic that reduced economic activity and energy consumption. This led to a reduction in energy dependency to 68.9%, mainly due to the decline in consumption of petroleum products as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Natural gas maintained its weight, while coal fell significantly

due to decarbonisation policies. Renewables, especially solar and wind, increased their presence, and nuclear energy maintained its stability as a domestic source.

In 2024, primary energy consumption was 117,727 ktoe, an increase of 2.1% over the previous year. This rise is mainly due to the increased use of fossil fuels in the transport sector. Oil products accounted for 54,784 ktoe (5.6 compared to 2023), natural gas fell to 24,065 ktoe (-11.4 %) and coal fell again to 2,470, consolidating its residual role. On the other hand, renewable energies reached 22,480 ktoe (+5.4%)(+14.79%). In the same year, energy dependency decreased to 68.4%, confirming a significant reduction compared to 2015, although still high in European terms.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY DEPENDENCE IN SPAIN



Source: Produced the authors based on data from MITECO (Energy balance of Spain, Advance 2024).

RENEWABLE ENERGIES IN SPAIN

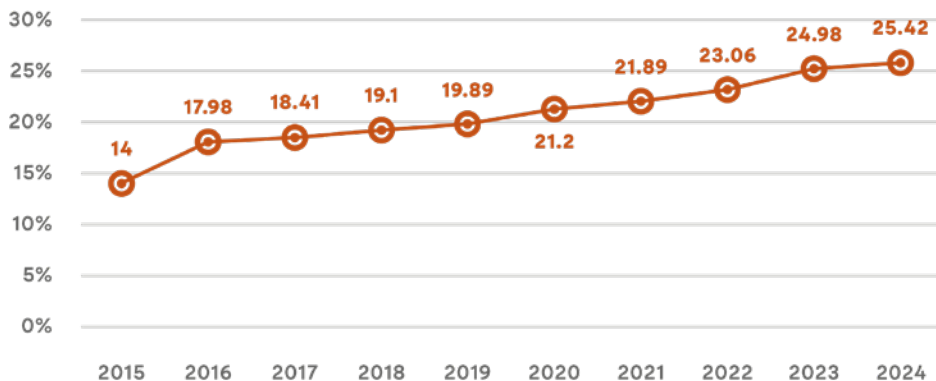
Since 2015, the share of renewable energies in gross final energy consumption in Spain has shown a positive evolution, albeit with variable growth rates. In 2015, the official figure stood at 14%, which started an upward trend compared to previous years.

In 2020, Spain exceeded the European target and reached 21.2% of renewable energy in gross final consumption. This progress was mainly due to the growth of renewable electricity generation, especially wind and solar, as well as improvements in energy efficiency and the use of biofuels in transport.

In 2021, the percentage remained at 21.8%, showing a stabilisation in growth. However, this rate was insufficient to meet the new European targets for 2030, which call for at least 42.5%, with an ambition to reach 45%. In 2023, the share of renewables in Spain's gross final energy consumption rose to 24.98% and in 2024 it reached 25.42%, consolidating an upward trend, albeit still moderate. This growth has been supported by the strong momentum of solar photovoltaic (23.8%), hydro (37.7%).

By sector, electricity is the most advanced in the energy transition, with electricity from renewable sources accounting for 59.7% of gross electricity consumption in 2024, while transport and heating still face significant challenges.

PERCENTAGE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY IN FINAL CONSUMPTION IN SPAIN



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

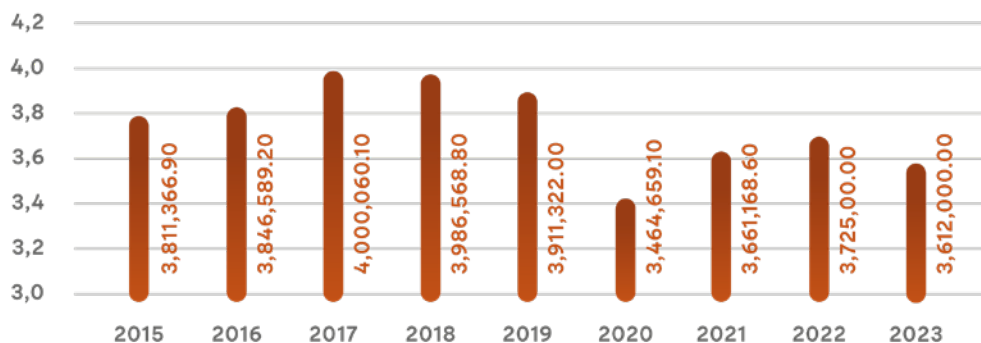
Since 2015, net household energy use in Spain has been variable, with a peak in 2017 and a cumulative reduction of 8.5% until 2021, driven by efficiency improvements, housing refurbishment and electrification. In 2022 there was a slight rebound, followed by a further drop in 2023, a reduction of 5% compared to 2019.

In this context, the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) 2023-2030 establishes a progressive energy savings path in final energy consumption and sets annual targets of 1.3% in 2024 and 2025, 1.5% in 2026 and 2027 and 1.9% between 2028 and 2030, taking as a reference the average consumption of 2016-2018. These targets reflect the need to consolidate a sustained reduction in energy demand in all sectors.

Transport, one of the largest consumer sectors, fell sharply in 2020 due to the pandemic, recovered in 2021 and continued to rise in 2022, before declining slightly in 2023. This development confirms the need to move towards more sustainable mobility. The manufacturing industry has shown more stability, with moderate fluctuations. After an increase in 2022, it reduced its consumption in 2023.

Overall, final energy consumption in Spain fell by 0.6% in 2023 despite economic growth, thanks to a decrease in the use of oil, gas and coal, and a 15% increase in renewable energies, especially biomass and biofuels. This development indicates a transition towards a cleaner energy matrix, with advances in sectors traditionally dependent on fossil fuels, such as transport and industry.

NET HOUSEHOLD ENERGY USE (TERAJULES)



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from INE and ECE (Results 2021).

NET ENERGY USE BY SECTOR IN SPAIN (2015-2023)

YEAR	TRANSPORT AND STORAGE (TJ)	MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY (TJ)
2015	572,841.50	1,309,572.00
2016	590,388.60	1,402,305.90
2017	620,299.80	1,421,163.10
2018	656,956.50	1,427,909.30
2019	657,732.50	1,413,625.10
2020	460,936.90	1,331,542.80
2021	558,805.60	1,380,710.50
2022	600,000.00	1,395,000.00
2023	580,000.00	1,350,000.00

Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

RESIDENTIAL ENERGY INTENSITY IN SPAIN

Residential energy intensity, measured as tonnes of oil equivalent (toe) consumed per dwelling, is a key indicator for assessing the efficiency of energy use at the household level. This metric combines aspects of consumption, housing stock typology, technological improvements and renovation actions.

In Spain, according to data from the ODYSSEE-MURE project, in which Spain participates through the Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving (IDAE), residential energy intensity has historically shown a decreasing trend between 2000 and 2022. The figure reflects improvements in energy efficiency, thermal insulation and changes in heating and air-conditioning systems. Specifically, it went from 0.8323 toe per dwelling in 2015 to 0.7549 toe per dwelling in 2022, consolidating a sustained reduction in energy consumption per household.

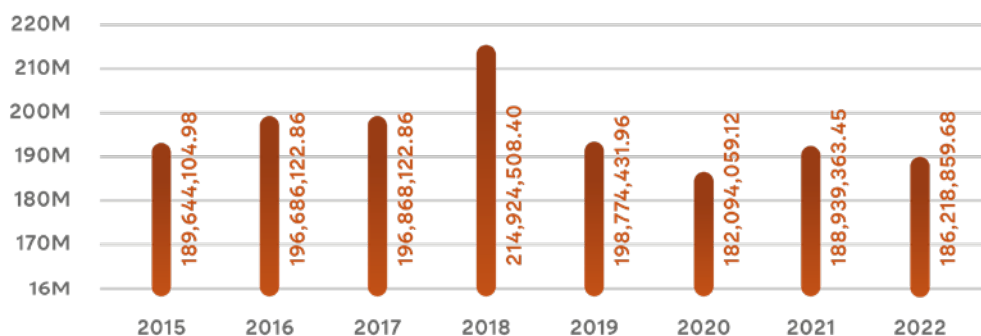
COLLECTIVE SELF-CONSUMPTION OF ELECTRICITY

Self-consumption of electricity has become one of the most important levers of the Spanish energy transition. According to data from the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO), the total installed capacity of self-consumption (individual and collective) reached 8.256 GW at the end of 2024, which is seventeen times the existing capacity in 2018 (484 MW). Currently, installed renewable energy capacity stands at 86.7 GW, meaning that an increase in self-consumption capacity, which is mainly renewable, allows for even more distributed generation, as these facilities have lower capacity than conventional ones.

The potential for collective development, especially in the multi-family residential sector (which accounts for more than 70% of primary dwellings), can be improved by facilitating its development.

In this sense, the existing regulation is being improved to facilitate its deployment and remove the barriers detected, with a view to achieving the objective of the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan 2023-2030 of having 19 GW of self-consumption by the end of the decade.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT



Source: FODAF (Global Footprint Network). Filtered by Ecological Footprint vs Biocapacity (gha).

The ecological footprint measures the biologically productive area required to supply the resources consumed by a population and to assimilate its waste, especially carbon emissions. Between 2018 and 2022, Spain's ecological footprint fell by 13.4%, from 214.92 million global hectares (Gha) to 186.22 million. These developments reflect significant progress in the integration of renewable energies, increased energy efficiency and the adoption of environmental measures. Despite this positive trend, the 2022 value represented 94.68% of the 2017 level (196.69 million Gha), indicating that the steady improvement is still insufficient to reverse the underlying ecological imbalance.

During the same period, national biocapacity, i.e. the land's capacity to generate renewable resources and absorb waste, remained well below demand. In 2018 it reached its highest value at 82.2 million Gha, still far from covering a footprint that is almost three times that figure and evidence of a structural imbalance.

In the case of Spain, qualitative data obtained through more than 77,000 ecological footprint calculations carried out between 2018 and 2021 allow us to identify differentiated consumption profiles that reflect the degree of sustainability of lifestyles. The most sustainable profile, called "frugal", is represented by people who combine moderate use of air conditioning, active mobility (cycling or walking), low meat consumption and high involvement in recycling. This group would need less than 1.25 planets to maintain their lifestyle. At the opposite extreme, the "wasteful" profile, common in high-income households and single-family homes, is characterised by intensive car use, excessive air conditioning, frequent consumption of processed products and little involvement in waste separation, requiring 4-5 planets to maintain their way of life. These typologies underline that, beyond national averages, there are important differences in daily habits with, in some cases, high environmental impacts.

At the international level, Spain has strengthened its commitment to climate ambition by signing a series of initiatives and adhering to a set of declarations promoted at COP 30 in Belém (Brazil). These include the following: the *Belem Declaration on Hunger, Poverty, and Human-Centered Climate Action*, the *Call to Action on Integrated Fire Management and Wildfire Resilience*, the *Global Initiative for Information Integrity on Climate Change* and the *Make Climate COP Presidencies Gender-Balanced Declaration*.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 3. DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Installed potential of marine renewable electricity in Spain.	↑	↓	Growth from 2019 with a fall in 2023.
Cumulative electrical power.	↑	↑	Significant increase in solar and wind.
Gross GHG emissions in Spain.	↓	↓	GHG emissions have decreased by 7.64 compared to 2022.
Renewable energy in gross final energy consumption.	↗	↗	Particularly noticeable progress since 2020.
Renewable energy in gross final energy consumption electricity sector.	↑	↑	Main driver of renewables expansion.
Net domestic energy use.	↘	↓	Significant drop in 2020.
Net energy use in the transport and storage sector.	↘	↓	Sharp drop in 2020 due to the pandemic.
Net energy use in the manufacturing sector.	↗	↗	Greater stability than other sectors.
Ecological footprint.	↘	↘	Major peak in 2018.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.3: DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

42

Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 32% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

Indicator: Percentage reduction in GHG emissions compared to 1990.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

SDG 13.3: Improve education and awareness of climate change mitigation.

SDG 12.2: Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

43

Achieve 48% renewable energy in final energy consumption by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of renewable energy in final energy consumption.

SDG 7.2: Substantially increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

SDG 9.4: Modernise infrastructure and converting industries to make them sustainable, using resources more efficiently.

44

Achieve a 43% energy efficiency improvement (in terms of final energy), by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage improvement in energy efficiency compared to current levels.

SDG 7.3: Double the global rate of energy efficiency improvement.

SDG 12.2: Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

45

Reduce energy dependence by up to 50% by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage reduction in energy dependence compared to current levels.

SDG 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

SDG 7.2: Increase renewable energy.

SDG 9.4: Modernise infrastructure and converting industries to make them sustainable, using resources more efficiently.

46

Reduce residential energy intensity to 0.66 toe/dwelling by 2030.

Indicator: Residential energy intensity.

SDG 7.3: Improve energy efficiency.

SDG 11.6: Reduce environmental impacts in urban settings

SDG 12.2: Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

47

Reach 19 GW of installed capacity in electricity self-consumption by 2030.

Indicator: Total power (MW) registered in the Administrative Register of Self-consumption of Electricity (MITECO).

SDG 7.2: Significantly increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix.

SDG 7.1: Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

SDG 12.2: Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 9.4: Modernise infrastructure and converting industries to make them sustainable, using resources more efficiently.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT THE DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY IN SPAIN

The decarbonisation of the economy is a strategic priority within the Country Challenge, which seeks an economic system that generates well-being and social and environmental justice, guiding the State's action towards a fairer, more resilient and sustainable model. Within this framework, the General State Administration has promoted a set of **regulatory and strategic measures** aimed at transforming the production system, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and accelerating the energy transition.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) 2023-2030** is the Spanish government's strategy for moving towards a sustainable energy transition. It sets targets such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 32% compared to 1990, achieving a 48% share of renewable energy in final consumption and improving energy efficiency by 43%. To achieve this, it prioritises the reduction of consumption in residential and industrial sectors through electrification, renewables and reduced external dependence. The projected annual final energy savings path is 1.3% in 2024 and 2025, 1.5% in 2026 and 2027, and 1.9% between 2028 and 2030, based on average consumption in 2016-2018.

The **National Building Renovation Plan (PNRE)**, drawn up in compliance with Article 3 of **Directive (EU) 2024/1275 on the energy performance of buildings**, is also noteworthy in the field of construction. This plan, which is aligned with the PNIEC, establishes a trajectory of energy renovation of the residential building stock that achieves the EU targets of reducing the primary energy consumption of the residential building stock compared to 2020 by 16% in 2030 and 20-22% in 2035, with the aim of transforming them into zero emission buildings by 2050.

With regard to self-consumption, the objective of reaching 19 GW of self-consumption by 2030, as set out in the aforementioned PNIEC, is considered noteworthy. To move towards this goal, several recent actions have been promoted, such as the regulatory review to encourage collective self-consumption in 2025 and the campaign "People with their own energy", launched by the Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving, which highlights its individual and collective benefits.

Also relevant is Spain's **Long Term Decarbonisation Strategy (ELP 2050)**, currently under preparation, which sets out the roadmap for achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Its main objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 90% compared to 1990, with the remaining 10% being absorbed by natural sinks such as forests.

Furthermore, within the framework of the just transition, the first Just Transition Strategy has been rolled out, aimed at ensuring that the transformation towards a low-carbon economy is equitable and generates social and economic benefits in the affected territories. Actions have focused primarily on accompanying the closure processes of coal mining, thermal power plants and nuclear power plants that have already been shut down, with the aim of mitigating their socio-economic impacts and taking advantage of the opportunities arising from the transition to promote the productive diversification of the territories.

In this context, the **Framework Agreement for a Just Transition of Coal Mining and the Sustainable Development of the Mining Regions (2019-2027)** has been approved, which articulates a set of social and employment support measures for affected workers, plans for the environmental restoration of degraded areas and economic aid aimed at promoting business projects and employment-generating activities in the mining regions.

Likewise, the **Agreement for a Just Energy Transition for thermal power plants in closure** establishes support mechanisms for workers and impacted territories and defines a tripartite governance framework between energy companies, trade union organisations and the public administration. This framework makes it possible to promote outplacement and retraining processes, as well as the development of new industrial and renewable energy projects, backed by investment commitments from the companies owning the facilities.

Work is currently underway on the development of the second Just Transition Strategy, with a 2030 horizon, to help respond to the new challenges of decarbonisation.

The **Self-Consumption Strategy** promotes distributed renewable generation, with a target of 19 GW installed by 2030.

The **Energy Storage Strategy** aims to reach a storage capacity of around 20 GW in 2030 and 30 GW in 2050 to ensure the stability of the electricity system. The **Renewable Hydrogen Roadmap** envisages 4 GW of electrolysers by 2030 and promotes their use in industry and transport. The **Biogas Roadmap** sets a target of 10.41 TWh per year, using organic waste. In the marine field, the **Roadmap for the development of offshore wind and marine energy** positions Spain as a technological and industrial benchmark.

The **Electricity Transmission Network Plan for 2030** envisages an investment of around €13.6 billion by the end of the decade, aimed at meeting the country's needs and fulfilling the objectives of the 2023-2030 Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC), giving priority to industrial projects, territorial structuring, housing development and electric mobility.

Similarly, the **Long-Term Strategy for Energy Rehabilitation in Buildings**, in coordination with various aid programmes (specifically PREE and PREE 5000), and the line of promotion of self-consumption, included in **Royal Decree 477/2021, which approves the direct granting of aid to the autonomous communities and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla for the implementation of various incentive programmes linked to self-consumption and storage, with renewable energy sources.**

Finally, the **National Action Plan for the Decarbonisation of Maritime Transport (2026-2030)** is worth highlighting. It promotes the reduction of emissions in the sector through a programme of public aid for the renovation and conversion of existing ships, the construction of new low-emission ships, and the development of pilot projects with renewable fuels of non-biological origin (such as ammonia or methanol), with annual monitoring of results.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

In the quest to promote the decarbonisation of the economy, **Royal Decree 818/2018**, which transposes Directive (EU) 2016/2284, establishes targets and programmes to reduce emissions of SO₂, NO_x, NH₃, NMVOC and PM_{2.5} in Spain. It regulates national commitments, sectoral programmes, monitoring, inventories and penalties, aligns with European legislation and promotes the protection of health and the environment through the monitoring and assessment of emissions.

In addition, Spain has established two key regulations to advance energy efficiency and sustainability. **Royal Decree 960/2020** regulates the economic regime for renewable energies through competitive auctions that grant a long-term fixed price for the energy produced, which incentivises investment in clean installations. Meanwhile, **Royal Decree 736/2020** requires the installation of individual metering systems in buildings with centralised heating systems, whenever feasible, so that each user pays according to their actual consumption.

To facilitate collective self-consumption of electricity, the **Draft Royal Decree on the promotion of collective self-consumption**, submitted for public hearing in October 2025, proposes several measures. Among the most relevant are the new modalities of shared surpluses, the extension of the maximum distance between generation and consumption from 2 km to 5 km, and the creation of the figure of the self-consumption manager, who will be able to represent the associated consumers and facilitate the management of the system. These measures seek to foster local energy communities, optimise the use of urban rooftops and promote citizen participation in distributed generation, thereby contributing to climate neutrality and emission reduction goals.

Finally, Royal Decree 214/2025 has introduced several relevant measures for companies with more than 250 employees that are public interest entities or have intense economic activity for two consecutive years (measured in assets above €20 million or turnover above €40 million). These obligations also apply to state public sector entities. The measures introduced for these organisations, applicable as of 12 June 2025, are: the obligation to calculate their carbon footprint, the preparation and publication of a 5-year emission reduction plan and the registration of the organisation in the state Carbon Footprint Register.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO ADVANCE IN THE DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: the *Strategic Plan for the Energy Development* of Castilla La Mancha, approved in 2022, aims to move towards a sustainable, efficient energy model based on renewable energies, in order to achieve 100% renewable electricity generation.

BASQUE COUNTRY: The *Basque Ecodesign Center* is a public-private alliance that brings together large industrial companies to promote eco-design and the circular economy in order to generate innovative knowledge that can be transferred to the business fabric.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CANARY ISLANDS: implementation of the *Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy 2025* in road infrastructures, to make roads and associated facilities energy self-sufficient. The lines of action include, among others: efficient lighting (LED and remote management), installation of photovoltaics on embankments, canopies and auxiliary buildings for self-consumption in tunnels and maintenance areas.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: in 2025 has incorporated *environmental criteria in the contracting of road works* and has prioritised production plants close to construction sites. This measure reduces travel, energy consumption and associated emissions. It also promotes local suppliers and execution with a lower carbon footprint.

CATALONIA: *carbon budget 2026-2030*, with the aim of reducing emissions by 31% in 2030. This initiative assigns sectoral boundaries and promotes efficiency and green innovation.

MEASURES BY THE LES TO ADVANCE THE DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

COUNCIL OF MAJORCA: the *Unlock Project*, launched in 2021, incorporates the provision of different training actions so that SMEs can participate in the green hydrogen economy.

BENIDORM (ALICANTE): in 2021, Benidorm Town Council approved the *renovation of the Singular Urban Scene Lighting*. The project consists primarily of replacing old luminaires with LED technology, which has a much longer life and is significantly more energy efficient.

4. INNOVATION AND VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES



INTRODUCTION

Innovation and the development of industries with high added value are key elements for the competitiveness and modernisation of the Spanish production model. Spain continues to increase its investment in R&D. According to the INE, domestic spending on R&D reached 1.49% of GDP in 2023, the highest figure since records began, after three consecutive years of growth and a cumulative increase of 69.8% since 2015. However, this level remains below the EU-27 average (2.3%) and far from the 3% target for 2030, highlighting a structural gap that limits the country's productivity and technological capacity.

Recent growth has been driven by both the public and private sectors: in 2023, business investment accounted for 0.85% of GDP, while public administration and higher education together reached 0.65%, supported by funds from the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism. At the same time, the high-tech and medium-high-tech sectors have shown significant dynamism. In 2023, they achieved an aggregate turnover of €354.307 billion (+6.6% year-on-year) and generated added value of €104.480 billion. In the field of technological services, ICT and R&D activities grew by 10.3%, consolidating their strategic role in the digital transition.

The business structure also reflects this evolution. The number of high-tech and medium-high-tech companies has increased from 73,555 in 2015 to 97,917 in 2023, with a particularly notable increase in high-tech services (from 52,845 to 77,516 companies). This expansion helps to strengthen key sectors, such as biotechnology, health and pharmaceuticals, electric vehicles, electronics, aerospace and artificial intelligence, which have the capacity to drive industrial supply chains and regional innovation ecosystems.

Despite these advances, structural barriers remain, including insufficient knowledge transfer between universities and businesses, marked regional disparities (Madrid, Catalonia, and the Basque Country account for most R&D spending), a shortage of highly qualified talent, and difficulties in absorbing funds in regions with less technological specialisation. These elements limit the impact of innovation on total factor productivity and on the sustainable re-industrialisation of the country.

Accelerating the transition towards a more innovative industrial fabric requires consolidating a stable financing framework, strengthening public-private collaboration, reinforcing industrial policy oriented towards strategic sectors and promoting smart specialisation strategies. Only with a robust scientific-technological ecosystem and high value-added industries will it be possible to ensure inclusive, green and digital economic growth, capable of placing Spain in a leading position in the new global environment.

DOMESTIC R&D EXPENDITURE IN RELATION TO GDP BY YEAR AND SECTOR OF EXECUTION

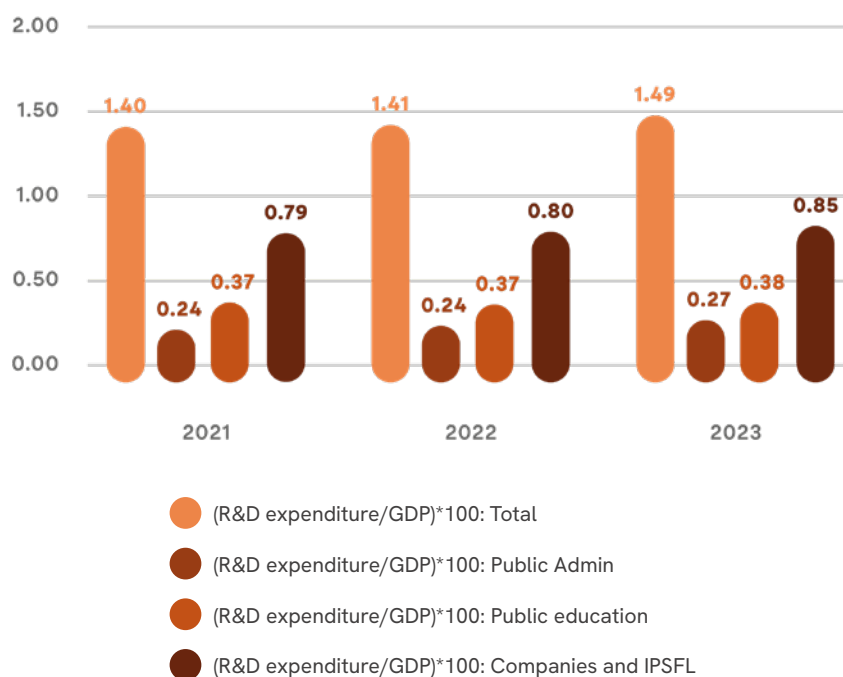
In recent years, domestic R&D investment in Spain has shown sustained growth (from 1.40% of GDP in 2021 to 1.49% in 2023), confirming a positive trend although still far from the 3% target set for 2030. This increase has been driven by both public and private investment, as well as by the effect of European funds linked to the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism.

DOMESTIC R&D EXPENDITURE IN RELATION TO GDP BY YEAR AND SECTOR OF IMPLEMENTATION			
INDICATOR	2021	2022	2023
(R&D expenditure/GDP)*100: Total	1.40	1.41	1.49
(R&D expenditure/GDP)*100: Public Administration	0.24	0.24	0.27
(R&D expenditure/GDP)*100: Higher education	0.37	0.37	0.38
(R&D expenditure/GDP)*100: Companies and IPSFL	0.79	0.80	0.85

Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

Between 2015 and 2023, investment in R&D in Spain experienced sustained growth of 69.8%, rising from €13.172 billion to €22.37915 billion. This progress has been driven by an increased involvement of all actors in the science, technology and innovation system. Thus, public investment increased by 58.4% during the period, reaching €3.992 billion, while the private sector increased its contribution by 82.3%, consolidating its position as the main source of R&D funding with €12.61574 billion. For its part, higher education increased its investment by 54.1% to 5.70866 billion. This dynamism reflects not only a recovery after years of stagnation following the 2008 crisis, but also the effect of public policies aimed at strengthening the role of R&D as a driver of economic transformation, as well as the impact of European financial instruments such as the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism. External financing also grew, now accounting for 9%, reflecting greater international outreach.

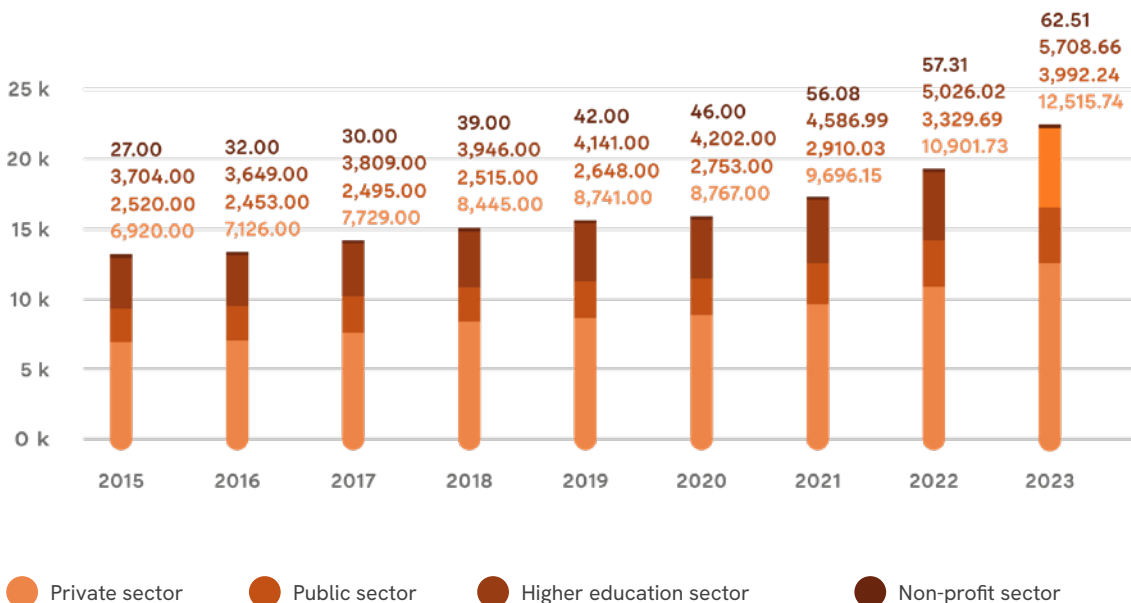
INTERNAL R&D EXPENDITURE IN RELATION TO GDP BY YEAR AND SECTOR OF IMPLEMENTATION



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

On the other hand, the investment effort continues to be below the EU-27 average (2.3% of GDP in 2022 compared to 1.49% in Spain), and collaboration between universities, research centres and companies is still limited, which hinders the effective transfer of knowledge to the productive fabric. In addition, large territorial inequalities persist in terms of absorption capacity and technological specialisation, with most investment concentrated in regions such as Madrid, Catalonia and the Basque Country.

INTERNAL EXPENDITURE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D) BY IMPLEMENTING SECTOR



Source: Produced by the authors based on INE.

COMPANIES IN HIGH-TECH SECTORS

According to the National Statistics Institute (INE), high-tech sectors include manufacturing and service activities with a high component of innovation and development. In the manufacturing industry, the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, computer, electronic, optical and aerospace machinery products stand out. Also considered medium-high technology are the chemical industry, arms manufacturing, electrical equipment, vehicles, various machinery and medical supplies. Services include those related to information and communication technologies (ICT), such as programming, telecommunications, computer services, audiovisual media, and especially research and development (R&D), which is key to the generation of technological knowledge.

In 2023, high-tech and medium-high-tech companies achieved a turnover of 354,307.2 million euros, an increase of 6.6% compared to the previous year. In 2023, high-tech and medium-high-tech companies achieved a turnover of €354.3072 billion, an increase of 6.6% over the previous year. Meanwhile, high-tech service sector companies had a turnover of €110.0641 billion, 10.3% more than the previous year.

The number of companies in the high-tech sector was 73,195 in 2015 and 97,917 in 2023.

NUMBER OF COMPANIES		
	2015	2023
High-tech manufacturing sector	2,820	2,548
Medium-high-tech manufacturing sector	17,890	17,853
High-tech services	52,845	77,516
Total High-tech	55,665	80,064
Total High and medium tech	73,555	97,917

Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 4. INNOVATION AND VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Total domestic research and development (R&D) expenditure.	↑	↑	Sustained increase for the whole period.
High-tech companies.	↑	↑	Increase in the number of (service) enterprises and their turnover.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.4: INNOVATION AND VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES

48

Increase public and private investment in R&D&I to 3% of GDP (ensuring a public minimum of 1.25%) by 2030, aligned with the objectives of the PEICTI 2024-2027.

Indicator: Internal R&D expenditure relative to GDP at market prices.

SDG 9.5: Increase scientific research, improving the technological capacity of industrial sectors, promoting innovation.

SDG 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

SDG 17.6: Improve international cooperation in and access to science, technology and innovation.

SDG 17.17: Foster effective partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.

49

Increase the number of enterprises in high-tech sectors by 35% by 2030 compared to 2015.

Indicator: High-tech indicators.

SDG 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 9.2: Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation.

SDG 9.5: Improve scientific research and technological capacity in the industrial sectors, promoting innovation.

SDG 9.b: Support the development of domestic technologies and encourage innovation in key industrial sectors.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO BOOST INNOVATION AND GENERATE VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES IN SPAIN

Innovation and the development of **value-added industries** are central elements for modernising the productive fabric and generating opportunities in leading sectors. Against this backdrop, the Spanish Government has promoted a set of **regulatory and strategic measures** to encourage research, technology transfer, digitisation and reindustrialisation in key sectors.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **State Plan for Scientific, Technical and Innovation Research (PEICTI) 2024-2027** stands out as the main instrument for planning R&D&I in Spain. It is structured into **vertical programmes** (human resources, research, transfer, innovation and infrastructure) and **cross-cutting programmes** (internationalisation, regional cooperation and strategic lines). Its objectives include **attracting and retaining talent, improving scientific quality, boosting knowledge transfer and strengthening public-private collaboration**, in line with the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy 2021-2027.

The Spanish **Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy 2021-2027** also provides a framework for strengthening the national R&D&I system in line with *Horizon Europe*, with the aim of doubling investment in research, improving the situation of scientific personnel, promoting public-private collaboration and knowledge transfer, promoting gender equality and responding to strategic challenges such as health, ecological transition and digitalisation.

In addition, Spain is promoting the transformation of its scientific and technical system with measures aimed at sustainability and innovation. The **Roadmap for Sustainable Management of Mineral Raw Materials** promotes a more efficient extractive industry aligned with climate goals. Meanwhile, the **Science and Innovation Emergency Plan** mobilises resources to strengthen research, attract talent and support business R&D&I, especially in the wake of the health crisis.

At the same time, progress is being made towards a more transparent model with the **National Open Science Strategy**, which promotes free access to scientific results and collaboration between researchers, and with the future **Statute for Teaching and Research Staff**, which seeks to consolidate a stable academic career, reduce precariousness and dignify the working conditions of university teaching staff, in line with the LOSU.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The most important regulatory tool is the **Organic Law 2/2023 on the University System (LOSU)**, which modernises the Spanish university system with the aim of improving educational quality, equity and institutional governance. Among its main measures are the **reduction of temporary teaching staff, the promotion of inclusion and equality**, and the **reinforcement of public funding**, with a minimum investment of 1% of GDP. It also promotes **knowledge transfer, lifelong learning** and recognises student participation in university life.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO BOOST INNOVATION AND GENERATE VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES IN SPAIN

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CANTABRIA: the *Law on Science, Research and Knowledge Transfer* establishes a regulatory framework to promote scientific and technological research in the region and fosters collaboration between research centres, universities and companies.

NAVARRÉ: *COMUNAL* is a social innovation project that seeks to combat depopulation and promote socio-economic development in rural areas. It is based on the creation of local entrepreneurship ecosystems, which promote initiatives led by the local population, especially young people.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: The *Andalusian Strategy for a Sustainable Blue Economy Horizon 2028*, approved in April 2025, seeks to promote an economic development model based on the sustainability of marine and coastal resources.

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: The *Castilla-La Mancha Horizon 2025 Health Plan* is committed to retaining research talent, focusing on priority lines of health and cutting-edge medicine, and generating standardised data records to measure and improve health outcomes.

NAVARRÉ: the region plans to approve its new *Science and Technology Plan 2026-2030* in 2025-2026. This plan will constitute the roadmap for boosting applied research, public-private collaboration and technology transfer, with special emphasis on high added value sectors such as sustainable automotive, personalised health and clean energy.

MEASURES BY LES TO BOOST INNOVATION AND GENERATE ADDED-VALUE INDUSTRIES IN SPAIN

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÁCERES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: in 2024 launched the *Network of Territorial Innovation Centres Circular FAB*, as a network of spaces to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the rural areas of the province.

HOSPITALET DE LLOBREGAT (BARCELONA): launched its *Local Digitalisation Strategy LH6.0* in 2021. Its aim was to improve the relationship with citizens through the use of digital channels and to promote the digital transformation of the local productive fabric.

5. PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HORIZON



INTRODUCTION

The Spanish production model is highly fragmented, with a majority presence of micro-enterprises, which represent more than 95% of the total. This structure conditions average productivity, innovation capacity and economic resilience, especially in comparison with other European countries where small and medium-sized enterprises have a larger size and international presence.

On the labour market, there is a higher concentration of employment in lower value-added sectors, together with high temporary and involuntary part-time work. The weight of the services sector is dominant, with a low industrial presence (18.2 % of employment generated in Spain compared to the EU average of 22.1 %). Likewise, economic activity is concentrated in the main urban centres, such as Madrid and Barcelona, while the less densely populated territories have lower levels of infrastructure, financing and digitalisation, which affects territorial and demographic cohesion.

The rate of preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste in 2023 reaches 42.9% (below the European target of 55% in 2025). For more complex waste, collection and traceability systems must be strengthened if Spain is to avoid backsliding on its environmental commitments.

Food waste remains high with a downward trend since 2020. Awareness campaigns, the increase in the perceived value of food due to inflation, and habits such as better planning or the use of lunch boxes are beginning to consolidate a culture of greater food use in households.

Overcoming the limitations associated with a model of labour and sectoral concentration will require strengthening the industrial fabric with a model based on digitalisation, innovation and circular economy.

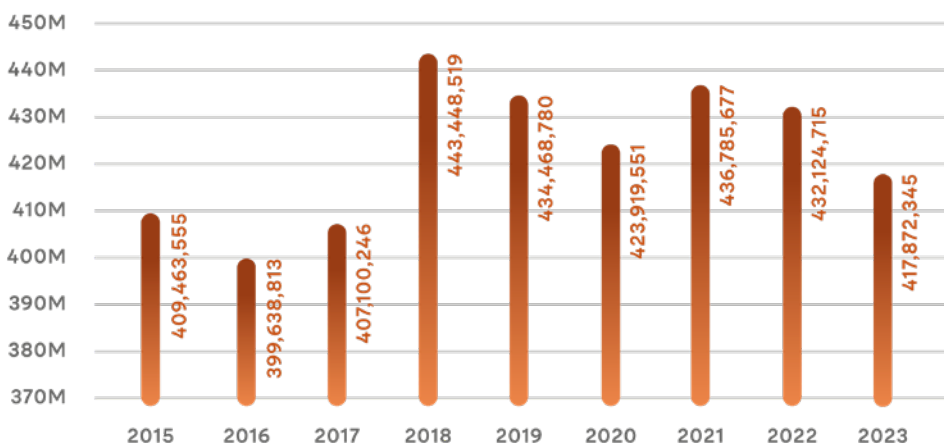
NATIONAL CONSUMPTION OF MATERIALS (CNM)

Since 2015, the National Consumption of Materials (CNM) in Spain has shown an oscillating evolution, with a peak of 443.45 million tonnes in 2018 and a subsequent reduction to 442.87 million tonnes in 2024, reflecting both the effects of the economic slowdown and advances in material efficiency.

At the same time, the productivity of materials, an indicator included in the Spain Circular 2030 and measured by INE, has shown an irregular trajectory over the last decade. Although showing moderate improvements over 2015 levels, the latest available data (2024) shows a decline of 2.4% and evidence that the decoupling between economic growth and material use remains limited.

Consequently, even if the CNM remains relatively stable and there are occasional signs of efficiency gains, productivity developments indicate that Spain has not yet achieved a consistent reduction in material use per unit of value generated. This underlines the need to reinforce policies focusing on eco-design, product durability, innovation and circular business models, beyond the traditional waste management approach.

**NATIONAL CONSUMPTION OF MATERIALS (CNM)
(UNIT: TONNES)**



Source: Produced by the authors based on INE.

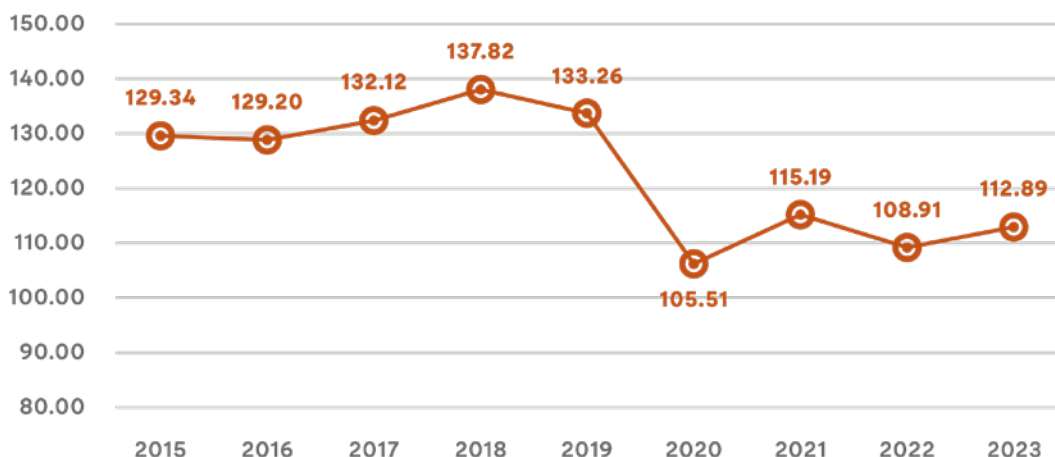
While Spain has made significant progress since the approval of the Spanish Circular Economy Strategy in 2020 and has improved its material productivity, important challenges remain to achieve a real decoupling between economic growth and material resource use. An example of this is that the circularity rate is below the European average.

While the role of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan and the PERTE on Circular Economy are recognised as key investment levers, the rate of preparation for reuse and recycling of municipal waste is still low (43% in 2023, far from the target of 55% by 2025), and landfilling of waste remains high compared to European targets, which set a maximum of 10% by 2035. Furthermore, the report points out that national strategies have focused too much on waste management and have neglected key areas such as eco-design or eco-innovation, which are essential for a truly circular economy. Consequently, the progress observed in material productivity should be read with caution, as quantitative improvements coexist with qualitative limitations in the transformation of the Spanish productive model.

WASTE GENERATED IN SPAIN

In 2023, the Spanish economy generated 112.7 million tonnes of waste, a decrease of 5.4% compared to the previous year. Of this, 109.4 million tonnes was non-hazardous waste and 3.3 million tonnes was hazardous waste. The most significant categories were mineral waste (43.4 million tonnes), mixed waste (37.8 million tonnes) and animal and vegetable waste (9.1 million tonnes). The activities that contributed most to waste generation were construction (32.9% of the total) and water supply, sanitation, waste management and remediation (21.4%).

**AGGREGATE WASTE GENERATION BY WASTE TYPE, HAZARDOUSNESS AND SECTOR OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
UNITS: MILLION TONNES**



Source: Produced by the authors based on INE. Total waste generation for the period 2015 - 2023.

In 2023, 49.9 million tonnes of waste were recycled in Spain, representing 53.9% of the total waste treated by waste management companies. Although this figure represents a slight decrease of 0.8% compared to 2021, it maintains recycling as the main destination of managed waste, ahead of landfilling (29.1%), backfilling operations (14%) and incineration (2.9%). Furthermore, compared to 2016, the volume of waste recycled increased by almost 9.4 million tonnes, which is equivalent to an improvement of 17.6 percentage points in relative terms and reflects positive developments in material recovery practices.

Likewise, part of the waste generated in Spain, as is the case with other countries in the world, is exported to third countries (mainly to countries in the Global South), especially in streams such as plastic waste and waste electrical and electronic equipment. The management of these flows poses challenges in terms of traceability, control and environmental safeguards, as treatment standards and monitoring capacities may differ between countries. This reality highlights the importance of having homogeneous information and monitoring mechanisms to assess the final destination and treatment conditions of exported waste, in line with the principles of the circular economy.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL TREATMENT OF MUNICIPAL WASTE BY TYPE OF TREATMENT

Between 2021 and 2022, the municipal waste recycling rate in Spain experienced a slight decline (from 43.7% to 43.1%), suggesting a possible slowdown in waste management progress. This decrease was accompanied by an increase in the share of landfilled waste, which rose from 45.67% to 46.68%, while incineration decreased slightly to 10.22%. While separate collection continued to grow (from 5.6 to 5.77 million tonnes), mixed waste also increased to 17.88 million tonnes.

YEARS	RECYCLED (%)	LANDFILL (%)	INCINERATION (%)
2022	43.1	46.67	10.22
2021	43.72	45.67	10.60
2020	40.39	49.49	10.12
2019	37.96	51.05	10.99
2018	34.79	53.61	11.60
2017	36.11	51.16	12.73
2016	33.86	54.12	12.02
2015	29.79	57.76	12.45

Source: Produced by the authors based on INE.

In terms of waste collected, household and similar waste grew slightly, both paper, cardboard and bulky waste as well as glass and plastics. For example, according to INE data, waste collected from paper and cardboard increased from 1,504,538 in 2021 to 1,507,886 in 2022. These developments reflect both progress and persistent challenges in the waste management system, and recycling infrastructure and circular economy strategies need to be strengthened to avoid stagnation in key sustainability indicators.

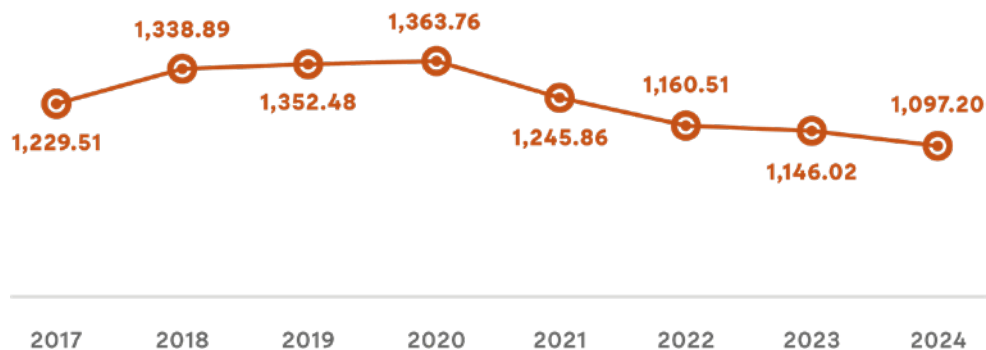
The slight drop in the recycling rate can also be understood in the light of the operational limitations of the current system. Although separate collection continues to increase, in 2023 more than 76% of municipal waste was still collected in mixed form, which compromises the efficiency of subsequent recycling. A significant part of the mixed waste arriving at mechanical-biological treatment or triage plants ends up as rejects destined for landfill or incineration, due to the low quality of the recoverable material. In contrast, sorting and composting plants treating waste from separate collection have a significantly lower proportion of rejects, which underlines the need to improve both separation at source and the quality of the material collected.

In addition, the treatment of specific waste streams such as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) shows a specialised infrastructure that still has room for improvement. As a result, the national collection rate was 40.27% of the volume placed on the market, far from the European target of 65%, with wide differences between categories, particularly the low collection rate for monitors, lamps and small appliances.

FOOD WASTE AND FOOD WASTE PREVENTION

In 2024, Spain wasted a total of 1,125.23 million kilos/litres of food and beverages, which represents a reduction of 4.4% compared to the previous year. This volume includes both in-household and non-household waste and is equivalent to 3.7% of the total food and beverages purchased in the country. The trend of the total volume wasted since 2020 is decreasing.

TOTAL VOLUME (MILLION KILOGRAM-LITRES)



Source: Report on food waste in Spain 2024 Alimentos de España. Directorate General for Food. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

CHALLENGE 2 / 5. PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HORIZON

Within the household, waste amounted to 1,097.2 million kg/litres. Households have reduced their waste by 48.9 million kilos or litres compared to 2023. 97.5% of waste is produced in households. When looking at the overall volume of waste, unused products, i.e. those that are thrown away exactly as they were bought, still account for the largest share of rubbish, totalling 851.52 million kilos or litres in 2024, representing almost 78% of the total. This is 3 times more than recipe waste, those foods or beverages that are wasted after having been used or prepared in some way at home. In per capita terms, around 23.59 kilos or litres of food and beverages are wasted per person within each household during 2024, which is 3.9% less than the waste generated per capita in 2023, equivalent to almost one less kilo or litre wasted per person (0.964 kg or litres). While unprocessed food and beverages as a whole performed well, this was not the case for fruit, which accounts for 32.4% of unused food and beverages waste and whose wastage volume grew by 1.6% compared to 2023. There is a better use of bread, vegetables and wine with 7.28 million kilos or litres less wasted, as opposed to a worse management of fruit, liquid milk and pasta. Overall, including fruit, vegetables and greens, fruit and vegetables accounted for almost half of the waste within households, at 46.2% in 2024.

Food waste outside the home accounts for 2.5% of the total volume of food and beverages we waste, as most of the food waste generated by consumers takes place at home. During 2024 the amount wasted in extra-domestic consumption corresponds to 28,031 million kilos or litres, which shows a reduction of 8.8 % compared to 2023 and a reduction of 20.7 % compared to 2020. The volume of waste recorded in the establishment was 11.3% lower than in 2023. Although half of the volume wasted comes from the establishment, it should be borne in mind that it is also the main place of consumption: almost 7 out of every 10 kilos or litres consumed outside the home are from meals in bars, restaurants, cafés or similar. These figures underscore the urgent need to promote responsible practices within the HORECA sector as well, and to foster a culture of mindful consumption beyond the home.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 5. PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HORIZON

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
National Consumption of Materials (CNM).	↑	↓	Maximum tonnes in 2018.
Waste generated in Spain.	↓	↓	Sharp drop in 2020 due to the pandemic.
Municipal waste recycling rate.	↑	↑	Accompanied by a reduction in landfill disposal.
Percentage breakdown of final urban waste treatment by treatment method.	↑	↘	Possible slowdown in waste management progress.
Food waste and prevention of food waste.	↓	↓	Decrease in 2024.
Quantity of non-hazardous and hazardous waste managed, by type of waste, type of treatment and hazard class.	↑	↑	Paper and cardboard, glass and metal fractions stand out.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.5: PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HORIZON

50

Reduce national material consumption by 30% of GDP (Base Year 2010).

Indicator: National Consumption of Materials.

SDG 8.4: Progressively improve global resource efficiency in consumption and production.

SDG 12.2: Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 12.5: Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

SDG 9.4: Modernise infrastructure and converting industries to make them sustainable, using resources more efficiently.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

51

Reduce waste generation by 15% by 2030. (Base year 2010).

Indicator: Total waste generation rate of total waste compared to 2010 (Eurostat).

SDG 12.5: Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

SDG 12.2: Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 11.6: Reduce environmental impacts in urban environments, including waste management.

52

Increase the rate of preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste to 60% by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste.
SDG 11.6: Reduce environmental impacts in urban settings, including solid waste management.

SDG 12.5: Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

SDG 12.4: Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle.

53

Reduce food waste generation by 50% per capita at household level and 20% in production chains by 2030, through awareness raising, regulation and supply chain optimisation strategies.

Indicator: Index of food waste generation per capita; FAO Supply Chain Food Loss Index.

SDG 2.1: End hunger and ensure access to safe and nutritious food.

SDG 12.3: Halve global per capita food waste at retail and consumer level, and reduce food losses in production and supply chains.

SDG 12.5: Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

SDG 13.3: Improve education and awareness of climate change mitigation.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT AN IMPROVED MODEL OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION AND FOSTER THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN SPAIN

The General State Administration plays a key role in the transition towards a more sustainable development model in Spain. Through policy, strategic and inter-institutional coordination measures, it promotes responsible production and consumption. These actions contribute decisively to the promotion of the circular economy and the decarbonisation of the production system.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The evolution of the circular economy in Spain has been driven by a new regulatory and strategic framework since the approval of the **Spanish Circular Economy Strategy - Spain Circular 2030**. This strategy represents a paradigm shift away from the linear model of production and consumption (based on "use and throw away") towards a regenerative approach, where waste is perceived as a potential resource. The document highlights that one of the causes of the high volume of waste is the increase in consumption linked to patterns such as "fast fashion" or planned obsolescence in electronic products. This shortens the life cycle of goods and leads to intensive and inefficient use of resources.

The Spanish Circular Economy Strategy 2030 establishes a framework for transforming the production and consumption model towards a more sustainable, efficient and competitive one. It proposes a 30% reduction in material consumption relative to GDP and a 15% reduction in waste generation, as well as improving water efficiency and reducing food waste. The strategy, aligned with the European Green Pact and the 2030 Agenda, is implemented through three-year action plans focusing on key sectors such as construction, agri-food, industry and textiles. To this end, it promotes innovation, institutional cooperation and citizen participation.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The main regulation regarding the circular economy is Law 7/2022, on waste and contaminated soils for a circular economy, which establishes a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and reduce waste generation, improve waste management and foster the transition to a circular economy in Spain. It transposes key European directives, introduces two new taxes (on non-reusable plastic packaging and on landfill and incineration), and sets ambitious reduction and recycling targets for 2025, 2030 and 2035.

In addition, the regulatory framework is supplemented by:

- The **Law on the Prevention of Food Losses and Food Waste (Law 1/2025)** establishes obligations for all actors in the food chain, such as prevention plans, hierarchy of uses prioritising human consumption, and promoting agreements and donations.
- **Royal Decree 1055/2022 regulates the management of packaging and packaging waste**, to promote its prevention, reuse and recycling, and to impose obligations such as the registration of producers, eco-design and the implementation of deposit systems, or return and return to move towards a circular economy.
- The **disposal of waste by landfill** is regulated by **Royal Decree 646/2020**, which establishes technical requirements to minimise environmental impact, obliges pre-treatment of waste and sets targets for the progressive reduction of landfilling, especially of biodegradable municipal waste.
- **Royal Decree 553/2020 and Regulation (EU) 2024/1157 on the shipment of waste**, both within and across borders, ensure the traceability, safety and proper environmental management of waste during transport, in line with the Basel Convention.
- Other EU Royal Decrees and Regulations implementing or revising extended producer responsibility such as **Royal Decree 712/2025, Royal Decree 1093/2024 or Regulations (EU) 1542/2023, 40/2025**.
- Lastly, the Regulation on eco-design (**Regulation (EU) 2024/1781**) and the Regulation on key raw materials (**Regulation (EU) 2024/1252**) are also noted for their importance in terms of their impact on the Circular Economy.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT AN IMPROVED MODEL OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION AND FOSTER THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN SPAIN

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *Restructuring Plan for the nut sector* aims to increase the area cultivated and the value of almond and carob production.

CATALONIA: the *Roadmap for the Circular Economy in Catalonia (FRECC 2030)* promotes a more efficient and sustainable production model, with measures to reduce waste, promote eco-design and transform key sectors.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: the *Regional strategy Without Waste 20-30, for the period 2025-2027*, promotes education and public awareness, collaboration with the agri-food sector and the hotel and catering industry, and the use of surpluses through food banks and donations.

CATALONIA: the community has carried out the *Impact Assessment of the Tourism Sustainability Plans 2026-2028*, financed with Next Generation EU funds. The study analyses how this programme has promoted territorial transformation, fostering sustainable, innovative and quality tourism models.

NAVARRRE: the *Navarra Zirkular* programme has developed 75 circular economy business projects aimed at reducing the use of raw materials, reusing industrial waste and decarbonising production processes.

CANTABRIA: *Cantabria Bioeconomy and Circular Economy Strategy (EcBEC)* of March 2025: the main purpose is to boost the competitiveness and resilience of the Cantabrian territory through sustainable resource management, territorial cohesion and public-private collaboration.

MEASURES BY LES TO IMPLEMENT AN IMPROVED PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL AND PROMOTE THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN SPAIN

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÁCERES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: in 2024 the provincial council launched the *Network of Territorial Innovation Centres Circular FAB*, as a network of spaces to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the rural areas of the province.

DOS HERMANAS (SEVILLE): use of a *self-assessment tool for the degree of circularity*, with the technical support of Ecoembes, which includes measures in both waste prevention and reuse and waste management.

VALLADOLID: *Valladolid City Council's Circular Economy Action Plan* promotes collaboration with municipalities in the province to implement circular, energy-saving and material recycling practices at the local level.

6. DIGITISATION AND ADVANCED SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES



INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation and the extension of digital connectivity, underpinned by advanced and sustainable technologies, are strategic levers for strengthening Spain's competitiveness and economic and social cohesion within the European framework. Connectivity is the basis that makes digitalisation possible, drives the transformation of production processes and the generation of added value. Against a backdrop characterised by the ecological and digital transition, geopolitical tensions and increasing environmental constraints, it is essential to establish resilient production systems capable of providing quality employment and ensuring the efficient use of resources, underpinned by robust and secure digital infrastructure.

In the case of Spain, these challenges are reflected in an economic structure characterised by a high proportion of SMEs and micro-enterprises, which account for over 95% of the business sector, and by productivity growth of around 3.1% between 2015 and 2024, which is below the EU average. Nearly half of employment is concentrated in companies with fewer than 50 employees, which conditions technological investment, the adoption of innovations and the ability to scale up activities. This is compounded by territorial gaps in human capital, infrastructure, access to finance and degree of digitalisation, which limit convergence between regions.

Despite this, Spain has made significant progress in business connectivity and digitisation. Between 2017 and 2024, fibre-to-the-home (FTTP) coverage has increased from 85% to 95%, placing the country among the Member States with the highest deployment of very high capacity networks. At the same time, 5G coverage has expanded to around 95% nationwide, with particularly strong growth in rural areas. At the business level, by 2023, 60.5% of SMEs reached at least a basic level of digital intensity and 29.6% had online sales, higher than the European average.

The adoption of frontier technologies is still uneven: the use of artificial intelligence, big data or cloud computing services remains concentrated in larger companies, while many SMEs face financing difficulties, lack of digital capabilities and organisational barriers. This asymmetric growth suggests the need to strengthen training, technical assistance and economic incentives. Progress also needs to be made in integrating environmental sustainability criteria to manage the energy and material impact of digital expansion on the use of energy and water resources.

In addition to the challenges associated with technological adoption, the expansion of artificial intelligence raises relevant implications in terms of fundamental rights and freedoms, especially in sensitive areas such as security, migration management or interaction with people in vulnerable situations, especially minors. The public, academic and institutional debate has recurrently highlighted the potential impact of certain uses of AI, including remote biometric identification in public spaces, automated risk assessment systems aimed at predicting crime, profiling and automated assessment in the field of migration, emotion recognition or the use of systems capable of influencing the behaviour of people in particularly vulnerable contexts.

In this context, the approval of the European Artificial Intelligence Regulation establishes an initial common framework for the regulation of these systems within the European Union. However,

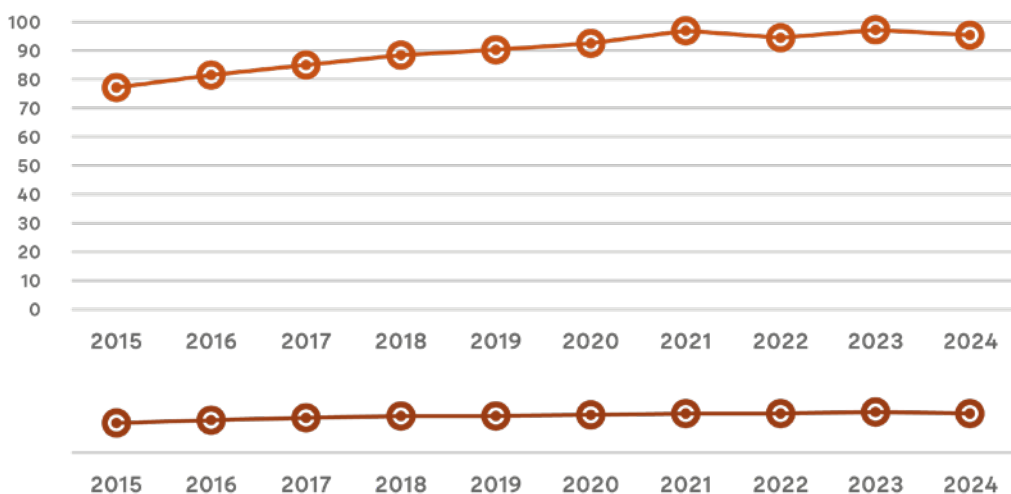
the actual deployment of AI in the different Member States takes place in an environment characterised by rapid technological evolution, which poses additional challenges in terms of implementation, monitoring and coordination of existing regulatory frameworks at national level.

It should also be noted that the obvious increase in the consumption of energy, water and critical minerals in the deployment of artificial intelligence raises very relevant implications for environmental protection and decarbonisation of the economy. In response to these challenges, Spain has launched the National Green Algorithms Programme (PNAV). This is an initiative framed within the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, the Spain Digital Agenda 2026 and the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, seeks to integrate sustainability in the design and application of AI, promoting more efficient and environmentally responsible models, while boosting its use to respond to different environmental challenges

FIXED DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY: FIBRE OPTICS

Fibre optic access has been growing steadily and has reached 95% coverage by 2024 with economic and logistical barriers to the installation of digital infrastructure in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Between 2017 and 2024, fibre-to-the-home (FTTP) coverage in Spain grew significantly from 85% to 95%. This progress places Spain among the countries with the highest fibre coverage in Europe, above the EU-27 average of around 94% in 2024.

AVAILABILITY OF HIGH-SPEED INTERNET BY TECHNOLOGY TYPE



Source: % of households with FTTP coverage, according to Eurostat.

This growth has been driven by policies aimed at providing broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps to 100% of the population. In addition to this, there are programmes such as the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan and the use of *Next Generation EU* funds, with a particular focus on rural and hard-to-reach areas. In addition to improving home connectivity, FTTP deployment has had a positive impact on teleworking, business digitisation, e-commerce and the growth of startups, especially during the pandemic.

However, challenges remain in areas of low population density, where the UNICO Programme seeks to extend coverage through subsidies and public-private partnerships. In addition, programmes such as Connected Schools and Educa en Digital are driving this transformation with the support of European *Next Generation EU* funds and aim to ensure that all schools, regardless of their location, have access to high quality connectivity.

From an environmental perspective, fibre optics stands out for its energy efficiency compared to other technologies, thereby contributing to more sustainable connectivity and the growth of digital services such as e-government, online education and remote healthcare.

MOBILE DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY: 5G

Between 2020 and 2024, 5G coverage in Spain has increased from 12.5% to 95.7%, reflecting a very rapid deployment compared to previous generations such as 4G. As for 5G coverage in rural areas in Spain, it has grown significantly to 79.6% by 2024 (*Broadband Coverage in Europe*).

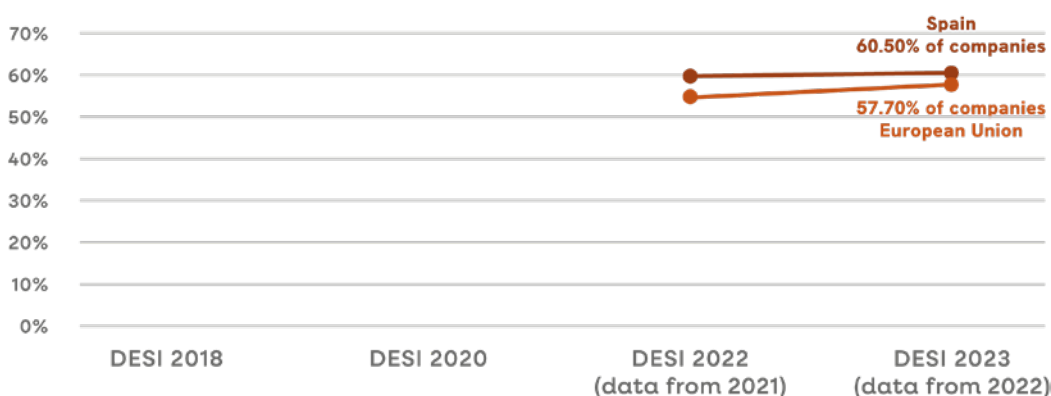
The deployment of 5G is particularly relevant in rural areas, where the digital divide has historically hindered equal access to digital tools. The UNICO 5G Active Networks Programme is aimed at providing 5G Stand Alone coverage (better performance) in municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants, which do not have mobile coverage of at least 50 Mbps. In its two funding rounds for 2023 and 2024, the programme has allocated €669 million for this purpose.

This progress places Spain in the most advanced position in the context, although a double challenge remains: guaranteeing total coverage before 2030 and research to ensure that improvements in connectivity are part of a horizon of resource sustainability.

DIGITALISATION OF BUSINESSES

In 2023, 60.5% of Spanish SMEs reached at least a basic level of digital intensity and exceeded the European average of 57.7%, according to the DESI index. Digitisation has especially advanced in companies with 10 or more employees, from 68.33% in 2022 to 74.81% in 2024.

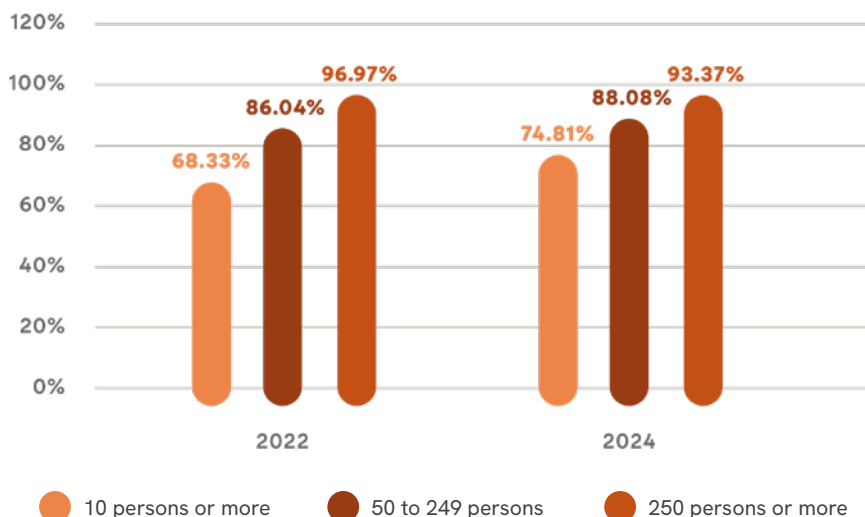
**SMES WITH AT LEAST A BASIC LEVEL OF DIGITAL INTENSITY (DII V3, YEARS AVAILABLE: 2021 AND 2023), SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES (10-249 PERSONS EMPLOYED)
UNIT: % OF COMPANIES**



Source: produced by the authors based on data from DESI.

While medium-sized and large companies far exceed this level (88.08% and 96.37% respectively), smaller companies still lag behind in the use of business software: only 59.65% were using tools such as ERP or CRM in 2023.

DIGITAL INTENSITY BY COMPANY SIZE UNIT: % OF COMPANIES

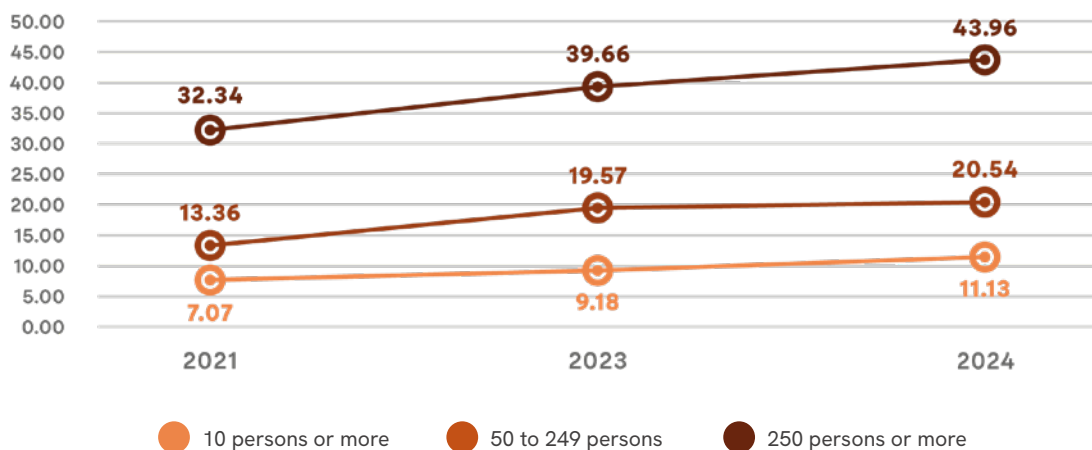


Source: produced by the authors based on data from Eurostat.

In 2023, 8.3% of Spanish SMEs (10-249 employees) were using artificial intelligence, slightly above the EU average (7.4%). This progress, supported by national plans and European funds, made it possible to automate processes and improve decision-making. Nationally, adoption grew from 7.67% in 2021 to 11.31% in 2024, especially in medium-sized (20.54%) and large enterprises (43.96%).

The use of AI and big data is still low in small businesses, due to lack of training, funding and perceived complexity. While *cloud computing* reached 35.83% in small and 76.32% in large by 2024, big data usage was only 8.97% in small by 2020, compared to 28% in large.

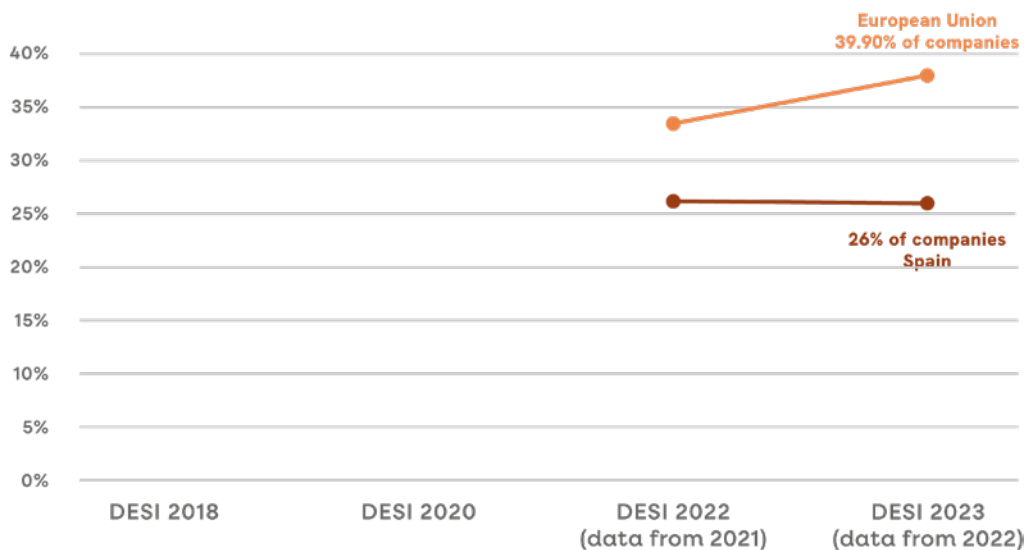
AI BY COMPANY SIZE



Source: produced by the authors based on data from Eurostat.
Filtered by company size.

With regard to *cloud computing* services in 2023, only 26% of Spanish SMEs (between 10 and 249 employees) were using cloud services, compared to 39.9% on average in the European Union, which shows a gap in the digitisation of the Spanish business fabric. While in Europe the use of *cloud computing* has grown steadily, in Spain progress has been more moderate, especially in small companies, where factors such as cost, lack of training and the perception of the cloud as a non-essential expense slow down its adoption.

CLOUD, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (10-249 PERSONS)



Source: produced by the authors based on data from DESI.

In summary, since 2021, digitalisation in Spain has continued to advance: the use of *cloud computing* in small companies has grown from 30.92% to 35.83% in 2024, while in medium-sized companies it rose from 47.26% to 53.32%, and in large companies from 67.38% to 76.32%, consolidating this technology as essential for business management. In parallel, the adoption of more complex technologies such as Artificial Intelligence has also increased, albeit at a slower pace: in small companies from 7.67% in 2021 to 11.31% in 2024, and in large companies from 32.34% to 43.96%.

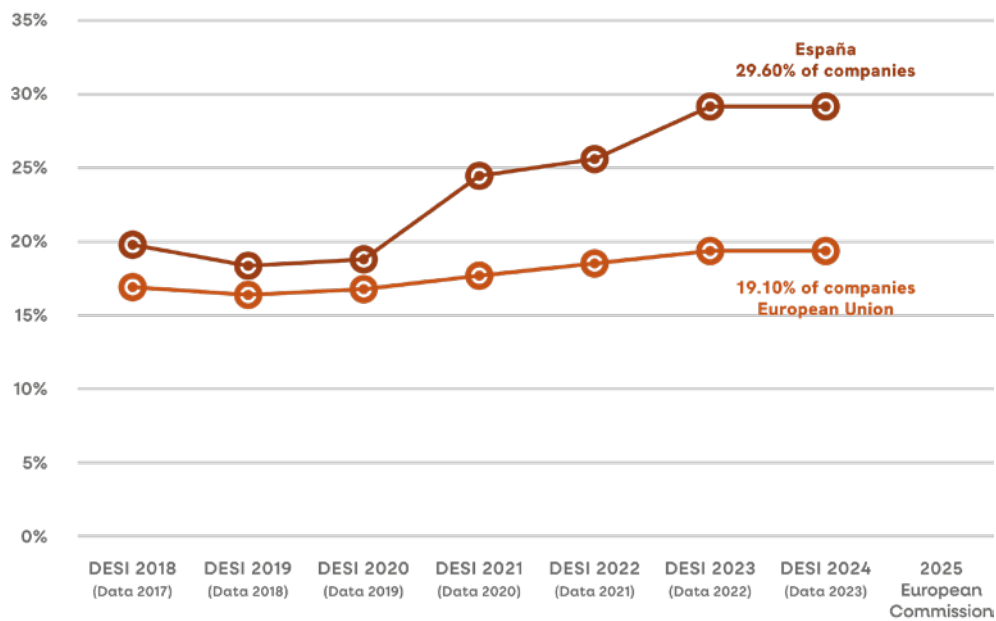
Progress in the digitalisation of Spanish SMEs has been helped by strategies such as the SME Digitalisation Plan 2021-2025, which offers advice and support. Of particular note are the Kit Digital programme and the new *Kit Consulting*, which subsidise small businesses and freelancers to implement e-commerce, cybersecurity, AI and digital management.

With regard to the Kit Digital programme, which has received €3.067 billion in funding from the PRTR, it is worth noting that the call for applications has now closed, with more than 860,000 grants awarded to SMEs and the self-employed (127% of the initial target of 676,000 beneficiaries), and that the programme has reached 100% of Spain's provinces and 92% of its municipalities. With more than half a million projects completed (as of November 2025), available data point to an increase in the average level of digitisation of beneficiary companies from 38% to 51%, productivity improvements of up to 65%, and a significant impact among self-employed women beneficiaries (39% of the total). It is also worth noting that the impact of the Kit Digital programme has been concentrated in sectors that have traditionally been less digitised, such as construction, transport, and agriculture and livestock farming.

BUSINESS E-COMMERCE SALES

In 2023, 29.6% of Spanish SMEs were selling online, well above the EU average (19.1%). The pandemic acted as a catalyst for this digital transformation and pushed many companies to diversify their sales channels and adapt to new consumer habits. Programmes such as the SME Digitalisation Plan and the Kit Digital, funded by *Next Generation EU* funds, have been key to facilitating the adoption of e-commerce platforms, digital payment solutions and online marketing strategies. In addition to these, there are the training initiatives led by Red.es and the Acelera Pyme offices.

SMES SELLING ONLINE, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (10-249 PERSONS EMPLOYED)



Source: produced by the authors based on data from DESI.

Since 2015, e-commerce adoption has grown across all business segments, although with greater intensity from 2020 onwards. Small companies increased from 17.94% in 2015 to 33.62% in 2023, while medium-sized companies grew from 27.69% to 40.89%, and large companies from 38.27% to 56.66%. However, in 2024 a slight deceleration is observed: the share of small enterprises decreased to 32.22% and that of medium-sized enterprises to 37.92%, while the share of large enterprises stabilised at around 55.94%.

This stabilisation indicates that, after the initial momentum, companies are facing new challenges such as the profitability of their online channels, market saturation and the need to consolidate more sustainable and competitive digital strategies.

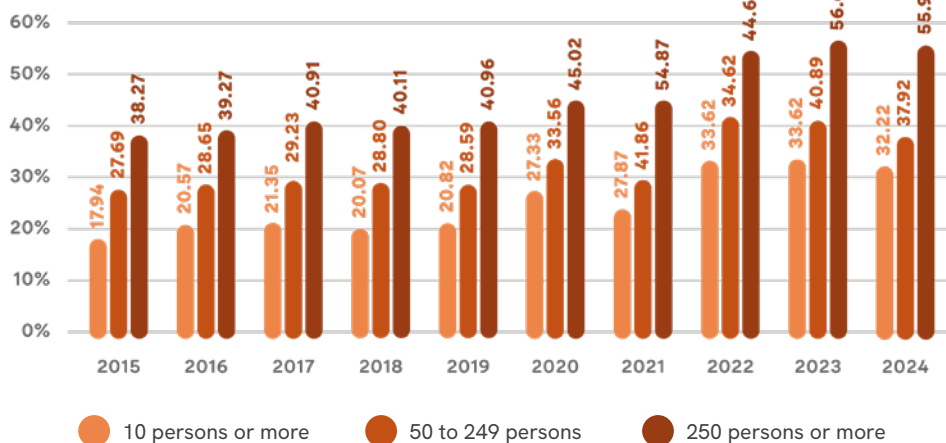
BUSINESS E-COMMERCE SALES BY COMPANY SIZE UNIT: % OF COMPANIES

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
10 persons or more	17.94	20.57	21.35	20.07	20.82	27.33	27.67	33.24	33.62	32.22
50 to 249 persons	27.69	28.65	29.23	28.80	28.59	33.56	34.62	41.86	40.89	37.92
250 or more persons	38.27	39.27	40.91	40.11	40.96	45.02	44.83	54.87	56.66	55.94

Source: produced by the authors based on data from INE.

Since 2021, e-commerce usage has grown among SMEs: from 27.87% to 33.62% in small businesses and 40.89% in medium-sized businesses by 2022. In 2023, companies with 10 or more employees generated €385 million in online sales, of which 79.8% came from large companies, 13.2% from medium-sized companies and just 7% from small companies. Although 83.04% of online sales were made via companies' own websites, small businesses rely more heavily on marketplaces (23.04% compared with 15.34% for large businesses).

BUSINESS E-COMMERCE SALES BY COMPANY SIZE



Source: produced by the authors based on data from Eurostat.

The share of e-commerce in total turnover is still low: 4.73 % in small and 6.51 % in medium-sized enterprises. In 2023, 9.6% of Spanish SMEs' turnover came from e-commerce, still below the European average (11.9%), reflecting growing adoption but limited economic impact.

A significant part of the business fabric still uses traditional channels and faces barriers linked to the absence of comprehensive digital strategies, competition from large platforms and limited integration of advanced technologies. Furthermore, the expansion of digitalisation poses significant challenges in terms of the environment and the efficient use of resources (due to the increase in energy consumption associated with data centres, telecommunications infrastructures, smart devices, as well as the increase in transport in the case of e-commerce) that require frameworks for action aimed at minimising impacts.

DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

The use of digital technologies raises an emerging debate about their possible implications for fundamental rights and freedoms. The defence of the right to privacy, freedom of expression, data protection and privacy, especially of minors, or the fight against hate speech, are essential challenges that must be faced in order to guarantee participation.

The lack of digital literacy to identify hoaxes and misinformation or to comply with appropriate standards for minors limits the right to safe participation in digital environments, a key part of protecting vulnerable groups and not limiting their responsible participation.

A critical aspect is network safety, an area where children can be particularly vulnerable to manipulation, cyber-bullying or other abusive practices. A survey conducted by *Save The Children* in Spain of 1,000 young people between 18 and 21 years old, published in 2025 in the report *Networks that Entrap*, concludes that 97.9% of young people have suffered sexual violence on the internet when they were minors, a third have suffered *grooming* (adult contact with minors for sexual purposes) and 20% were victims of *deepfakes* (fake sexual images created with AI). For its part, the Ministry of Interior recorded 4,896 reports of cybercrime against children and adolescents in 2023, of which 1,068 involved sexual offences.

On the regulatory side, in July 2025, the European Commission issued guidelines on the protection of minors under the Digital Services Act to ensure a safe online experience for children and young people. In Spain, the draft law for the protection of minors in digital environments was given the green light in September 2025.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 6. DIGITISATION AND ADVANCED SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Digital intensity by company size.		↑	Above the European average and higher in large companies.
IA used by company size.		↑	Growth higher than the EU average and higher in large companies.
Cloud Computing Services by company size.	↔	↔	Below the European average with higher growth in large companies.
Business e-Commerce sales by company size	↑	↑	Above the European average and similar growth across all company sizes.
E-commerce sales.	↓	↓	Below the European average.
SMEs using social networks.	↑	↑	Above the European average.
Percentage of households with access to FTTP.	↑	↑	One of the countries with the highest coverage of this type in Europe.
Nationwide 5G connectivity.	↑	↑	Above the European average.
5G coverage by Autonomous Community		↑	Notable regional differences.
Percentage of households with 5G coverage in rural areas.	↑	↑	At the European average.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.6: DIGITISATION AND ADVANCED SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES

54

Achieve 100% coverage with fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) or 5G coverage in all rural and urban areas by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of households and businesses with FTTP access. Percentage of households and businesses with access to 5G.

SDG 9.c: Increase access to information and communication technologies and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet.

SDG 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 17.8: Improve international cooperation for universal access to digital technologies in developing countries (applicable in the global framework).

55

Promote the use of advanced technologies (cloud, big data, AI) while taking into account negative environmental externalities (electricity and water consumption) to achieve 90% basic digitisation in SMEs.

Indicator: Percentage of SMEs with a basic level of digital intensity (DII) according to DESI.

SDG 9.c: Increase access to information and communication technologies and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet.

SDG 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

SDG 12.2: Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, considering the environmental impact of digitisation.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies, including the responsible use of technologies.

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Achieve 40% of SMEs selling products/services through sustainable e-commerce with a focus on proximity by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of SMEs that sell online.

SDG 9.3: Increase small businesses' access to financial services and markets.

SDG 12.6: Promote sustainable business practices, including responsible e-commerce.

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 17.17: Foster effective partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING DIGITISATION AND SUSTAINABLE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

The General State Administration promotes various **public policies to strengthen the competitiveness of the Spanish productive fabric**. Through regulatory reforms, strategic investments and support programmes, the aim is to **improve the efficiency, innovation and sustainability of enterprises**. These measures contribute to positioning Spain as a more resilient and dynamic country in the global economic context.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **Digital Spain 2026 strategy** is being implemented as the Government of Spain's strategic roadmap to drive the country's digital transformation. Its main objective is to promote economic growth, social and territorial cohesion, and the well-being of citizens. The agenda is structured around three key areas, which are infrastructure and technology, the economy and people, and ten strategic priorities, complemented by two cross-cutting priorities included in the PRTR: the **PERTE projects** and the **RETECH initiative** (Regional Networks for Technological Specialisation).

The aforementioned **Digital Spain 2026 Agenda and the Plan for Digital Connectivity and Infrastructure** set out the roadmap for bridging the regional digital divide. It aims to achieve coverage of at least 100 Mbps for 100% of the population by 2025, with a special focus on rural and vulnerable areas. Furthermore, the roll-out of **rural 5G through the UNICO 5G Redes Activas programme**, driven by the government and private operators,

is connecting historically unconnected regions and facilitating services such as precision farming, remote healthcare and remote working.

On the other hand, the **General Guidelines of the New Spanish Industrial Policy 2030** establish a strategy to strengthen the industrial sector as a driver of innovation, quality employment and economic resilience. The document is articulated around five priority vectors: productivity and competitiveness, sustainability and decarbonisation, digitalisation, alignment with the European strategy and support for SMEs.

In addition, the **Spain Entrepreneurial Nation Strategy**, the **Spanish Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy 2021-2027** and the **Strategic Framework for SME Policy 2030** make up a set of initiatives aimed at transforming the Spanish business fabric. These strategies promote innovative entrepreneurship, corporate sustainability, the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the integration of ethical and social principles into economic activity, in line with sustainable development goals and digitalisation.

Within this strategic framework, the **CID 211 (Modernisation of markets, commercial areas and short marketing channels)**, **212 (Sustainable markets in rural areas)** and **225 (Promotion of trade in tourist areas)** components of the **PRTR** have also created the enabling conditions to promote the sale of products and services through e-commerce by SMEs. This directly reinforces the digitalisation and modernisation of the local commercial fabric and contributes to the objectives of territorial cohesion and sustainability. These objectives have, in turn, facilitated the funding of projects centred on three key areas: digitalisation (infrastructure, platforms and solutions enabling SMEs to sell online), sustainability (DNSH criteria, energy efficiency and the circular economy in projects, particularly in tourist areas) and local focus (local marketplaces, supplier traceability and last-mile logistics networks that prioritise short supply chains).

The **Productive Industrial Investment Support Fund (FAIIP)** and the **Financial Support Programme for R&D&I in the manufacturing industry** are key instruments to boost the modernisation of the industrial sector. Both provide funding for projects that improve productive capacity, promote technological innovation and reinforce sustainability, thereby contributing to the strengthening of Spanish industry in a competitive global context.

On the other hand, the **National Digital Skills Plan (PNCD)** is a strategic initiative aimed at guaranteeing the digital training and inclusion of all citizens, with special attention to education, employment, gender equality and the promotion of ICT professionals. Its main objective is to ensure that no one is left behind in the transition to a fully digital economy and society, strengthening innovation, employability and sustainable growth in line with the 2030 Agenda.

On another front, there is also the **National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (ENIA)**, which promotes the integration of AI into the Spanish economy and society, with a focus on sustainability, inclusion and digital ethics. Its update in 2024 reinforces the commitment to trustworthy, transparent and inclusive AI, through an investment of €1.5 billion to establish Spain as a leader in innovation and the responsible development of artificial intelligence.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING DIGITISATION AND SUSTAINABLE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ANDALUSIA: The *Fourth Integral Plan for the Promotion of Domestic Trade in Andalusia 2019-2022* promotes training itineraries, aid for technological implementation, administrative simplification and support for generational change.

CANTABRIA: offers rebates in the autonomous community's personal income tax bracket to encourage investment in new or recently created companies. Taxpayers may deduct up to 15% of the amount invested, subject to an annual limit of €1,000, provided they hold the investment for at least three years and do not hold more than a 40% stake in the company.

ASTURIAS: roll-out of fibre optics, wireless networks, satellite networks and public aid to facilitate installation in rural areas.

CANARY ISLANDS: *Canarias Digital* is the digital transformation strategy of the archipelago, which seeks to promote a more sustainable, competitive and egalitarian economic model, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: The autonomous community is currently drafting the *Preliminary Bill on Productive Spaces for the Promotion of Industry*, with a view to its adoption in 2026, with the aim of modernising industrial estates and strengthening the planning and management of land designated for economic activities.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: development in 2025 of the *Illes en transformació* Investment Plan, a regional modernisation programme that mobilises €3.8 billion until 2030 for sustainable public infrastructures. The plan integrates actions in health, education, social services, water cycle, mobility, housing and tourism sustainability.

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: the *Conéctate CLM* programme is aimed at guaranteeing universal digital connectivity throughout the territory. This initiative seeks to reduce the digital divide in rural municipalities by extending fibre optics and 5G coverage, as well as promoting digital skills for citizens and businesses.

MEASURES BY LES TO ADVANCE DIGITISATION AND SUSTAINABLE ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ALICANTE: the *Alicante Sustainable Tourism Destination Strategy (2023-2027)* is aimed at having protected natural resources (such as the island of Tabarca), reducing the ecological impact of tourism, and improving the quality of life of the resident population.

VILLACARRILLO (JAÉN): the *Jaén Agrotech Ventures (J.A.V)* project is a rural entrepreneurship ecosystem that develops different actions to support local companies. These include an annual course on precision agriculture and advanced digitalisation using drones, a start-up acceleration programme and a project accelerator.

ALCÁZAR DE SAN JUAN (CIUDAD REAL): the *Digital Training Centre* has been providing, since 2024, training in digital skills to eliminate the digital divide for local citizens and offers job guidance to the municipality's neighbourhood.

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: through agreements signed with various municipalities, the Provincial Council provides small municipalities with digital infrastructures, as well as advice for the operation of their digital innovation centres.

7. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY



INTRODUCTION

Sustainable mobility is a key pillar in moving towards an economic model that combines social welfare and environmental justice. In Spain, although the use of public transport and active mobility is growing, transport is the main greenhouse gas emitting sector.

Low Emission Zones, despite their uneven implementation, already show benefits in air quality and urban health, thus contributing to the creation of more liveable environments.

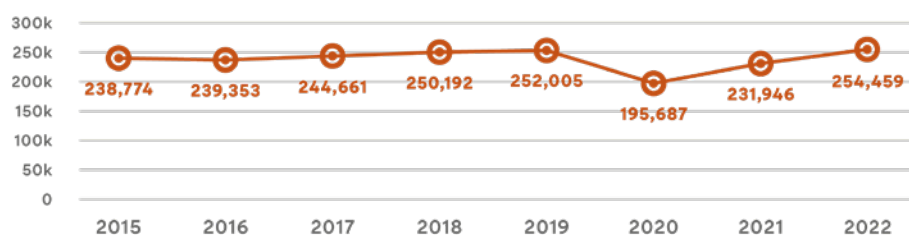
The electrification of the vehicle fleet through the deployment of an accessible charging network suited to the characteristics of our territory and the expansion of cycling infrastructures are essential steps not only to reduce emissions, but also to guarantee the right to safe, affordable and universal mobility.

MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Between 2015 and 2024, public transport in Spain has shown a positive evolution, interrupted only by the impact of the pandemic in 2020. During the previous years, the number of passengers and vehicle kilometres travelled (VKM) increased steadily, driven by modernisation, digitalisation and infrastructure improvement policies. In 2019, the figure reached 252,055 million VKM, compared with 238,774 million in 2015. However, in 2020, the lockdown and the rise in remote working led to a 22.3% fall in passenger-kilometres, bringing the total to 195,687 million, which had a significant impact on all modes of transport.

The recovery started in 2021 and consolidated in the following years, with 254,459 million VKM in 2022 and the number of passengers reaching 5,539,759,000 in 2024, the highest figure of the period analysed. This upturn has been made possible by the lifting of restrictions, the return to face-to-face work, improvements in services and policies to promote public transport, such as reduced fares or the deployment of more sustainable fleets. This development indicates not only a recovery but also a transformation in mobility habits, with public transport once again becoming a preferred option over the private car.

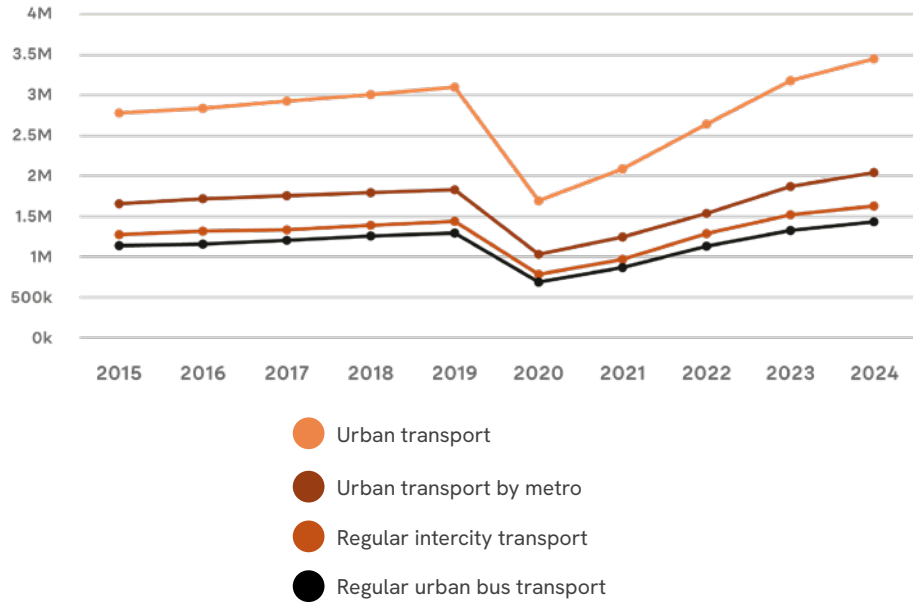
YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE, URBAN AND INTERURBAN TRANSPORT
UNITS: MILLION VEHICLE-KILOMETRES (VKM)



Source: Eurostat. Road motor vehicle traffic performance by traffic and registration location and type of vehicle.

Rail transport has played a major role in this transformation, thanks to market liberalisation, the introduction of lower-cost high-speed services and their lower environmental impact. Rail, as one of the most sustainable means of interurban travel, has reinforced its strategic position within the public transport system, which favours the sector's decarbonisation objectives.

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PASSENGERS BY TYPE, URBAN AND INTERURBAN TRANSPORT
UNITS: PASSENGERS**

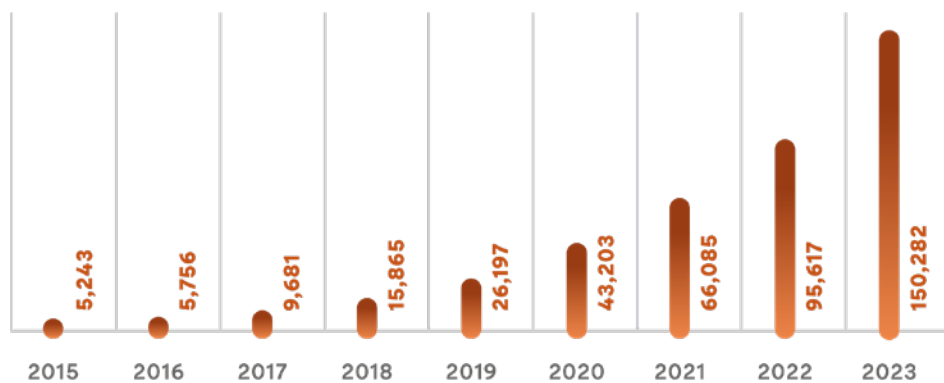


Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

ELECTRIC AND HYBRID VEHICLES

Spain has experienced sustained growth in the adoption of electric vehicles between 2015 and 2023, with the 2,620 passenger cars registered in 2015 becoming more than 55,000 by 2023. The total electric vehicle fleet has also multiplied significantly, from 5,243 units in 2015 to more than 150,000 in 2023. This progress has been driven by public policies such as the MOVES Plan, the progressive development of charging infrastructures and a growing environmental awareness. However, the share of electric vehicles in the overall fleet is still small (only 0.54% in 2023), although it is clearly on an upward trend.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

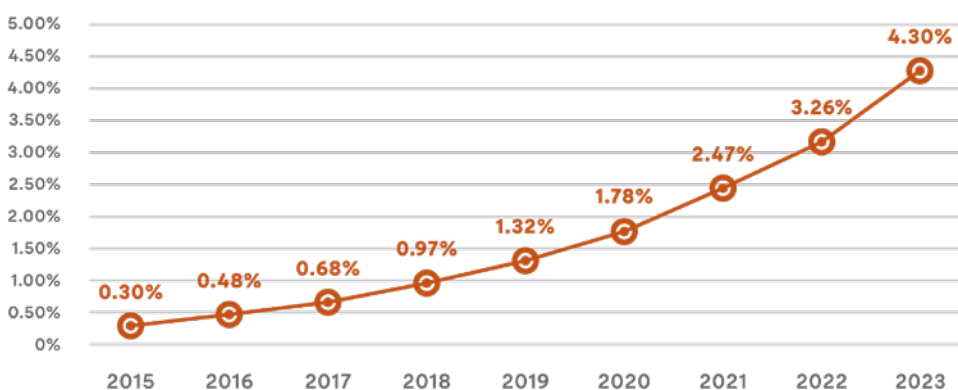


Source: Produced by the authors based on Eurostat.

In 2023, according to Eurostat, a total of 110,680 passenger cars and 9,226 motorbikes with a "Zero" environmental label were registered in Spain, out of an overall volume of 1,040,767 passenger cars and 206,942 motorbikes registered. This accounts for only 10% of passenger cars and 4% of motorbikes, so the penetration of zero-emission mobility is still low despite recent progress.

If we also add hybrid vehicles, together with electric vehicles, the vehicle fleet will represent 4.3% in 2023, compared to 0.3% in 2015, reflecting a gradual transition towards more sustainable mobility. This shift has been reinforced by technological improvements, the increased supply of electrified models and restrictions on polluting vehicles in urban areas. Even so, barriers remain, such as the purchase price, the limited autonomy of some models and, especially, the lack of sufficient recharging points, which generates uncertainty among potential users.

PERCENTAGE OF ELECTRIC + HYBRID VEHICLES (TOTAL VEHICLES)



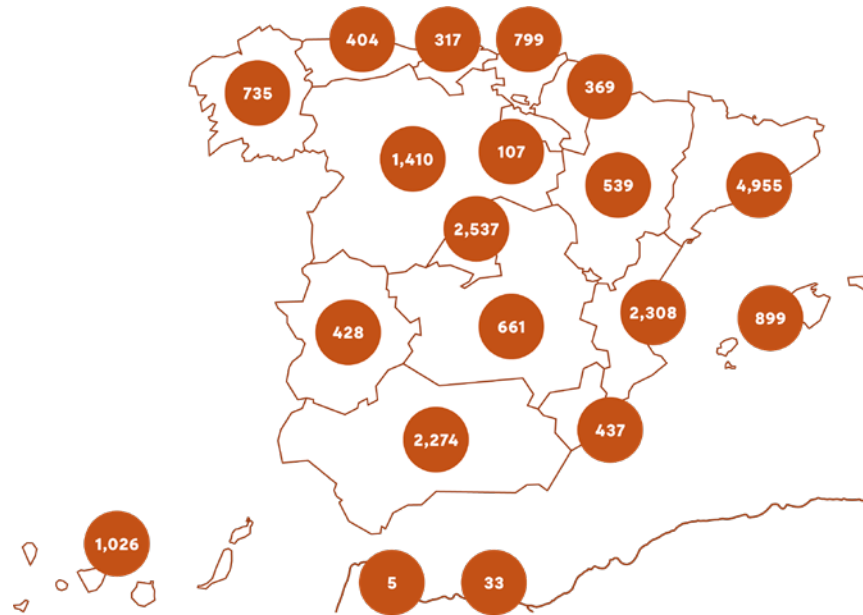
Source: Produced by the authors based on Eurostat.

The upward trend continues: the year 2025 closes with an increase of 94.5% in the number of electrified passenger cars sold compared to the previous year, according to industry data.

Spain has experienced significant growth in the installation of charging points for electric vehicles (from 11,517 in 2021 to more than 40,000 in 2024), which is a considerable increase. Furthermore, the introduction of the obligation of new recharging points established in European and national regulations and the improvement of the operating conditions of these recharging points have favoured the accessibility of these facilities in different areas. However, there is still a certain inequality in the territorial distribution of recharging points.

Finally, the creation of a unique platform with real-time information on available recharging points, created in 2025 and named REVE Map, should be highlighted. The information presented on this platform corresponds, at least, to public access recharging points with a capacity of 43 kW or more (fast recharging points). This map, with periodically updated data, has shaped the accessibility of a recharging point within 50 kilometres of any location on the Iberian Peninsula.

PUBLIC ACCESS RECHARGING POINTS



Source: ANFAC (Map of Public Access Charging Infrastructure in Spain).

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2. TOPIC 7. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Electric vehicles registered per year.	↑	↑	Progressive increase, but slower than in other EU countries.
% electric vehicles as a percentage of total vehicles.	↑	↑	Accelerated growth since 2018.
% electric and hybrid vehicles as a percentage of total vehicles.	↑	↑	Increased proportion of hybrid vehicles.
Charging infrastructures.		↑	There is an upward trend, especially in the area of public charging.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 2.7: SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

CHALLENGE 2 / 7. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

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Increase by 2030 the use of collective transport for daily mobility by 20%, including urban, regular interurban commuter and medium-distance transport, (base year 2021).

Indicator: Passengers on public transport for everyday mobility. Passenger Transport Statistics INE.

SDG 11.2: Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies.

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Promote the electrification of private transport, reaching at least 5.5 million electric vehicles on the road by 2030.

Indicator: Number of electric vehicles registered and in use.

SDG 11.2: Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies, including the decarbonisation of transport.

SDG 7.2: Substantially increase the share of renewable energy in the energy mix, linked to electricity charging.

SDG 9.4: Modernise infrastructure and converting industries to make them sustainable, using resources more efficiently.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

The General State Administration promotes sustainable mobility as a strategic axis to reduce emissions, improve air quality and transform the transport model in Spain. Through policy measures, public investments and innovation support schemes, a more efficient, accessible and environmentally friendly mobility system is promoted. These actions contribute to progress towards a just and balanced ecological transition throughout the territory.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **Safe, Sustainable and Connected Mobility Strategy 2030** is in force as a roadmap to guide transport, mobility and infrastructure policies in Spain until 2030. It is the Spanish Government's reference framework for transforming the transport system into a more efficient, inclusive and environmentally friendly model. Approved by the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility in 2021, the strategy is now in force and aligns its objectives with the commitments of the European Green Pact and the 2030 Agenda.

Its purpose is to ensure safer, cleaner, digital and connected mobility. To this end, it aims to reduce emissions, promote public and active transport, and boost technological innovation in transport management. It also promotes mobility as a social right, ensuring accessibility in urban and rural areas and prioritising energy efficiency and road safety.

The MOVES III Plan: an aid programme, framed within the PRTR, with the aim of promoting electric mobility through the purchase of electrified vehicles and the installation of charging points.

The Moves Corridors and Moves Fleets Plus programmes: aid lines within the framework of the new package to boost decarbonisation and competitiveness, launched by MITECO in November 2025. Aimed, respectively, at the installation of public access charging points on major roads and highways, and at subsidising the electrification of company delivery vehicle fleets.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

It is worth mentioning that the **Sustainable Mobility Law 9/2025** aims to transform the transport system in Spain towards a more efficient, accessible and environmentally friendly model. It recognises mobility as a social right, in order to ensure that all people

can move around in a safe, affordable and sustainable way. It also encourages the use of cleaner modes of transport, such as public transport, active mobility (pedestrian and cycling) and low-emission vehicles, thus contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gases and the improvement of air quality.

On the other hand, **Royal Decree-Law 14/2022, of 1 August**, established **urgent measures for economic sustainability in transport, grants and study aids**, as well as actions for energy saving and efficiency, in order to reduce dependence on natural gas and mitigate the effects of the energy crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine. Since its publication, aid and subsidies for the use of public transport have been granted through different approved regulatory instruments. Key measures include discounts on public transport, the promotion of remote working and energy efficiency, a reduction in energy consumption in public buildings and shop windows, and the promotion of renewable energy and sustainable heating systems.

In the field of building regulations, the new requirements relating to charging infrastructure for electric vehicles and the provision of parking spaces for bicycles, included in the amendment of the Technical Building Code currently being processed, are noteworthy. This amendment responds to the partial transposition of **Directive (EU) 2024/1275 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the energy performance of buildings**, and was submitted to public information during November and December 2025.

Similarly, under **Law 7/2021, on climate change and energy transition**, the installation of charging points is obligatory. On the other hand, **Royal Decree-Law 4/2024** assigns a new function to the System Operator to collect and process real-time information on the retail price of electricity recharging services and the availability of the existing infrastructure.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ASTURIAS: the community is progressively integrating rural municipalities into the *Asturias Transport Consortium (CTA)*, to ensure sustainable and equitable mobility throughout the territory. This strategy includes the expansion of routes, the shared use of school transport, the development of on-demand services and the digitalisation of the system.

BASQUE COUNTRY: the *Basque Sustainable Mobility Law 11/2023* establishes a comprehensive framework for transforming transport in the Basque Country towards a more sustainable, inclusive and efficient model.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: the *Demand Responsive Transport* programme is an adapted public mobility model that offers flexible routes without fixed schedules and covers rural or low-density areas.

CATALONIA: the *Electric Vehicle Promotion Plan 2025-2030 (PIVE)*, with a budget of more than €1.4 billion, aims to triple the penetration of electric vehicles, achieve 90% electrification of the regional fleet, deploy more than 9,000 public charging points and strengthen the industrial value chain of electric vehicles.

MEASURES BY LES TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *Provincial Plan for the Humanisation of Urban Environments and Rural Agenda* has implemented different actions to make urban and rural environments more sustainable and habitable. The plan includes infrastructure improvements.

SANT BOI DE LLOBREGAT (BARCELONA): the *CITIMOB Sant Boi, Driving Force for Sustainable Mobility* project has positioned the city as a benchmark in the automotive sector.

NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3: SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING TO IMPROVE SOCIAL COHESION AND ADDRESS CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES

1. TERRITORIAL AND SOCIAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of climate change in recent decades has made territorial and social adaptation an essential strategic axis for guaranteeing sustainability, social cohesion and resilience in Spain. The country's growing exposure to extreme weather, such as heatwaves, prolonged droughts, wildfires and floods, highlights the urgent need to strengthen local and national capacities to anticipate, mitigate and manage their impacts, particularly in the most vulnerable areas.

The increase in extreme weather events (such as heavy rains, floods, fires and droughts) has generated significant impacts on health, economy, land degradation, desertification, biodiversity, ecosystems, water resources, soil quality, and the security of millions of people. The National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC) and the Disaster Risk Management Framework have made important institutional advances, but gaps remain in operational response, integration of social services and equitable coverage in rural or impoverished areas. Strengthening social protection mechanisms, early warning systems and multi-risk planning becomes a priority to protect the most exposed populations. To achieve this, actions will need to be implemented in line with the principles of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which promotes local action as a key pillar of resilience.

Spain has an almost universal regulatory and urban planning structure, but it is very rigid and needs to be updated. Urban planning instruments are very old and updating them in coherence with the new regulations that have been approved under a climate, ecosystemic and inclusive perspective is complex. The urgent updating of these plans is key to achieving cities and territories that are prepared for the new challenges. This will require a coordinated effort between administrations (accompanied by regulatory tools that provide planning security, techniques and specific funding), which will facilitate the coordination of urban and territorial planning with the strategic planning promoted by the Spanish Urban Agenda in its consideration of National Urban Policy.

Flood protection is also reactive rather than structural. The high variability in the numbers of people protected year after year is evidence of the need for a sustained prevention policy, based on green infrastructure, ecological restoration and operational emergency plans.

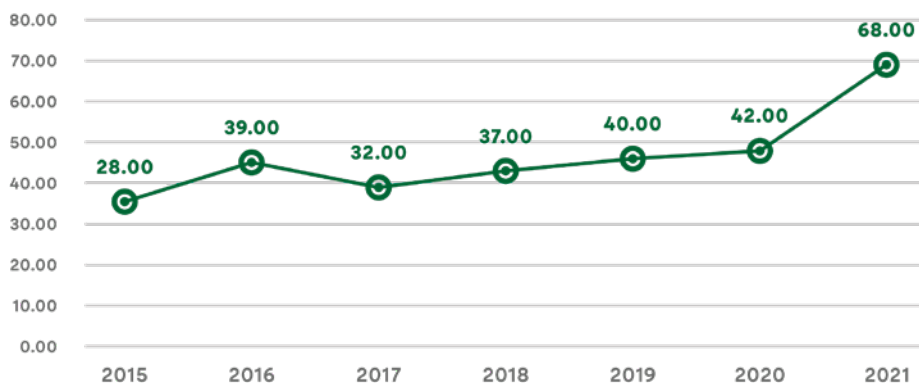
In this context, the development of a sustainable territorial and environmental model not only implies responding to climate change, but also transforming it into an opportunity to rebuild more equitable, safe and cohesive territories in line with what the Spanish Urban Agenda promotes.

LOCAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES

The Spanish Meteorological Agency (AEMET) compiles the number of days per year on which critical thresholds associated with exceptional phenomena are exceeded. Its incidence and severity have a clear upward trend, with an increasing pattern of thermal extremes, an increase in the frequency of torrential rainfall, especially in the Mediterranean area during autumn, and other adverse events such as wind gusts or storms. This severe weather scenario has an impact on water stress, the incidence of forest fires, health risks due to extreme heat and damage to infrastructure vulnerable to rainfall.

Disaster risk management in Spain, as assessed by the indicator on the proportion of local governments adopting and implementing strategies in line with national strategies, shows a clearly positive evolution in the period from 2015 to 2021. In 2015, only 28% of Spanish local governments had and implemented specific strategies for disaster risk reduction, this proportion reached 39% in 2016. In 2017 there was a slight decline to 32%, however, the overall trend turned positive again in the following years: in 2018 it was 37%, and by 2019 and 2020 the proportion continued to grow to 40% and 42%, respectively. This sustained progress is evidence of a growing commitment and the gradual integration of risk reduction into Spanish municipal planning, in line with the principles of the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which promotes local action as a key driver of resilience.

PROPORTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING LOCAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN LINE WITH NATIONAL DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

The most notable change occurred in the last year analysed, 2021, when a remarkable 68% was reached, representing a substantial increase over the previous year. This percentage jump signals a significant consolidation of the preventive approach at the local level, probably driven by increased social and institutional awareness of climate vulnerability and recent events such as floods, forest fires, and other climate change emergencies that have affected different regions of the country. It can also be linked to the implementation of new public funding frameworks and regional and local action plans promoted by the central government, as part of the National Civil Protection Strategy and the regional Territorial Emergency Plans, which require municipalities to integrate specific risk management plans.

Progress in 2021 also reflects more effective and aligned coordination between local and national administrations, facilitated by the digitisation of administrative processes, the strengthening of local technical capacities, and the existence of networks for the exchange of best practices, such as the Spanish Network of Cities for Climate, which have promoted more comprehensive and collaborative approaches to risk planning. The improvement also coincides with a context

of increased availability of European funds linked to the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism, which allowed many municipalities to update or implement their risk reduction strategies for the first time.

The local implementation of the Spanish Urban Agenda (AUE), approved in 2019 and aligned with the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda of the UN and the Urban Agenda for the European Union, defines a strategic and methodological framework to guide local entities in decision-making with urban and territorial impact. In this way, the Local Urban Agendas constitute the urban strategic planning that guides decision-making with urban and territorial impact in an integrated and cross-cutting manner that transcends sectoral competences and guarantees its coherence and real impact.

PROTECTION AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS

Mediterranean regions are particularly vulnerable due to phenomena such as cold drops, urbanisation in flood-prone areas and natural soil disturbance.

For flood protection, the measures implemented are those included in flood risk management plans, land use and urban planning measures, adaptation measures, civil protection planning measures and flood forecasting measures, among others, as well as those included in the National Strategy for River Restoration (ENRR) viewer.

The tragedy in October 2024, when the Valencian Community suffered an Isolated High Level Depression (INLD), which caused torrential rains and devastating floods, is just one evidence of this. This event resulted in the tragic loss of 238 lives of which 230 occurred in the Valencian Community, 7 in Castilla-La Mancha and 1 in Andalusia and affected approximately 700,000 people. It also caused significant damage to infrastructure, homes and businesses, with more than 4,500 businesses damaged and 1,800 completely destroyed. Economic losses were estimated in billions of euros.

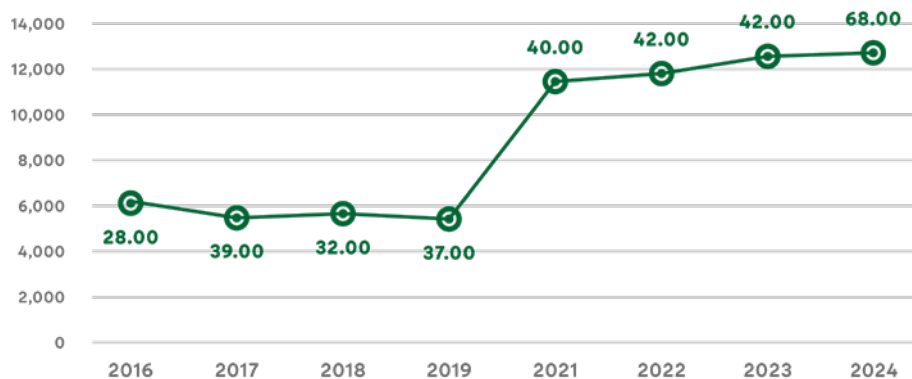
In this context, and with the aim of contributing to reconstruction through planning, the development of Urban Reconstruction Agendas that address urban resilience through prevention, mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change has been promoted.

In this context, the Areas at Potential Significant Risk of Flooding (ARPSI), identified in the framework of Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks, require priority intervention through the integration of adaptation strategies based on green solutions and the restoration of river space. In total, 1,444 ARPSIs have been delimited in Spain, covering more than 10,357 km throughout the territory, with a notable concentration in districts such as the Ebro (1,764 km in 56 ARPSIs), Guadalquivir (1,082 km in 128 ARPSIs) and Júcar (1,008 km in 59 ARPSIs). These areas include both fluvial and pluvial, marine or combined risks, allowing for more specific and territorialised planning.

Their heterogeneous distribution shows differences in exposure and planning between the different territories, which points to the importance of reinforcing the coherence and monitoring of actions, especially in urbanised areas, more vulnerable areas such as the coastline or areas with high agricultural value. The incorporation of ARPSI into urban planning and civil protection instruments is expected to be relevant to consolidate proactive risk management and reduce the impacts of future floods.

According to data from the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, public investment in resilient infrastructure has seen a significant increase in recent years, reaching over €12 billion in 2024.

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURES AND ECOSYSTEMS



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from the General State Budget Statistics. Ministry of Finance.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3. TOPIC 1. TERRITORIAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Adverse weather events.	↑	↑	Increasing, both in frequency and intensity.
Updating of urban planning instruments.	↓	↓	Temporary obsolescence of some urban plans as more than 70% were approved before 2010.
Integrated strategic urban planning.	↑	↑	Increasingly, due to the implementation of the Spanish Urban Agenda.
Proportion of local governments adopting and implementing local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies.	↑		Small setback in 2017.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 3.1: TERRITORIAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

59

Increase approved Local Urban Action Plans or Agendas in accordance with the AUE methodology by 20% by 2030 (base year 2021).

Indicator: Number of Local Entities that have drawn up their Local Urban Agendas. Source: Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda will provide the data.

SDG 11.a: Support economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas.

SDG 11.b: Increase the number of cities and human settlements that adopt and implement integrated policies and plans for disaster resilience.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

60

Train more than 8 million students in 25,000 non-university education centres in the knowledge, skills and abilities to learn how to act in civil protection emergencies.

Indicator: Number of non-university students trained in civil protection emergency response. Source: Ministry of the Interior will provide the data.

SDG 4.7: Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, including resilience to emergencies.

SDG 11.b: Increase the number of cities and human settlements that adopt and implement integrated policies and plans for disaster resilience.

SDG 13.3: Improve education and awareness of climate change mitigation.

61

Promote the creation of structures to improve coordination and decision-making by public administrations in the new context of climate emergency, such as the State Agency for Civil Protection and Emergencies and the Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the consolidation of existing structures, such as the Observatory on Health and Climate Change.

Indicator 1: Creation of the State Agency for Civil Protection and Emergencies and approval of its Statutes. Source: Ministry of the Interior will provide the data.

Indicator 2: Establishment of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Source: Ministry of the Interior will provide the data.

SDG 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions.

SDG 11.b: Increase the number of cities and human settlements that adopt and implement integrated policies and plans for disaster resilience.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

The General State Administration has adopted decisive policy and strategic measures to address territorial adaptation to climate change and strengthen resilience to climate impacts.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

One of the main contributions to improving territorial adaptation is the **Spanish Urban Agenda (AUE)**, a national strategy currently in force that serves as a reference framework to guide public policies towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development. It is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations New Urban Agenda. Its main objective is to achieve more liveable, cohesive and sustainable cities and towns by promoting rational land use, energy efficiency, sustainable mobility, urban regeneration and the protection of cultural heritage. The EUA encourages collaboration between administrations, businesses and citizens through voluntary local action plans. It also promotes integrated urban planning that combines environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social well-being.

Law 7/2021 on Climate Change and Energy Transition recognises the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC) as the basic planning instrument to promote coordinated action against the effects of climate change in Spain. Its main objective is to avoid or

reduce present and future damage from climate change and to build a more resilient economy and society. In the framework of the **Second National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change (PNACC) 2021-2030**, a total of 18 ministries, together with state agencies and autonomous bodies, are actively participating in the implementation of measures to strengthen climate resilience in Spain. These entities are responsible for implementing the 257 measures and 11 sub-measures of the first work programme (2021-2025), which address key sectors such as health, water, biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, energy, tourism and cultural heritage.

The **National Strategy to Combat Desertification (ENLD)**, which replaces the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (PAND) and is aligned with this Second Plan, proposes measures and actions to improve the governance of the fight against desertification and to promote land management that avoids land degradation.

The **Strategic Plan for Health and Environment (PESMA)**, approved in November 2021 and valid until 2026, is a Spanish Government initiative that aims to reduce health risks from environmental factors. Based on the One Health approach, it integrates human, animal and environmental health. The plan addresses areas such as air quality, water, noise, chemicals and temperature extremes. It promotes prevention, research, training and environmental management, with special attention to vulnerable groups. PESMA is articulated with other national strategies such as the PNACC and the Health and Climate Change Observatory.

The **Health and Climate Change Observatory** is an inter-ministerial initiative that studies how climate change affects public health. It assesses risks such as heat waves, vector-borne diseases and extreme events, and develops early warning systems. It also promotes scientific research, supports adaptation policies and promotes citizen education. Its approach prioritises the protection of vulnerable groups and the improvement of health resilience to climate challenges, in coordination with the PNACC and the PESMA.

The **National Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction Horizon 2035** strengthens the capacity of the National Civil Protection System to anticipate and respond to risks arising from climate change and other hazards. This plan establishes strategic links with the PNACC and recognises that climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are complementary processes that must be addressed jointly to ensure security, well-being and social cohesion throughout the national territory.

On the other hand, Spain has made significant progress in flood risk management, especially through the updating of the **Flood Risk Management Plans (PGRI)**, corresponding to the second cycle (2022-2027). These plans seek to reduce the negative impacts of floods through joint action between public administrations and society.

The PGRI and the **Hydrological Basin Plans (PHC) of the third cycle (2022-2027)** include specific actions aimed at the adaptation of vulnerable infrastructures, the lamination of headwater flows, the restoration of flood plains and the reduction of exposure in urban areas through the control of urban expansion on the public water domain.

The **Hydrological Planning Regulation (RD 907/2007)** incorporated in 2021 the need to carry out a specific study of adaptation to the risks of climate change in each river basin district for future consideration in the revision of the hydrological plan, so that all plans incorporate the commitment to draw up a **specific study of adaptation to the risks of climate change in each river basin district**, with an ecosystemic and territorial perspective.

This strategy aims at a transition from reactive management to a proactive model in which flood risk reduction, protection of aquatic ecosystems and resilience to extreme events

are integrated into a unified vision. These measures should be integrated into municipal urban planning instruments to promote effective coordination between water, land and civil protection policies.

Finally, the **Innovation Programme for Climate Resilience run by the INNPULSO Network of Science and Innovation Cities** is also worth mentioning, which was launched in January 2025. This programme aims to contribute to the recovery and transformative reconstruction of cities affected by external hazards. It does this by promoting the creation of climate-neutral cities that are more resilient to threats such as climate change-induced disasters. In addition to the municipalities of the Innpulso Network, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the Centre for Technological Development and Innovation (CDTI) and the two public universities of Valencia (UV and UPV) are participating in this initiative.

As part of the implementation of the programme, 5 Technical Support Groups have been created and several working days have been held in different Valencian municipalities affected by the last hurricane.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

As part of the adaptation to climate change, the reform and updating of the **Water Act in Spain** has been promoted by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO) as part of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR) and in compliance with commitments to the European Union. This reform, embodied in **Royal Decree-Law 4/2023**, responds to the need to adapt national regulations to the new challenges of climate change, especially with regard to the reuse of reclaimed water.

The main novelties include the modification of the **Consolidated Text of the Water Act**, which incorporates stricter criteria for the use of the public water domain, regulates the activity of urban wastewater reclamation and establishes incentives to promote its reuse in sectors such as agriculture and urban areas.

With regard to the adaptation of the coastline to the effects of climate change, the following stand out:

- **Law 2/2013 on the protection and sustainable use of the coast**, which introduces specific criteria for adaptation to climate change. It differentiates between urban and natural sections, imposes greater restrictions on natural sections, limits construction and occupation.
- The **National Strategic Plan for the Protection of the Spanish Coast** considering the Effects of Climate Change provides a coherent approach at national level, ensuring regional harmonisation and implementation of the most appropriate protection measures for the entire Spanish coastline in relation to coastal erosion risk management, seeking synergies with flood risk management and incorporating climate change adaptation.
- **Law 7/2021 on climate change and energy transition** (art 20) also requires coastal management to take into account resilience to climate impacts. It also affects the duration of concessions and limits their extension in areas of greatest vulnerability.

Following the particularly serious and tragic consequences caused by the storm on 29 October 2024, **Royal Decree-Law 7/2024** was published. This regulation entrusts the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and the Autonomous Communities, with the task of drawing up a civil protection emergency training plan. This training plan, which is compulsory in all non-university educational centres, aims to spread the culture of prevention and guarantee the appropriate training of the entire educational community in the response to all types of civil protection emergencies.

Based on the same Royal Decree-Law, two new subsidy lines have been opened in the 2025 financial year, resulting in subsidies in the area of childhood, adolescence and youth to local entities and social entities for work in the areas affected by the DANA.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the community promoted in 2024 the *Programme for the adaptation of school playgrounds to climate change*. The project plans to transform some 65 public schools through green infrastructures (shade, vegetation, permeable soils, water management) to improve their resilience to heat, promote biodiversity and strengthen the territorial competitiveness of the education system.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: *Law 10/2019, of 22 February, on climate change and energy transition*, was approved by Parliament with the aim of promoting the fight against climate change and moving towards a sustainable energy model.

NAVARRRE: the main objective of the *Roadmap for Climate Change in Navarra* is to move towards a sustainable, low-emission and resilient development model in the face of the effects of climate change.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: the Autonomous Community approved in 2023 the *Emergency Plan for Tsunami Risk*, designed to safeguard its coastline against tsunamis. This instrument organises the institutional structure for warning and response to high impact events and strengthens the competitiveness of the coast by ensuring its resilience and the continuity of key economic activities in coastal areas.

CATALONIA: the Autonomous Community participates in the European project *PITON (Pyrenees Innovation Holistic Mountain Transition 2024-2026)* which brings together mountain territories in Spain, France and Andorra to develop innovative tools for climate and digital transition.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: in 2024 the *Adaptaclima 2030* programme, aimed at all municipalities in the province (with the exception of Barcelona), has established a line of subsidies to boost the intervention of local governments in the province in adapting to climate change. This programme is part of the Provincial Council's Urban Agenda.

JUMILLA (MURCIA): the city council is developing the Spanish Urban Agenda pilot project in 2025 and the *New Bauhaus Jumilla 2030 Strategy* is being drawn up. The strategy aims to implement the urban transformation of the municipality in line with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) principles of sustainability, inclusion and beauty.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



INTRODUCTION

Environmental protection is an essential element in moving towards a sustainable territorial and environmental model in Spain, aimed at guaranteeing social cohesion, ecological resilience and the viability of production systems in the face of the effects of climate change and ecological degradation. In this context, the transformation of agricultural systems towards environmental improvement, sustainable water management, the conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and the modernisation of environmental infrastructures are identified as key components to promote sustainable and inclusive development.

Air quality in Spain has shown improvements in recent years, although challenges remain in urban areas. According to MITECO's Air Quality Assessment Report, in 2024 more than half of the population was exposed to pollution levels above the World Health Organisation's recommended values. While progress has been made in terms of environmental policies and traffic reduction through the implementation of Low Emission Zones, measures to ensure cleaner and healthier air need to be strengthened.

River basin management in Spain presents growing structural challenges, intensified by climate change. Territorial differences in water availability and quality, together with overexploitation of aquifers and diffuse pollution, require integrated water planning that takes into account ecological protection, territorial balance and sustainable development. Instruments such as River Nature Reserves and the Natura 2000 Network are important steps towards preserving the functionality of aquatic ecosystems, although it is considered necessary to complement them with active measures addressing the ecological requirements of aquatic ecosystems, ecological restoration, water efficiency and pollution prevention. On the other hand, the decline in the reuse of reclaimed water is evidence of the need to integrate circular economy principles into water management.

Water stress is a critical reality of climate change in Spain. Water losses in the network or management shortcomings can artificially exacerbate this stress; therefore, adapting all water supply systems to this new scenario (through technological modernisation and management efficiency) is an essential step towards ensuring water security by 2030.

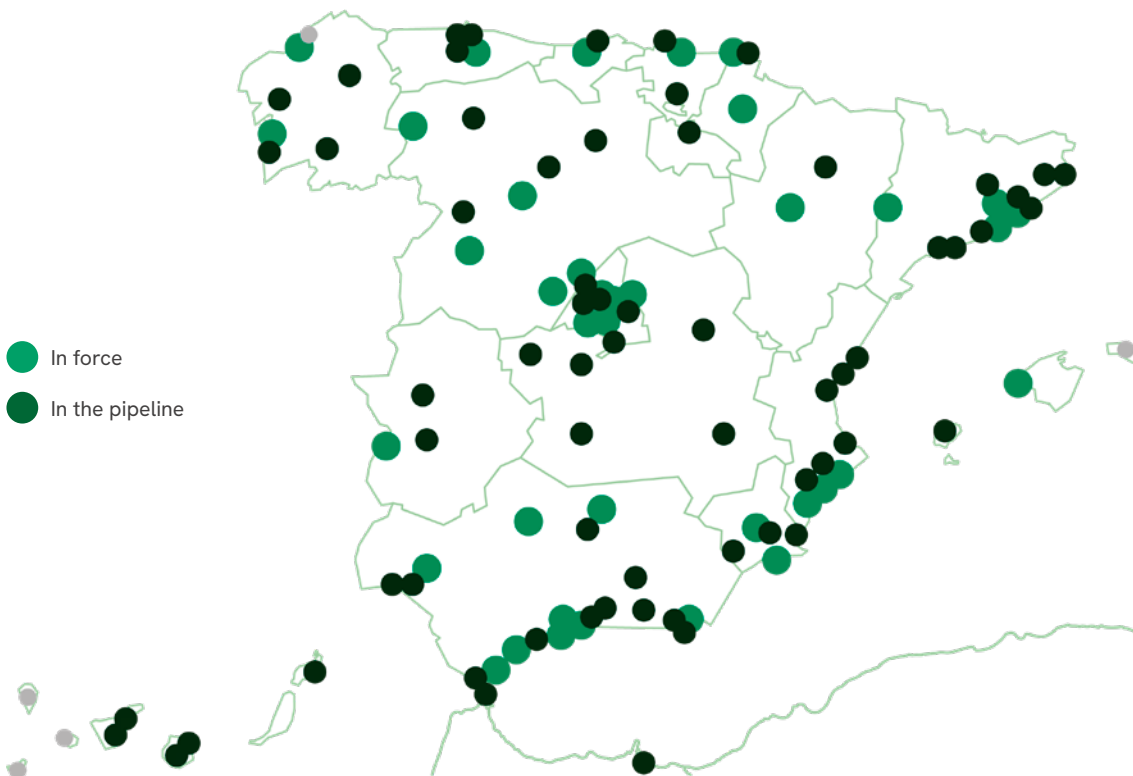
In this sense, nitrate pollution in groundwater is identified as a relevant and persistent problem. The territorial expansion of the affected areas and their link to intensive agriculture and livestock farming highlights the urgency of transforming the agri-food model towards sustainable practices. The lack of measures in this area could affect public health and ecosystems, as well as implying risks for Spain's compliance with its international environmental commitments.

Meanwhile, the conservation of marine ecosystems has taken significant steps forward with the expansion of marine protected areas in all parts of the country. It has achieved impressive figures, with 22.45% of Spanish waters now designated as marine protected areas, including 51% in the South Atlantic region and 34% in the Levantine-Balearic region. Furthermore, the INE indicators (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development indicators – Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development – Indicator 14.4.1. Proportion of fish stocks whose levels are biologically sustainable) reflect an increase in fish stocks managed at maximum sustainable yield levels.

Overall, strengthening environmental protection requires a systemic approach that ensures the conservation and restoration of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, guarantees essential ecosystem services and actively contributes to the resilience of urban and rural communities in the face of ecological crisis. Only through coherent, equitable and transformative action will it be possible to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and build an environmentally just and territorially balanced future.

AIR QUALITY

Low Emission Zones (LEZs) have been consolidated as a key tool in Spain's strategy for sustainable mobility and the fight against pollution, driven by the 2021 Climate Change Law, which requires their implementation in municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. Although the mandate affects some 152 municipalities (more than half of Spain's population), its deployment has been uneven: at the beginning of 2024, only 27 cities had operational EPZs, while more than 60 had not yet started the process. At present, 56 municipalities have an LEZs in force and 91 are in the pipeline.



Source: MITECO (Low Emission Zones in Spain).

Low Emission Zones (LEZs) can have a significant impact on improving air quality and reducing emissions if they are designed with ambitious criteria and accompanied by complementary measures.

WATER STRESS AND WATER QUALITY

Water stress in Spain has intensified in recent years, reflecting a structural situation associated with climatic factors, growing demands and inequalities in the efficiency of water infrastructures.

This scenario is compounded by actual water losses during distribution, which in 2022 reached 16.3% at the national level. Significant regional disparities were observed. In Madrid, there are high levels of efficiency with actual losses of 1.9%, whereas in other areas there are significant shortcomings in the management of the urban water cycle and the condition of infrastructure, which are important factors in the ability to respond to climate change.

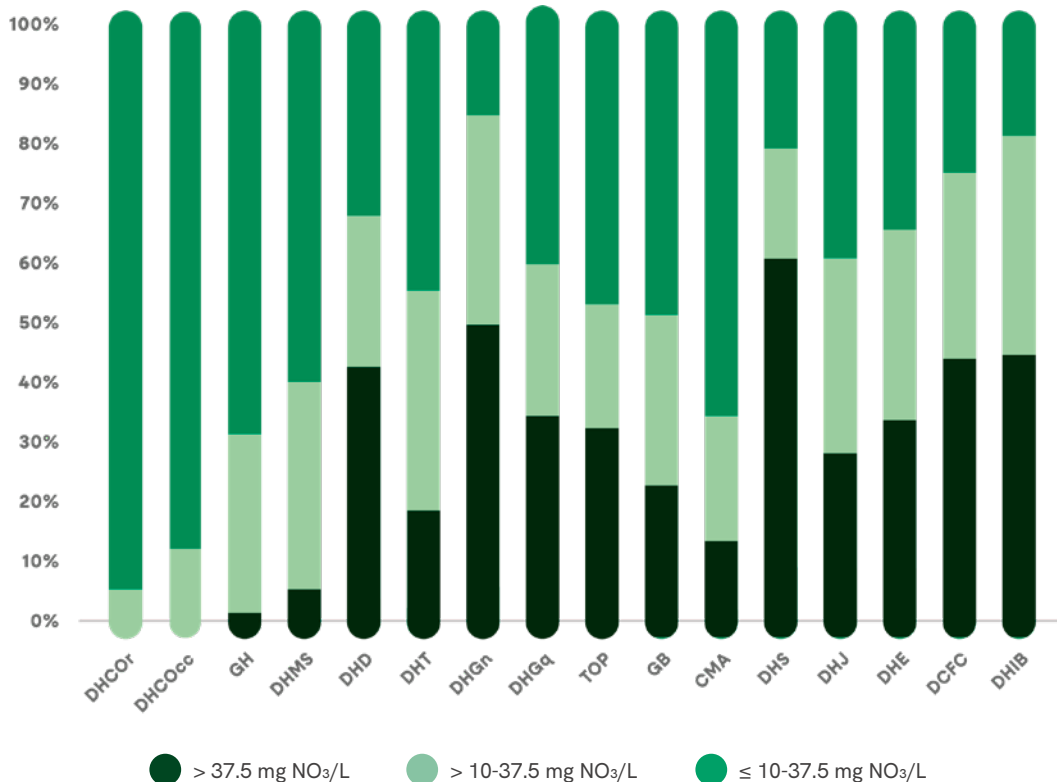
On the other hand, the status of water bodies in Spain presents relevant challenges. According to 2022 statistics, 45% of surface water bodies and 54% of groundwater did not reach the good ecological and chemical status established by the Water Framework Directive. The main pressures include diffuse nitrate and phosphate pollution from intensive agriculture, as well as overexploitation of aquifers.

The water deficit in Spain is particularly acute in the basins of the southeast peninsular, such as those of the Segura, Júcar and Guadalquivir, in a situation of structural shortage that is reflected, in some cases, in the historical dependence on external resources, such as the Tagus-Segura water transfer and desalination plants. These basins coexist with a structural deficit in terms of available resources together with an increasing exposure to drought events and strong pressure for intensive irrigation.

Specifically on groundwater, nitrate pollution has shown an increasing trend in recent years, as evidenced by both mapping data and monitoring reports. This development is closely related to the increase in intensive agriculture and livestock farming, particularly in regions such as Murcia, Valencia, Ebro and, more recently, Galicia and Extremadura.

In 2023, a total of 1,107 groundwater sampling points, equivalent to 33.06% of the total, exceeded the nitrate concentration of 37.5 mg/l, a figure slightly lower than the historical average for the period 2010-2023 (33.80%), but which maintains a high and persistent trend over time. The regions with the highest proportion of stations exceeding this threshold were the Guadiana (51.37%), the Segura (42.86%), the Balearic Islands (41.33%) and the Catalonia River Basin District (39.72%). However, the report highlights an all-time high of 8,588 analyses carried out in 2023, which has allowed a better characterisation of the state of the aquifers.

NITRATES. GROUNDWATER (2023)



Source: Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge. (2024a). Water Quality Report 2010-2023. TRAGSATEC team.

The consequences of this form of diffuse pollution are significant, persistent and affect both human health and ecological balance. Nitrates can remain in aquifers for decades and deteriorate the quality of drinking water and cause eutrophication in sensitive ecosystems. In this context, the new 2022-2027 water plans recognise that 23% of water bodies are impacted by nutrients and propose stricter measures, including the definition of maximum nitrogen surpluses and the extension of vulnerable zones.

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The Nice Ocean 2025 Conference (UNOC3) endorsed the almost unanimous recognition by States, maritime sectors and civil society of the importance of the conservation of underwater life and its relationship with the other goals of the 2030 Agenda. The oceans regulate the global climate system, provide natural resources and key ecological functions such as a carbon sink, a source of oxygen, contribute to the decomposition and disposal of waste and the reduction of pollution, and constitute the world's largest ecosystem with a multitude of habitats and almost one million known species.

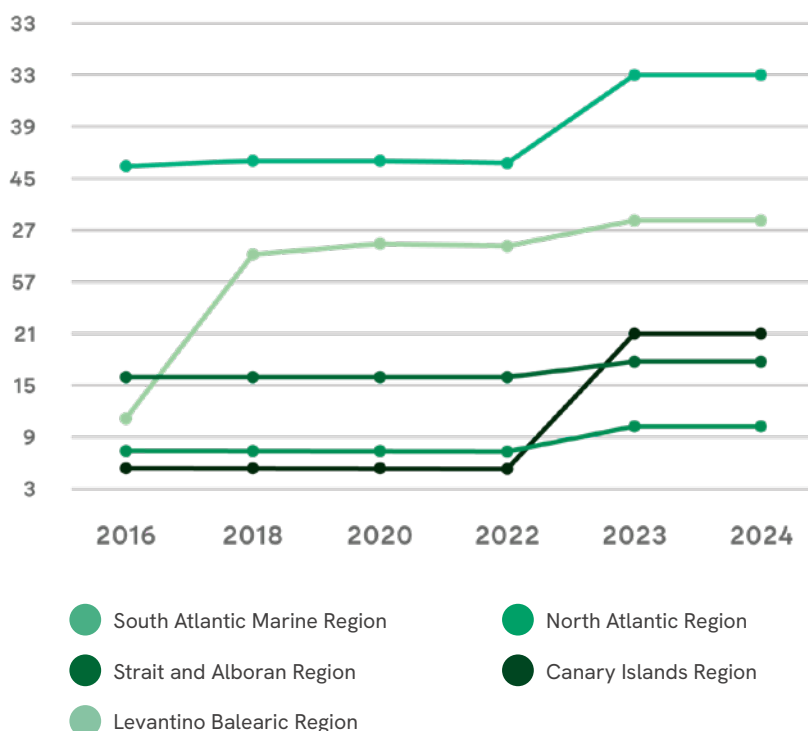
In Spain, marine biodiversity comprises around 14,000 known species, 10,000 km of coastline and 1 million km² of marine waters, making it a key factor in sustaining the Blue Economy, which employs 900,000 people and generates a turnover of almost €100 billion.

In the last decade, the marine protected area has gone from protecting barely 1% of Spanish waters to almost 22.45% today, representing more than 125,000 km², a substantial advance towards the target of 30% by 2030 under the Kunming-Montreal framework.

One part corresponds to Natura 2000 sites, which account for 16.8% of the total marine area of 180,518 km². MITECO manages 96% of these marine areas, conserving and monitoring a total marine area of 177,797 km² (16.5%) protected under the Natura 2000 network.

Maritime Spatial Plans were adopted in 2023, covering more than 1.2 million km² and acting as a key tool to drive a sustainable blue economy. Furthermore, Spain has stepped up its financial support with a contribution of €8.5 million to the Blue Fund for the Mediterranean and remains committed to science and innovation. Finally, the country is also a leader at the international level, being the first EU country to ratify the global agreement for the conservation of marine biodiversity in international waters.

COVERAGE OF PROTECTED AREAS IN RELATION TO MARINE AREAS



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from INE.

The growth in protected coverage has been particularly notable in the South Atlantic, Canary and Levantino-Balearic regions. South Atlantic increased from 40.5% in 2016 to 51.05% in 2023, thanks to the addition of strategic habitats such as sandbanks and cetacean breeding grounds. In the Canary Marine Demarcation, coverage quadrupled in two years (from 5.36% in 2022 to 20.97% in 2024), showing a shift in focus towards greater protection of its endemic biodiversity. The Levantino-Balearic region also showed sustained growth to 34.07%, with a special focus on the recovery of key habitats such as Posidonia oceanica meadows.

In terms of available resources, Spain’s contribution to UNOC3 stands out, with €8.5 million allocated to the Blue Fund for Cooperation in the Mediterranean, an annual budget of €16 million for environmental monitoring of the state of Spain’s marine environment, the commitment of €20 million for the period 2024-2029 to support research in marine environments and the commissioning of an oceanographic vessel.

To tackle these cross-border challenges, international cooperation is being strengthened through measures such as Spain’s ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdictions. Other significant initiatives include: a

commitment to regional seas conventions (a key instrument for cooperation with neighbouring countries and for establishing binding measures), the Barcelona Convention for the Mediterranean Sea and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention), and the High Ambition Coalition for a quiet ocean.

TERRESTRIAL NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST MANAGEMENT

Taking all protected areas into account, Spain now has 36.9% of its land area under protection, thereby far exceeding the 30% target set by the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

In the last 50 years, Spain's forested area has increased from 12 million hectares to 19.5 million hectares. Including cleared forest areas (9 million hectares), the total amounts to 28.5 million hectares.

The following factors have been identified as contributing to the increase:

- Rural abandonment: the abandonment of agricultural land has allowed natural colonisation by native species.
- Reforestation and environmental policies: reforestation and conservation programmes have contributed to growth.
- Legal protection: about 40% of the forest area is under some form of protection.

Recent years have seen an increase in fire risk and fire spread associated with the accumulation of biomass, a factor that can be reduced through proper forest management. In 2021, 22.2% of the forest area in Spain was managed, while two years later (in 2023) 23.6% was managed. The approval of the Common Basic Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management (2022) encourages the Autonomous Communities to update their management instructions: Extremadura (2022), Andalusia (2024) and Castilla y León (2025) have already done so, while Castilla-La Mancha's instructions are in the pipeline, which will cover 60% of the territory.

This is relevant if we take into account that only a third of the forest is publicly owned and that a significant part of the forest property is unknown or in a state of abandonment, the lack of exploitation of which increases risks and threats such as forest fires, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion or desertification. Finally, forest stands are facing forest decline processes induced by severe droughts, increased duration and intensity of heat waves and torrential rains, among other meteorological events linked to climate change. This makes it necessary to intensify climate change adaptive forest management practices to improve the structure and resilience of forest stands.

BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND DEGRADED ECOSYSTEMS

Biodiversity loss in Spain is a serious problem that affects the environment, the economy and human health. Despite being one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of biodiversity, with a great variety of ecosystems and endemic species, Spain faces multiple threats that are accelerating the disappearance of its natural heritage.

The main causes of biodiversity loss are:

- **Habitat destruction and degradation:** uncontrolled urbanisation, intensive agriculture, deforestation and infrastructure construction have drastically reduced and degraded natural areas, affecting the survival of many species.

- **Pollution:** various pollutants such as pesticides, excess nutrients, plastics and microplastics, and various heavy metals such as lead, affect soils and inland, coastal and marine waters and impact on habitats and species.
- **Climate change:** rising temperatures, droughts, floods and changes in precipitation patterns alter species' life cycles and change their habitats, especially in vulnerable areas such as forests and wetlands. Climate change is already having an impact on biodiversity, from the genetic to the ecosystem level. In addition, climate change multiplies threats to biodiversity when combined with other drivers of global change.
- **Invasive alien species:** the introduction of invasive alien species such as, among many others, the American crab, the zebra mussel or the ailanthus competes with native species, displacing them and altering the ecological balance. Invasive alien species are increasing in many regions of Spain and affect areas of high ecological value.
- **Overexploitation of natural resources:** activities such as illegal fishing and hunting and indiscriminate harvesting of endangered species lead to continuous and increasing exploitation of natural resources, often exceeding their regenerative capacity. In addition, they sometimes lead to the extinction of many species, some of which are unique in the world. Similarly, for example, overexploitation of water resources has sometimes irreversible consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Lack of environmental awareness:** the poor integration of natural heritage and biodiversity in the different economic sectors, as well as insufficient knowledge, education and awareness of the importance of biodiversity hinders the adoption of sustainable practices by citizens and productive sectors.

Biodiversity loss directly affects the ecosystem services that sustain life: crop pollination, water and air purification, climate regulation, flood protection, among others. Moreover, sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and tourism, which depend on natural wealth, are seeing their sustainability compromised.

In addition, the problem of degraded ecosystems is one of the country's main environmental threats, with direct consequences for biodiversity, human well-being and the economy. Spain has lost approximately a significant part of its natural habitat area in recent decades due to land use transformation, uncontrolled urbanisation, intensive agriculture and infrastructure construction.

PROTECTION OF PETS

In 2024, more than 292,000 dogs and cats were collected in Spain, the highest number since 2020. Of these, more than 173,000 were dogs and more than 118,000 cats. This gradual increase is attributed to improved registration rates and the persistence of factors such as unwanted litters, which accounted for 16% of abandonments, followed by loss of interest (14%), changes of address (11.8%), the end of the hunting season (11.2%) and behavioural problems (10.4%).

Three out of four animals collected were not microchipped, making it difficult to return them to their owners. Only 25% of dogs and 5% of cats were correctly identified, which has prompted awareness and identification control campaigns.

In 2025, the first official study on the management of animal protection, which collects data from municipalities and animal shelters, was presented. This study forms the basis for the future State Action Plan against Abandonment, which aims to reduce abandonment and complement the zero culling policy.

It is expected that, with the full implementation of the Animal Welfare Act, the reinforcement of identification, the compulsory sterilisation of cats and adopted animals and the control of breeding, the number of animals collected may decrease in the coming years.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3. TOPIC 2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
LEZ in Spanish municipalities.		↑	Progressive but slow increase.
Treated wastewater.	↑	↑	19.4% increase.
Reused water.	↗	↘	Uneven development by Autonomous Community.
Use of reused water in the agricultural sector.	↗	↓	Significant drop since 2020.
Use of reused water in the industrial sector.	↘	↑	Accelerated growth since 2020.
Nitrate affected waters.	↑	↑	A comparison of the 2015 and 2022 maps shows a considerable increase in nitrate impaired waters.
Volume of unregistered water.	↔	↔	Systematic loss of water resources.
Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas.	↑	↑	The South Atlantic region stands out.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

62

By 2030, halve pollutant emissions due to PM2.5 (particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of $\leq 2.5 \mu\text{m}$) compared to the level recorded in 2005.

Indicator: IME (average concentration measured at the stations constituting the IME network).

SDG 11.6: Reduce environmental impacts in urban environments, including air quality.

SDG 3.9: Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals and pollution of air, water and soil.

SDG 12.4: Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes during their life cycle.

63

Ensure good catchment status by reducing at least 40% of ground and surface water catchments with moderate and poor quality pesticides and nitrates (base year 2023).

Indicator: Percentage (%) of water quality monitoring points complying with nitrate and pesticide regulations. The data are collected in a water quality report of MITECO.

SDG 6.3: Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating discharge and minimising the release of hazardous chemicals.

SDG 6.6: Protect and restore water-related ecosystems.

SDG 15.1: Ensure the conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

64

By 2030, at least 30% of the national territory, and 30% of the marine area under national jurisdiction, will be protected, ensuring effective and socially participatory management and the achievement of its conservation objectives based on the best available scientific knowledge.

Indicator: Percentage of land and marine area protected, according to data from MITECO.

SDG 14.5: Conserve at least 30% of marine and coastal areas.

SDG 15.4: Ensure the conservation of mountain and terrestrial ecosystems.

SDG 15.1: Ensure the conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

65

Promote the implementation of sustainable management of all forest types by ensuring that there is no net loss of area subject to sustainable forest management plans by maintaining the sustainable forest management indicator at 23.62% (base year 2023).

Indicator: % of forest area subject to Management Instruments.

SDG 15.2: Promote sustainable forest management and halt deforestation.

SDG 15.1: Ensure the conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies.

66

Reversing biodiversity loss. Achieve measurable and quantifiable improvement in the conservation status of native wild species by ensuring that there is no deterioration in the trends and conservation status of any species by maintaining 0.88 (base year 2021) in the Red List Index.

Indicator: Red List Index (base year 2021).

SDG 15.5: Take urgent action to reduce habitat degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

SDG 15.1: Ensure the conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

SDG 14.2: Manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems.

67

Restore, collectively, by 2030, at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, promoting ecological connectivity and ensuring the provision of ecosystem services, prioritising the use of nature-based solutions, with a focus on restoring at least 30% by 2030, of habitat types in poor condition as defined by the Nature Restoration Regulation (base year 2024).

Indicator: % of habitats in poor condition restored. Source: MITECO will provide the data.

SDG 15.3: Combat desertification and restore degraded land.

SDG 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies and strategies.

SDG 11.a: Support economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas.

68

Reduce by 50% the number of animals collected in animal shelters by 2030 (base year 2023).

Indicator: number of animals collected in animal protection centres (base year 2023).

SDG 15.5: Take urgent action to reduce habitat degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

SDG 12.8: Ensure information and education on sustainable lifestyles, including animal welfare.

SDG 11.6: Reduce environmental impacts in urban settings, including animal management.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Spain has developed a set of interrelated plans, regulations and strategies that form a solid architecture for environmental protection. These instruments range from water and biodiversity management to air quality, terrestrial and marine ecosystems, and green infrastructure.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The **European Nature Restoration Regulation** (EU 2024/1991), in force since 18 August 2024, represents a historic milestone in the European Union's environmental policy. It is the first binding regulation that obliges Member States to restore degraded ecosystems, not just protect them. It includes restoring at least 20% of EU land and marine areas by 2030 and by 2050 restoring all ecosystems in need by 2050, thus contributing to mitigating climate change, improving food security and increasing resilience to natural disasters. To this end, the Regulation sets specific targets for different types of ecosystems (agricultural, forest, urban, rivers, seas) and requires Member States to adopt a National Restoration Plan, currently under preparation.

In the context of the recovery of emblematic ecosystems, the Priority Action Frameworks of the Mar Menor and Doñana stand out, which include a series of actions to reverse their degradation.

The **National River Restoration Strategy 2023-2030** is articulated with water and flood risk management plans, and aims to restore 3,000 km of river channels through nature-based solutions.

The **Groundwater Action Plan (2023-2030)** aims to optimise groundwater management and governance, making it compatible with the sustainable use of groundwater for different purposes, and to serve as a reference for the development of action and investment programmes involving all stakeholders in groundwater management.

In the field of biodiversity, the **State Strategic Plan for Natural Heritage and Biodiversity 2030** establishes the objectives and measures for the conservation, improvement and sustainable use of biodiversity, restoring degraded ecosystems, protecting threatened species and conserving key habitats such as wetlands, in line with international commitments. These actions are integrated with instruments such as the **Strategic Plan for Wetlands to 2030** or the **National Strategy for Green Infrastructure, Connectivity and Ecological Restoration**, which seeks to create a coherent and functional ecological network throughout the territory. There are also many conservation and threat control strategies in place to ensure the improvement of the most endangered species.

The **Spanish Action Plan against Illegal Trade and International Poaching of Wild Species** is also noteworthy. It aims to prevent illegal trade and international poaching of wild species and to tackle the root causes by involving public authorities and civil society.

In the marine environment, the **Master Plan for the Network of Marine Protected Areas (RAMPE)** and the second cycle Marine Strategies reinforce the protection of ocean ecosystems, by encouraging the promotion of the conservation of vulnerable habitats and the sustainable management of marine resources. These strategies are aligned with the objectives of the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC), which promotes the energy transition to renewable sources, energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

In relation to water use, the adoption of the **Strategic Directions on Water and Climate Change**, which identify the main challenges that climate change poses to water management, serves as a guideline. They propose lines of action to protect water bodies, improve sanitation, reduce pollution and better manage floods and droughts, relying on instruments such as hydrological planning, river restoration and aquifer protection. They also stress the importance of making progress in governance, with more transparency and participation.

Air quality is also addressed through the **National Air Pollution Control Programme 2030**, which sets out measures to reduce key pollutants in sectors such as transport, industry and agriculture.

In the forestry field, the **Spanish Forestry Plan 2022-2032 (PFE)** is the main strategic planning instrument for forestry policy in Spain. It develops the Spanish Forestry Strategy horizon 2050 (EFE). One of its objectives is to ensure the conservation of forest areas and resources, to balance their environmental and socio-economic value and to ensure that they can continue to provide multiple ecological, economic and social benefits. It also aims to improve the conservation status of forest ecosystems, their biodiversity and connectivity, through protection, ecological restoration and sustainable management, including the conservation of genetic resources and mature forests.

These actions are linked to the **National Strategy to Combat Desertification** which addresses land degradation and desertification, and reinforces the fight against erosion and loss of fertile soil by strengthening the sustainable management and use of land resources (soil, water and vegetation).

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Moreover, **Royal Decree 1052/2022**, which regulates **Low Emission Zones (LEZs)**, represents a key step forward in the fight against air pollution and climate change in urban environments. The LEZs not only improve air quality, but also promote modal shift towards public transport, active mobility and the electrification of the vehicle fleet, in line with the objectives of the **National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) and the Climate Change Act**.

Royal Decree 102/2011 establishes the criteria for assessing, maintaining and improving **air quality in Spain**. This decree adapts national regulations to European directives on clean air and sets limit values for pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, ozone and heavy metals.

With regard to the protection of the marine environment, maritime spatial planning was incorporated by **Royal Decree 363/2017**, developed within the scope of Law 41/2010 on the protection of the marine environment. The **Maritime Spatial Plans (POEM) were approved by Royal Decree 150/2023** for the five marine regions: North Atlantic, South Atlantic, Estrecho-Alborán, Levantine-Balearic and Canary Islands.

It also highlights the approval of **Law 5/2023, on sustainable fishing and fisheries research**, which regulates fishing in Spain with a sustainable approach. This regulation seeks to adapt fisheries to the current reality through the sustainability of biological resources, the use of the best and most recent scientific information, and the ecosystem approach, in relation to international agreements and European regulations.

Law 7/2023 on Animal Welfare in Spain has been a significant step forward in the protection of the rights of companion animals. It recognises animals as sentient beings and establishes a homogenous regulatory framework throughout the country, with concrete measures to improve their welfare and prevent abandonment. This reflects a profound change in the way Spanish society relates to animals, promoting responsible ownership and more respectful coexistence, including advances in the collection of animals from animal protection centres in Spain. It also contributes to the broader objective of environmental protection. By regulating the breeding, keeping and marketing of pets, this law reduces negative impacts on ecosystems, such as the abandonment of species that may become invasive or the overexploitation of natural resources associated with illegal practices. It is also aligned with environmental strategies such as biodiversity conservation, ethical management of natural resources and the prevention of health and ecological risks.

Organic Law 3/2023 amending the Criminal Code in the area of animal abuse reforms the Criminal Code in the area of animal protection, reinforcing the criminal protection of animals and updating the regulations to their legal status as sentient beings recognised by Law 17/2021.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CASTILLA LA MANCHA: *Law 2/2020, on Environmental Assessment of Castilla-La Mancha*, regulates the assessment of the environmental effects of plans, programmes and projects that may have a significant impact on the environment.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *Balearic Carbon Footprint Register*, created by Article 28 of Law 10/2019 on climate change and energy transition, is a key tool for monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the Balearic Islands.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: in the Autonomous Community, the *Preliminary Bill on Environmental Agents* is being drafted, with approval expected in 2026. Its aim is to modernise and legally consolidate this specialised body created in 2001. The new regulation seeks to strengthen the structure, functions and rights of civil servants with the status of environmental officer.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the region will promote, by the second quarter of 2026, the Programme for the environmental recovery of areas degraded by the deposit of inert waste, in response to a European demand for restoration and sustainable land management.

CATALONIA: the *Catalan Water Agency (ACA)* maintains a line of subsidies aimed at improving the ecological status of rivers and wetlands, with a 2027 horizon.

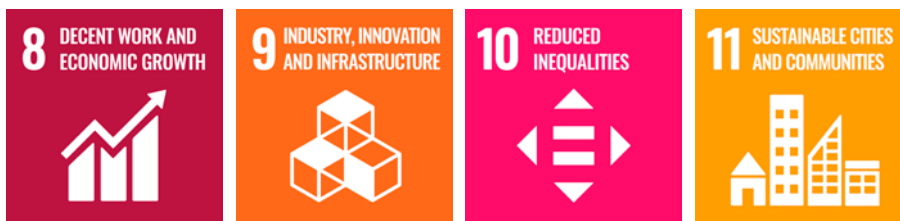
MEASURES BY LES TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BADAJOS PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: since 2024, the council has been implementing the *Green Label initiative on Zújar Island* to improve the sustainability and tourist attractiveness of the area. The initiative basically consists of improving infrastructures (accesses, car parks, paths, toilets, rest areas and signposting), preserving native flora and fauna and efficient management of the resource (digitalisation of gauging, incorporation of new technologies, accessibility, etc.).

CÓRDOBA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *Provincial CO₂ Emissions Offset Programme* has carried out reforestation, planting of trees and shrubs with native plant species and the creation of new carbon sinks, on several estates owned by Cordoba Provincial Council or on land ceded by other public entities.

3. TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING, COHESION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE



INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development and territorial cohesion are fundamental pillars to ensure equity and resilience for all places in Spain. The urban-rural divide, population ageing and depopulation of small municipalities pose structural challenges that require a comprehensive and coordinated response.

The phenomenon of depopulation in rural municipalities is a structural problem that has continued over the last decade, with a steady loss of inhabitants in these areas. Although a slight demographic recovery has been observed recently, the exodus to the cities still marks the population dynamics of many regions. The low birth rate, the lack of employment opportunities and the absence of adequate services reinforce this process, making it essential to implement effective repopulation strategies.

DEMOGRAPHICS IN RURAL AREAS

Spain's population has continued to grow over the last few decades, reaching 49 million by 2025, with the population concentrated around the major cities, the coast and the Mediterranean coastline. The ageing index in Spain is over 140, a figure that rises significantly in smaller towns and villages, where those with fewer than 8 inhabitants per square kilometre have more than 400 people aged over 65 for every person under 16. These figures coexist with record low birth rates and an increase in life expectancy to 83.2 years in 2023.

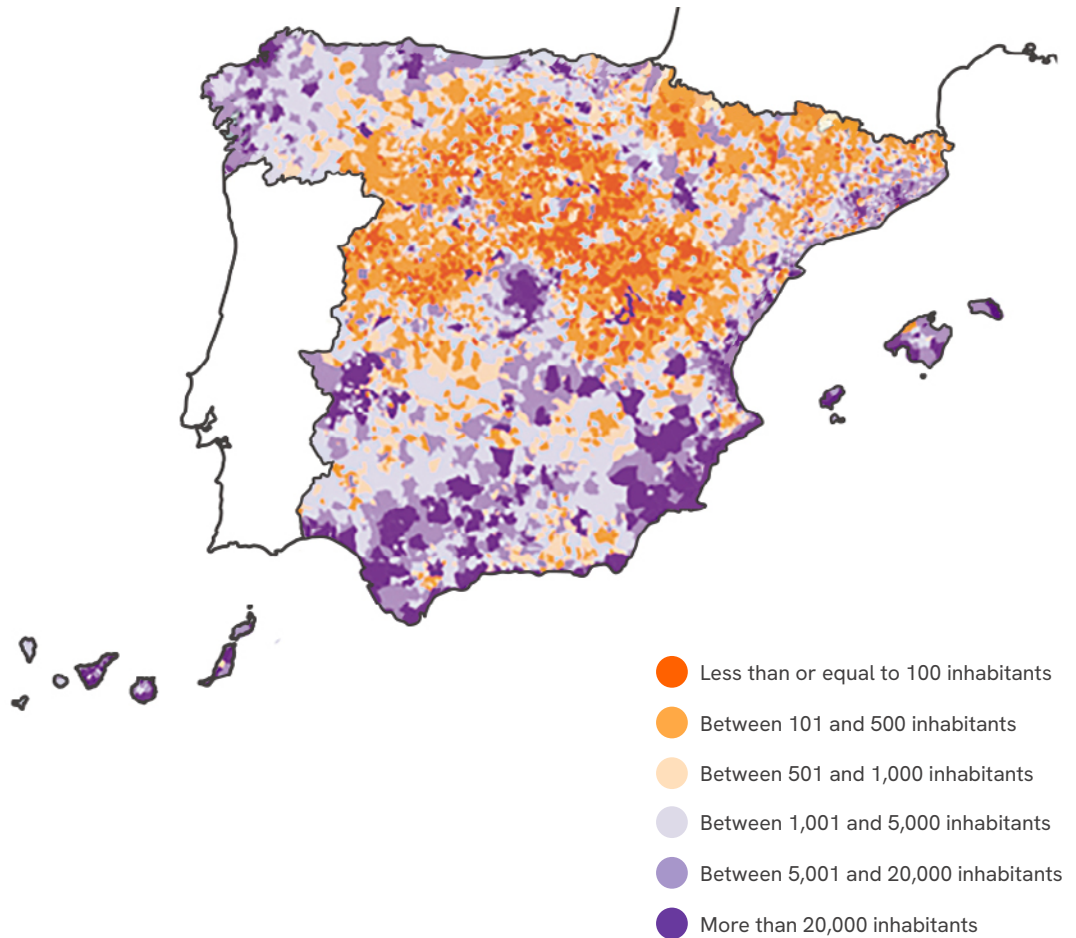
This over-ageing of the population predominates in rural areas, combined with higher male ratios and a decrease in the proportion of migrant population, which tends to reside in urban and coastal areas. Despite the lower number of women, female unemployment rates in rural areas are higher than the national average, a phenomenon potentially associated with the type of economic activity concentrated around the primary sector in these areas.

Inequalities are also observed in income distribution, with a gap of 38 points between municipalities with a population of less than 1,000 inhabitants and those with more than 500,000; as well as a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion in rural areas, with a rate 3 points above the average.

LOSS OF POPULATION IN RURAL MUNICIPALITIES

Currently, 84.3% of the population in Spain lives in urban municipalities, while only 15.7% live in rural areas. Of these, 6.4% live in municipalities with between 5,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, and 9.3% live in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants. However, these rural municipalities represent 81.8% of the total number of municipalities in Spain and occupy 85.4% of the country's surface area, which is evidence of the low population density in these areas.

POPULATION BY MUNICIPALITY (YEAR 2023)



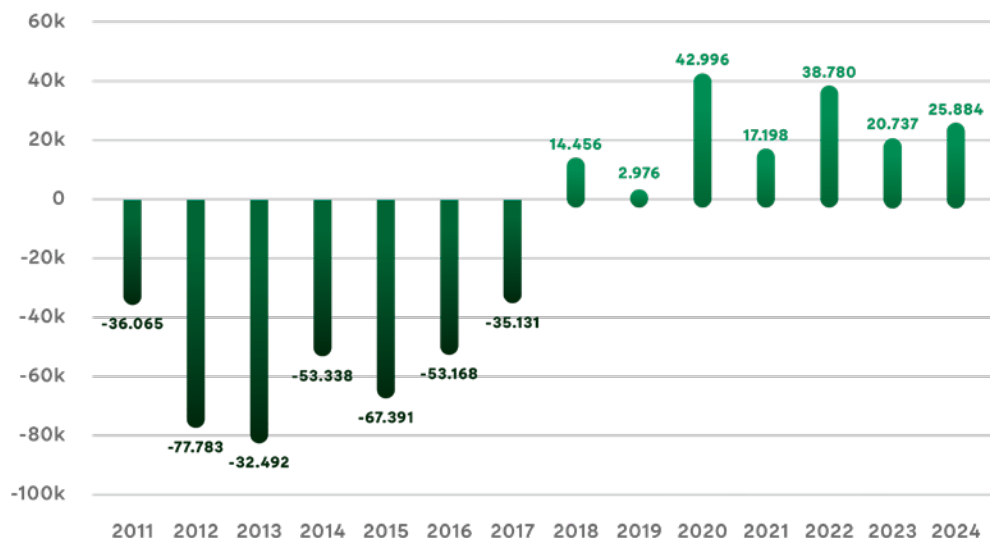
Source: Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

Depopulation in rural municipalities in Spain is a phenomenon that is clearly reflected in the evolution of population figures in recent years. However, although depopulation has been intense and widespread in rural areas, since 2018 there has been a slow change in the trend, which is reflected in an increase in the population of municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants and, above all, the generalisation of a positive migratory balance in many of these municipalities.

Whilst in 2018 there were 6,832 municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants that had lost 405,371 inhabitants between 2011 and 2017, these same municipalities will see their population increase by 163,027 people by 2025 and, more significantly, will have a positive net migration of 447,667 inhabitants between 2018 and 2024. This population growth is linked to the influx of migrants into our country in recent years and to people moving from other municipalities (this factor accounting for around 40% of the increase).

In any case, it is necessary to consolidate this change in trend, both in terms of extension and intensity, in order to make progress in territorial cohesion and to reinforce the functionality of rural areas, especially in the provision of basic services.

EVOLUTION OF THE POPULATION OF MUNICIPALITIES WITH ≤ 5,000 INHABITANTS (2012-2024)



Source: data Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO).

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The availability of basic infrastructures such as access to drinking water, sanitation and electricity, together with accessible public transport and the presence of basic services (education, health and social services, among others) in rural areas, are key elements in reversing the trend of demographic decline and promoting balanced territorial development.

Low population density implies difficulties in the provision of essential infrastructures and services to the people living in these territories, which affects their capacity to offer residential opportunities to their inhabitants and feeds back into the trend towards depopulation.

Spain has made significant progress in providing access to essential services, notably the near-universal provision of sanitation and a reduction in the number of people without access to basic infrastructure. However, the slight decline in access to safe drinking water in recent years highlights the need to reinforce investments in water infrastructure and ensure sustainability of supply in a context of climate change. Improvements in wastewater treatment and the modernisation of distribution networks will be crucial to ensure the quality of the resource and prevent inequalities in access.

Public transport in municipalities of less than 5,000 inhabitants represents another major challenge for territorial cohesion. Despite the growth of inter-urban transport and the gradual recovery after the 2020 health crisis, difficulties in accessing efficient mobility systems continue to affect less populated areas. Strategic route planning, digitisation of transport and the implementation of sustainable models such as on-demand transport are essential to ensure connectivity and avoid isolation of these communities.

Likewise, the presence of multi-service centres (educational, health, social and cultural) in rural areas is a key factor in ensuring equity in access to fundamental rights such as health and education. Distance to hospitals and secondary schools remains an obstacle in large regions of inland Spain, particularly affecting the most vulnerable populations and contributing to the depopulation of these areas. The decentralisation of services, remote healthcare and the expansion of inter-municipal transport are key strategies for improving accessibility and quality of life in less densely populated areas.

Ensuring access to essential services, digitisation of procedures and digital training, connectivity, promotion of rural employment, generational change, diversification of economic activity and improvement of infrastructure can be key factors in reversing population loss in low-density areas. The equitable redistribution of resources, the strengthening of support networks and the promotion of community participation will be crucial to ensure the social and economic sustainability of rural municipalities and a just and inclusive transition.

TERRITORIAL VULNERABILITY

Rural territories occupy 85.4% of the surface area and concentrate the country's main environmental assets. They generate essential public goods in terms of landscape, biodiversity, water resources or renewable sources. At the same time, they face increased exposure to natural hazards, forest fires, droughts, land degradation and desertification, aggravated by climate change, as well as greater challenges with fewer technical and financial human resources to deal with them.

Likewise, loneliness itself is conditioned by these territorial dynamics linked to depopulation, geographical dispersion, the lack of proximity services and the difficulties of physical and digital connectivity, especially in rural areas and territories with low population density. These dynamics can exacerbate social disconnection and limit opportunities for community participation and belonging, particularly among older people, youth and other vulnerable groups.

Therefore, territorial structuring implies a fair and responsible transition, respectful of the territory in the deployment of renewable energies, which strengthens social cohesion and promotes the integration of climate resilience with social equity, sustainability and citizen participation.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3. TOPIC 3. TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING, COHESION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Demographic variation rate in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants.	↓	↑	A change in trend is observed from 2018 onwards.
Ratio of overall population ageing.	↑	↑	Increasing, with higher incidence in rural areas of their proportion, together with a general drop in birth rates.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 3.3: TERRITORIAL STRUCTURING, COHESION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

69

5% reduction in the rate of municipalities losing population.

Indicator: Rate of demographic change in rural municipalities at risk.

SDG 11.a: Support economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas.

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 9.1: Develop sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being in rural areas.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT TERRITORIAL IMBALANCES, DEPOPULATION AND PROMOTE COHESION

The General State Administration promotes regulatory and strategic measures aimed at strengthening balanced territorial development and social cohesion in Spain. These actions aim to reduce inequalities between regions, improve access to essential services and promote economic opportunities throughout the territory. Through public investment, territorial planning and institutional cooperation, progress is being made towards a more balanced and equitable model in all territories.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

In another area of territorial cohesion and development, the **National Strategy for Territorial Equity and the Demographic Challenge**, currently in the process of being approved, is a long-term roadmap that involves all administrations (state, regional and local) and civil society (private entities, associations, non-profit organisations, citizens and the third social action sector). Its aim is to promote balanced development in all the territories of Spain by tackling inequalities and demographic challenges in a comprehensive manner. To ensure its inclusive and participatory nature, a consultation process has been carried out to identify the main challenges and opportunities for rural development. Another highlight is the forthcoming creation of the **Observatory for Territorial Equity and the Demographic Challenge**, an initiative that aims to create a digital space of national reference to obtain information, data and statistics, analysis, as well as regulations and initiatives underway in the areas of the demographic challenge and the fight against depopulation. These efforts are aimed at enhancing the analysis and monitoring of demographic challenges in Spain.

It was preceded by the **130-point Plan to Address Demographic Challenges** (approved by the Spanish Government in 2021 to combat depopulation and reduce regional inequalities), which had a budget of over €13 billion, largely funded by the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, and came to an end in 2024. Among its priorities were the improvement of digital connectivity in rural areas, the promotion of sustainable mobility, the digitisation of public services and businesses, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and economic diversification. It also included measures to guarantee access to basic services such as health and education, facilitate access to housing, promote gender equality and support young people in rural areas.

The "**30-minute country**" refers to a political initiative promoted by the Spanish government, with the aim of ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their place of residence, have access to essential public services (such as health, education, transport, etc.) within a maximum of 30 minutes' travel time. The main objective is to combat rural depopulation and promote territorial cohesion to ensure that people living in rural areas are not forced to move to cities for lack of basic services.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO COMBAT TERRITORIAL IMBALANCES, DEPOPULATION AND PROMOTE COHESION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CANTABRIA: programme of actions and aid to support the primary sector, especially in view of the challenges arising from the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Among the most notable measures is a "historic" agreement that includes an initial investment of €3 million in direct aid for some 3,000 livestock farmers and arable farmers, with the aim of compensating for lost income and improving the sector's sustainability.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the *Rural Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy* seeks to make visible, empower and support women who live and work in rural areas, especially in the agricultural and agri-food sectors.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: the *First Strategy to face the Demographic Challenge 2025-2030* aims to address internal migration, population ageing, connectivity of rural areas and the digitalisation of public services to achieve balanced, cohesive and competitive development throughout the region.

CANARY ISLANDS: promotes the *Canary Islands Demographic Challenge and Territorial Cohesion Strategy (Ecan Reto y Cohesión)* by 2026. The strategy aims to curb depopulation, promote new generation settlements and strengthen connectivity (physical and digital) of remote islands and municipalities. Its aim is to ensure equal opportunities, improve the quality of life and make the territory more competitive.

MEASURES BY LES TO COMBAT TERRITORIAL IMBALANCES, DEPOPULATION AND PROMOTE COHESION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ALZIRA (VALENCIA): in recent years, the town council has carried out various actions to recover and enhance the value of its natural, urban and cultural heritage.

4. REVITALISATION OF THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT



INTRODUCTION

The revitalisation of rural areas is one of the major territorial and socio-economic challenges facing Spain today. Although the country has a population of over 49 million inhabitants in 2025, this figure conceals enormous territorial imbalances characterised by progressive depopulation and ageing in large rural areas of the peninsular interior. Territories such as Castilla y León, Aragón, Castilla-La Mancha and Galicia have densities below 50 inhabitants per km², levels considered critical by Eurostat, and comparable to some of the most depopulated regions in Scandinavia or Eastern Europe. The phenomenon not only threatens social and economic sustainability, but also compromises key strategic objectives of the 2030 Agenda, such as territorial equality, equitable access to basic services and social cohesion.

Faced with this situation, sustainable tourism, the enhancement of rural cultural heritage, organic livestock farming and agriculture, sustainable forest management and small-scale fishing, among others, emerge as significant opportunities to reverse this depopulation dynamic.

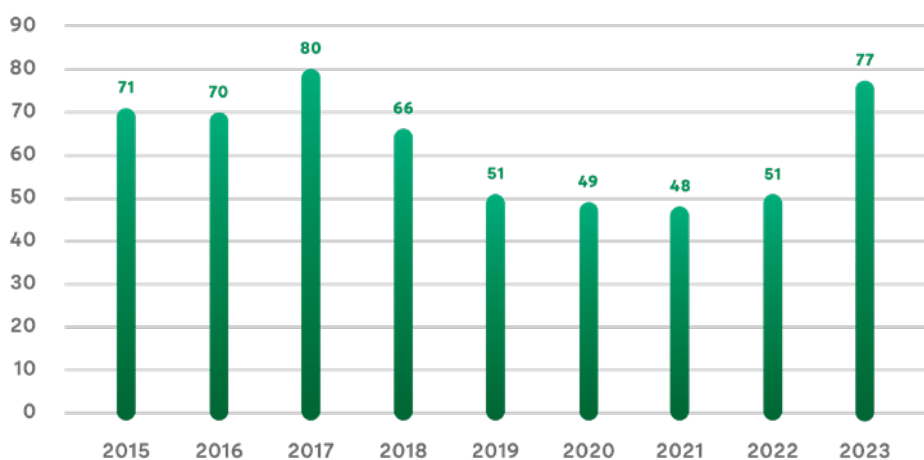
Likewise, the blue economy and organic production play a fundamental role in territorial revitalisation, in a country that is a net exporter of fruit and vegetables and a European leader in the blue economy. Both are strongly committed to sustainable economic models that make responsible use of marine resources, promote local employment and environmental protection. Organic production has made remarkable progress in recent years, with a steady growth in the certified area. Spain is one of the leading countries in terms of organic surface area in the European Union, which reflects a gradual change towards more sustainable agricultural practices, although it is necessary to continue to make progress in the increasingly sustainable use of phytosanitary products.

HERITAGE, RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

Spain's tangible and intangible heritage is one of its greatest assets, not only for its historical and cultural value, but also for its strategic potential in the configuration of more sustainable, resilient and cohesive territories. Cultural heritage represents a key lever for sustainable development in the Spanish rural environment, both for its identity value and its economic impact. According to the 2024 Yearbook of Cultural Statistics, Spain has 19,062 properties designated as Assets of Cultural Interest (BIC), of which 79.2% are monuments and 10.8% are historic sites; these categories are widely distributed throughout the country, including numerous rural and inland areas. In regions such as Castilla y León, Aragón and Andalusia, where there is a high concentration of these assets, heritage becomes a structuring axis for cultural tourism proposals, specialised training and entrepreneurship linked to traditional trades, architecture and crafts.

The active conservation of this heritage also generates an important technical and professional activity. In 2023, the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute carried out more than 300 actions, including 96 restoration interventions on immovable property, 47 on movable property and 224 scientific studies applied to conservation and diagnosis, focusing on the prevention of deterioration, analysis of materials and historical documentation. These interventions, in addition to preserving the cultural heritage, promote skilled employment and cooperation between administrations, universities, companies and technicians in the territory. Moreover, rehabilitated heritage increases the attractiveness of rural destinations and contributes to territorial balance by encouraging more sustainable and distributed tourism flows. Furthermore, in the field of architectural heritage conservation, the 2% Cultural Programme has, since 2014, carried out conservation work on more than 440 properties, with an investment of over €250 million.

RESTORATION OF PROPERTY OF THE SPANISH CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTE (TOTAL FOR YEARS)



Source: produced by the authors based on data from INE + CULTURABase.

The impact of heritage on the rural economy is amplified through cultural tourism, which attracts millions of visitors and euros each year. According to the same yearbook, almost 10 million people visited monuments and archaeological sites in 2023, with a high satisfaction rate and a strong spending component on accommodation, catering and complementary activities. This type of tourism presents a clear opportunity for municipalities with depopulation, as it allows diversification of the local economy and the enhancement of pre-existing resources.

Within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, the Impulsa Patrimonio Cultural programme has been implemented. The project has financed actions for the maintenance, restoration and revaluation of cultural heritage for tourist use and assets of cultural interest in Paradors, with a total of more than 200 beneficiary heritage assets, many of which are located in rural areas.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Faced with the negative impacts of mass tourism, this model proposes a balance between economic growth, environmental protection and the well-being of local communities. In a global context marked by the climate crisis, the loss of biodiversity and the growing demand for authentic and responsible experiences, sustainable tourism is not only an alternative, but a necessity.

In the case of Spain, where tourism represents more than 12% of GDP and a large part of the supply is concentrated in coastal and urban areas, the promotion of sustainable tourism is

considered relevant to decongest destinations with high tourist pressure such as Barcelona or the Balearic Islands. It also helps to revitalise rural and inland areas, such as Castile and León, Aragon and Extremadura, and promotes more balanced development that is in line with climate and territorial cohesion objectives. In addition to the marked concentration in island areas and along the mainland coastline, there is also a strong seasonal component. This generates a high pressure on services and infrastructures during the summer season, as opposed to inland areas with a loss of affluence.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture in Spain is a key sector that represents an important part of the rural economy and contributes to the food security of the country and of Europe. The most important crops are cereals, olives, vineyards, fruit and vegetables, with Spain being the world leader in olive oil and wine production. The Mediterranean climate favours agricultural diversity but faces challenges such as water scarcity, rural depopulation and adaptation to climate change.

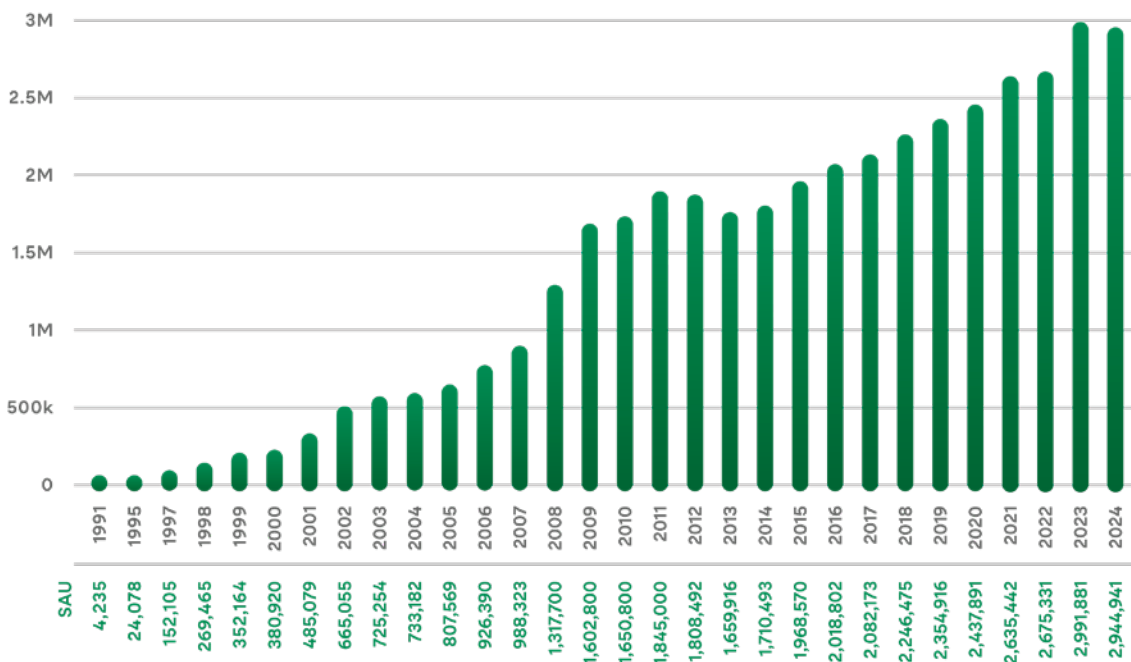
In this sense, agriculture is the main consumer of water in Spain, with approximately 80% of the total, being irrigation its main use, and has an impact on soil quality and desertification. Most of the water used comes from surface sources (74%) and groundwater (24%), although in view of the increasing scarcity of the resource and the effects of climate change, the use of non-conventional sources such as reclaimed water (0.4%) and desalinated water (1.6%) has increased. Irrigated crops include cereals, olive groves, non-citrus fruit trees and vineyards, which together account for 67.5% of the total irrigated area. This configuration generates strong pressure on water resources, especially in basins with structural deficits, and highlights the urgency of moving towards more efficient and sustainable models of agriculture.

In recent years, modernisation has been driven by digital technologies, efficient irrigation and sustainable practices to ensure competitiveness and reduce environmental impact. Specifically, for the period 2021-2027, infrastructure investment has allocated €422 million to the transformation or consolidation of irrigation systems; alongside €1.335 billion for the modernisation of irrigation systems to improve energy efficiency and savings, which will benefit over 160,000 hectares and involve 96 irrigation associations.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

In recent years, organic production in Spain has experienced notable growth, consolidating the country as one of the European leaders in terms of surface area dedicated to this method of production. In 2024, this area reached 2.94 million hectares, representing 12.31% of the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA), compared to 7.49% in 2012. The number of organic operators has grown from just 396 in 1991 to 62,621 in 2024, reflecting not only an expansion of the sector, but also a significant increase in the diversification of related activities, reaching 66,687 at national level in 2024. Andalusia stands out especially in this area, as it leads in terms of surface area and number of operators and industrial and commercial activities.

EVOLUTION OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION (1991-2024) UTILISED AGRICULTURAL AREA



Source: Report on organic production statistics in Spain. Year 2024.
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

This quantitative growth is accompanied by a qualitative transformation in the perception and positioning of organic production within the Spanish agri-food system. Operators opting for organic processes are not only involved in primary production, but also in the processing, marketing and industrialisation of foodstuffs. Industrial activities related to plant production (around 10,000) and animal production (more than 1,600) are evidence of a more mature value chain, in which regions such as Valencia, Catalonia and Castile-La Mancha are strongly positioned. However, territorial disparities persist, reflecting different degrees of institutionalisation of the ecological model and differences in local capacities to develop it.

According to the data of the last agricultural census of 2020, more than 68% of the holdings corresponded to natural persons, although legal persons with a smaller number of holdings accounted for more hectares, which shows a larger average size per holding. These data show how organic production is consolidating both among individual producers and in company structures. This reflects an increasingly professionalised sector with growing economic weight. The sector nevertheless faces persistent challenges to avoid the delocalisation of added value and to strengthen marketing channels that facilitate market access for small producers.

In addition to traditional agricultural holdings, organic production encompasses other low-impact economic activities such as honey production, mushroom picking, organic production management, livestock and forestry grazing.

EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK FARMING

The Spanish livestock sector was worth €28.241 billion in 2024, accounting for 41% of total agricultural output. Spain is the leading European producer of pigs and sheep and the third largest producer of cattle, generating thousands of jobs in rural areas. This is key to curbing depopulation and maintaining economic activity in less populated areas.

Extensive livestock farming is fundamental to land management and, more specifically, its work in sustainable pasture management is of paramount importance from an environmental point of view. It is present in areas such as the dehesa, and contributes to the conservation of the landscape, biodiversity and fire prevention, as well as generating high quality products such as meats and cheeses with designation of origin and important ecosystem services. From a territorial perspective, extensive livestock farming is key in many rural areas of Spain, where it is the main source of income and employment. However, it faces challenges such as low profitability, ageing farmers and competition for land use.

On the other hand, intensive livestock farming, particularly in the pig and poultry sectors, has boosted international competitiveness and exports, placing Spain among the leading European producers, with an estimated pig production of 12.8 million head in the final quarter of 2025, accounting for 87% of national meat production. The cattle population, which is on a downward trend, stands at around one million head, whilst for sheep and goats, despite the decline observed, Spain remains the EU's leading producer.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3. TOPIC 4. REVITALISATION OF THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Tourist expenditure.	↓	↑	Significant drop due to COVID and post-pandemic recovery to above pre-pandemic levels.
Tourist consumption.	↓	↑	Significant drop due to COVID and post-pandemic recovery to above pre-pandemic levels.
Direct tourism GDP.	↓	↑	Significant drop due to COVID and post-pandemic recovery to above pre-pandemic levels.
Tourism employment.	↓	↑	Significant drop due to COVID and post-pandemic recovery to above pre-pandemic levels.
Organic farming.	↑	↑	UAA production increase compared to 2021, with a slight decrease in 2024 compared to the previous year, in absolute terms.
Efficiency of irrigation.	↓	↑	Financial efforts to modernise systems.
Restoration of immovable property of the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute.	↑	↑	Uneven annual change with no clear trends.
Economic diversification in rural areas.		↑	Initiatives launched such as the Territorial Innovation Centres.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 3.4 REVITALISATION OF THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Increase the growth of total international tourism expenditure on sustainable tourism activities in the Autonomous Communities of Green Spain (Asturias, Cantabria, Galicia and the Basque Country) and the inland regions of Spain, with the exception of the Community of Madrid (Extremadura, Castilla y León, Castilla La Mancha, La Rioja, Aragón and Navarra) and Ceuta and Melilla by 6.5% compared to 2024.

Indicator: Expenditure of international tourists by Autonomous Community of main destination.

SDG 8.1: Sustain per capita economic growth in line with national circumstances.

SDG 8.2: Increase economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation.

SDG 8.9: Promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs, promotes culture and local products.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 11.4: Protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

71

Increase the area under organic farming by 25% by 2030 (base year 2015).

Indicator: *Statistics on organic production in Spain, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.*

SDG 2.4: Ensure sustainable and resilient food production systems.

SDG 3.9: Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses caused by hazardous chemicals and pollution of air, water and soil.

SDG 6.3: Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating discharge and minimising the release of hazardous chemicals.

SDG 15.1: Ensure the conservation of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR RURAL REVITALISATION

The State Administration has launched important strategies from the public administration, such as the **Spanish Urban Agenda** or the **National Strategy to face the Demographic Challenge**, which emphasises the need to integrate criteria of density, quality of life, available services and economic opportunities in territorial public policies, in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDGs 9, 10 and 11), as well as other actions ranging from the promotion of organic agriculture and extensive livestock farming, to the digitalisation of the agri-food sector, the improvement of the quality of life in small municipalities and the promotion of gender equality in the rural environment.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

It is important to highlight the **Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy Post 2020 (PEPAC)** because of its relation to competitiveness and the agricultural sector. The document constitutes the national strategy for implementing the new Common Agricultural Policy in Spain. For the first time, all the interventions of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are integrated into a single document, allowing greater coherence and flexibility to adapt them to the specific needs of the agricultural sector and the Spanish rural environment.

Extensive livestock farming receives a high percentage of CAP direct coupled support in addition to basic income support. Equally, eco-regimes have been particularly adapted to the particular conditions of extensive livestock farming. The future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the period 2028-2034 is currently under negotiation, which will ensure that aid to the sector is maintained and increased. Participatory local development is also promoted through the LEADER initiative, to which 9.5% of the EAFRD has been allocated, almost double the amount required by European regulations, thus strengthening social cohesion in rural areas.

In addition, the **National Food Strategy** and the **Strategy for the Management and Promotion of Extensive Livestock Farming** are two fundamental pillars for promoting a sustainable agri-food model in rural areas. Both promote practices that respect the environment, animal welfare and biodiversity, while generating employment and added value in rural areas. These strategies not only contribute to the conservation of natural resources, but also strengthen the local productive fabric.

In parallel, the **Digitisation Strategy for the Agri-Food, Forestry and Rural Sector**, together with their respective **Action Plans 2021-2023 and 2024-2026**, have been key to reducing the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Through investments in connectivity, digital training, open data platforms and support for technological entrepreneurship, these measures have made it possible to modernise farms, improve the competitiveness of rural SMEs and facilitate access to essential digital services.

In addition, the **Roadmap of Actions in Favour of Generational Replacement in the Agricultural Sector**, drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and approved at the Conference of Presidents, is essential to guarantee the effective incorporation of young people and new professionals in the agri-food sector. It is also necessary to address aspects such as improving access to land and credit for young people, reinforcing their skills and training to exercise the profession, improving the social prestige of the agricultural profession, making public aid more flexible and optimising it for young people, promoting the digitalisation of the sector and the use of other cross-cutting actions that make the exercise of agricultural activity more attractive.

The **Strategy for Rural Women's Equality** reinforces this inclusive approach by recognising the central role of women in the economic, social and cultural dynamisation of rural areas. Through programmes such as *Crecemos Juntas* or *Desafío Mujer Rural*, female entrepreneurship and the creation of support networks are promoted, which helps to fix the population and combat depopulation.

In turn, the **"Sow, Grow and Harvest your future" strategy** is aimed at professionalising the agri-food sector and attracting young talent through training, innovation and digitalisation. Through actions such as the CULTIVA Programme, the consolidation of an agri-food sector with qualified professionals, essential for the sector's ecological and digital transition, environmental sustainability, the contribution to the circular economy of our production model, as well as gender equality, the economic, territorial and social resilience of rural areas and, in short, the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, is promoted.

The **Nature Trails Programme** includes actions aimed at the management, construction, improvement and dissemination of the network of Nature Trails in Spain. They basically consist of the recovery and conversion of old infrastructures for use by pedestrians and cyclists, thereby responding to the social demand for alternative tourist services of a sporting, cultural and nature-related nature. All of this, with the aim of contributing to the development of rural areas, to the preservation of the public use of the infrastructures on which they are based, to sustainable mobility and to the so-called green infrastructure.

On the other hand, the **Spain Tourism 2030 Strategy** is the roadmap for transforming the Spanish tourism sector towards a more sustainable, inclusive and balanced model from an economic, social and environmental point of view. The strategy is articulated in five programmes, 50 goals and 148 instruments, in which 18 ministries of the Spanish government participate

The Spain Tourism 2030 Strategy is aligned with the demographic challenge policies to promote the socio-economic revitalisation of rural territories. It aims to make Spain a world leader in sustainable tourism and to this end places people at the centre of the ecosystem and places responsibility and balance as the guiding values of the activity. In this sense, the aim is to consolidate tourism as an engine of responsible economic development, boosting its competitiveness, economic contribution, capacity for distributing prosperity in the territories and generating new opportunities. To this end, it integrates 5 programmes on destinations, businesses, talent, residents and tourists, whose aim is to maximise the benefits that tourism brings to the territories and to correct the negative externalities that may arise from the tourist pressure that some destinations suffer.

It thus includes measures to facilitate the digital and green transition, improve the quality of employment, promote balanced coexistence and living culture, improve the quality of life of residents, and boost business competitiveness and talent attraction. It also seeks to promote a more balanced development, in line with climate and territorial cohesion objectives. The Spain Tourism 2030 Strategy aims to consolidate the results of policies aimed at spreading out tourist flows, reducing seasonality and diversifying tourism supply and demand, which have already been launched with an investment of €3.4 billion from Component 14 of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan.

The launch of the network of Regional Innovation Centres is also worth highlighting. These are collaborative spaces operating at provincial or multi-provincial level that promote economic development, social innovation and the retention of talent in rural areas. These centres act as nodes connecting public administrations, companies, universities and civil society and are dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship, sustainability and territorial cohesion projects. The RedCIT facilitates the exchange of experiences, the creation of innovation ecosystems and the design of joint initiatives between territories.

The network is currently present in more than 20 Spanish provinces. The **CIT MITECO-CIUDEN**, located in León, functions as a national focal point and supports the implementation of common projects. It also strengthens collaborative governance between the different Territorial Innovation Centres.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Law 9/2022 on Architectural Quality is particularly noteworthy; it declares architecture to be a public good and establishes a legal framework to protect, promote and disseminate architectural quality in Spain. Its objectives include: promoting architectural heritage, encouraging research, rehabilitation, innovation and digitalisation, fostering energy efficiency, the circular economy, universal accessibility and the gender perspective in building.

Likewise, **Law 35/2011, on shared ownership of farms**, which aims to alleviate the situation of inequality and the lack of visibility of women's work in farming, especially in family farms where only the man is the owner of the farm, although she also shares the agricultural tasks. Through this figure of co-ownership, women farmers and livestock breeders are given fair economic, professional and social recognition, which is essential for their professionalisation, to improve their participation in the sector's organisations and to increase their presence in their decision-making bodies.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO REVITALISE RURAL AREAS

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ANDALUSIA: The *Andalucía Rural Conectada Programme* is an initiative that seeks to improve mobility in rural areas with low demand for public transport. It offers an on-demand transport service by means of discretionary vehicles (such as taxis), adapted to the needs of the rural population, especially in small and isolated municipalities.

NAVARR: the *Rural Development Plan* is a key tool for boosting the economic, social and environmental development of rural areas, promoting the modernisation of the agricultural sector, the incorporation of young farmers, and the improvement of rural infrastructures as a whole.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: the *CRECE Industry 2027 Action Plan*, framed within the Strategy for the Economic Transformation of Andalusia 2021-2027, aims to strengthen and expand the region's industrial value chains. To do so, it promotes its modernisation, digitalisation and sustainability.

CANTABRIA: *Law 3/2024 on Fiscal and Administrative Measures* introduces new personal income tax deductions. The deductions are aimed at encouraging the birth rate and the fixation of population in rural areas and include bonuses for the birth of children and specific tax deductions for those who live in or move to rural municipalities. The aim of all this is to encourage the establishment of roots and repopulation.

CATALONIA: the *Women in the Rural and Maritime World Programme 2026-2030* seeks to promote gender equality and the active participation of women in the agricultural, fishing and marine sectors. To this end, it favours their leadership and visibility in decision-making.

MEASURES BY LES TO REVITALISE RURAL AREAS

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

MONÒVER (ALICANTE): since 2022, the local government has been developing a programme to revitalise the rural areas of the municipality and organises various cultural activities that focus on the promotion of sustainable tourism.

PONTEVEDRA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *+Convivir Programme* for the strengthening of the associative fabric of the municipalities of the province aims to invigorate neighbourhood communities. To this end, it encourages exchange between social entities and promotes intergenerational dialogue by supporting activities led by associations in the municipality.

NEW COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4: FREE, EQUAL AND COMMUNAL LIVES

1. GENDER EQUALITY



INTRODUCTION TO GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality in Spain has experienced remarkable progress in recent years, but still faces structural inequalities that limit the full exercise of women's rights and opportunities. Areas such as employment, leadership, care and participation in strategic sectors, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and sustainability show partial progress, although insufficient to guarantee real and effective equality.

One of the main deficits lies in co-responsibility for care. Since 2015, the percentage of women out of the labour market due to family responsibilities has remained around 1%, ten times higher than for men (0.1-0.2%). While the pandemic temporarily narrowed this gap thanks to remote working, by 2021 it had reached 1.2%, reflecting the persistence of an unequal distribution.

The gender pay gap has decreased from 23% in 2015 to 8.96% in 2025. This progress responds to pay transparency measures and the increasing presence of women in higher paid occupations. However, inequality persists in high value-added sectors, such as finance, industry and technology, where women face greater barriers to access and promotion.

In terms of leadership roles, Spain has achieved significant improvements in the representation of women in senior bodies and senior positions within the central government, rising from 29.4% in 2015 to 41.6% in 2024. However, women account for only 19.66% of top-level executive positions. In SMEs, the proportion of female managers rose from 33.7% in 2019 to 38.4% in 2025, with marked differences by age: whilst young women (aged 16-34) have almost achieved parity (47.8%), those aged 55 and over account for just 27.5%.

Women's participation remains low in strategic sectors linked to knowledge and sustainability. In 2022, 5.5% of employed women worked in STEM fields, compared to 13% of men, reflecting a participation ratio of 2.4 in favour of men. Nevertheless, there has been an improvement compared with 2011 (3.3%), indicating slow but steady progress.

Since 2015, the proportion of women in senior management positions in public and private companies has shown a steady increase. In that year, only 22.2% of board members in the European Union (EU-27) were women, while in Spain the figure was even lower at 18.7%. In terms of executive positions, female representation was even lower, at 13.7% in the EU-27 and 10.6% in Spain, reflecting a clear gender gap in access to leadership positions.

Between 2016 and 2019, the trend was one of moderate growth and from 2020 onwards, an acceleration in the inclusion of women in leadership positions was observed. In 2021, the percentage of women on boards of directors in Spain exceeded the European average, 32.6% compared to 30.6% in the EU-27. By 2024, the EU-27 average is 34% of women on boards of large listed companies. In Spain, women account for 36.34% of all board members at listed companies, whilst on the boards of IBEX 35 companies the regulatory threshold of 40% is exceeded, reaching 41.22%, driven by stricter regulations on gender parity in management bodies such as the entry into force at the end of 2024 of the EU Directive on gender balance on boards of directors, and Organic Law 2/2024 on equal representation and the balanced presence of women and men.

Regarding sexual and reproductive health, it is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of Organic Law 2/2010 on sexual and reproductive health and the voluntary termination of pregnancy, in order to guarantee universal and equal access to these rights throughout the country, preferably through public healthcare centres.

There is also an important gender dimension to loneliness, linked to persistent structural inequalities in the areas of care, employment and social protection. Women experience loneliness more frequently at certain stages of the life cycle, especially at older ages, as a consequence of longer life expectancy, more discontinuous work trajectories, pension gaps and a greater likelihood of taking on unpaid care. These dynamics affect their relational well-being, social participation and autonomy, reinforcing situations of vulnerability that require comprehensive public responses.

In short, achieving effective gender equality in Spain requires redoubling efforts and adopting more comprehensive and cross-cutting strategies that reinforce co-responsibility, boost wage and employment equity, facilitate women's access to emerging high-value sectors and strengthen the protection of particularly vulnerable groups of women, with the aim of meeting the targets set for 2030.

At the international level, Spain promotes gender equality through its feminist foreign policy, which incorporates the gender perspective as a cross-cutting principle in all our actions, strengthens cooperation with a gender focus, including the new Feminist Cooperation Strategy and the Ellas+ programme, and increases its support for multilateral organisations such as UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It also advocates gender-sensitive international funding and parity in decision-making bodies by 2030.

GENDER EQUALITY INDEX (EIGE)

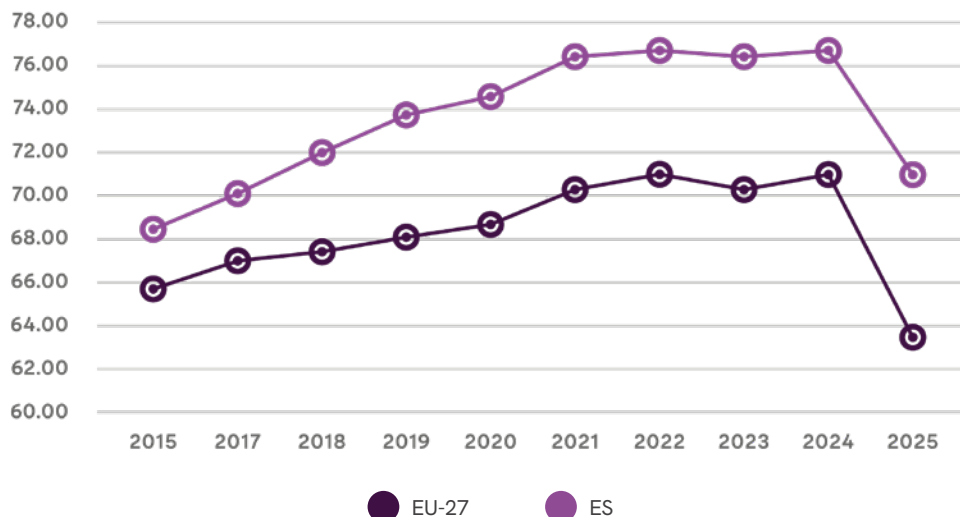
The EIGE Gender Equality Index 2025 gives Spain 70.9 points, which once again places Spain above the average index for the rest of the European Union countries (63.4 points).

Thus, the latest Gender Equality Report published by EIGE (European Agency for Gender Equality) identifies Spain as one of the three countries (along with Ireland and Malta) that have recorded the greatest progress in the Index since 2015. Specifically, the progress that has taken place in our country since 2015 is 13.2 points, although taking the year 2000 as a reference, the increase reaches 5.2 points.

In this sense, the report's data consolidate the vision of structural progress in gender equality, mainly attributable to regulatory reforms (Equal Pay Act, parental leave and labour legislation, among others), greater institutional commitment and a growing social demand and consensus on the problem of gender inequality.

In this respect, he stresses that, based on this methodology (renewed for the first time in 2025, since 2013, to account for emerging issues in a constantly evolving context), we are at least 50 years away from achieving full gender equality in Spain.

COMPARATIVE EVOLUTION (2015-2025)



Source: Produced by the authors, based on data from the European Agency for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2025). Gender Equality Index 2025: Spain vs EU-27 scores 2015-2015.

Regarding the period 2020–2025, the greatest progress recorded in Spain has been in the area of 'Power', with the situation in Spain improving by 22.7 points. In contrast, the biggest drop in Spain's ranking was in the area of "Knowledge", where we dropped 3.6 points.

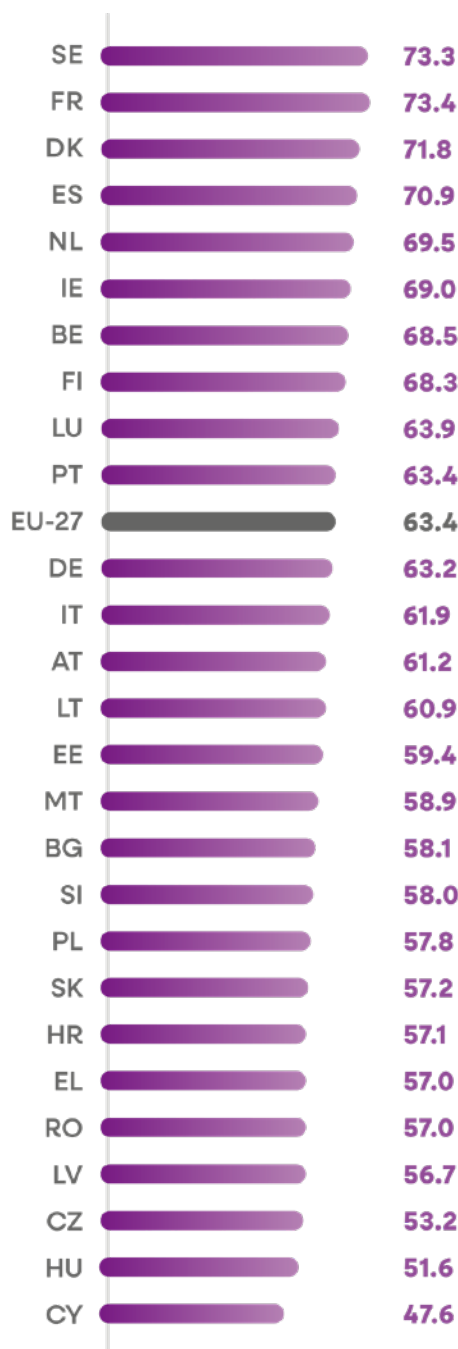
In 2025 and with respect to the European average (EU-27), Spain is in line with the average, with a notable improvement in the areas of "Financial resources" (79.9 points compared to 76.1 in the European average), "Participation" (83.2 points compared to 82.1 in the European average) and, especially, in the area of "Power".

Thus, with regard to the "Power" dimension, Spain's better positioning in 2025 in the area of political power (77.7 points compared to 47.3 points in the EU-27) is noteworthy, as it has greater parity in political representation, on the boards of directors of large companies (65.7 points, compared to the EU-27 average of 49.4) and in the socio-sporting sphere (58 points and 28.4 in the EU-27).

As a counterpoint, we are more engaged in care activities (childcare, housework and long-term care) in 2025, where we register 68.9 points compared to 57.1 in the EU-27.

In conclusion, the comparison of the EIGE Index with the EU average in 2025 shows, once again, that Spain is one of the leading countries in gender equality within the European bloc. This relatively advanced position is the reflection of a sustained public strategy, a robust institutional framework for equality (through, for example, the Women's Institute) and the promotion of strategic frameworks that incorporate the gender perspective in a transversal manner (Third Strategic Plan for the Effective Equality of Women and Men 2022-2025 and the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan) and the accompaniment of an active civil society.

GENDER EQUALITY INDEX



Source: European Institute of Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2025.

GENDER PAY GAP

Since 2015, the gender pay gap in Spain has been progressively narrowing, albeit slowly and marked by structural inequalities according to sectors and occupational levels. In that year, the difference in average annual earnings between men and women was 23%, reflecting not only a direct wage disadvantage, but also multiple systemic barriers limiting women's access, retention and promotion in the labour market. Between 2016 and 2019, the gap remained broadly stable between 21% and 22%, with no significant structural changes.

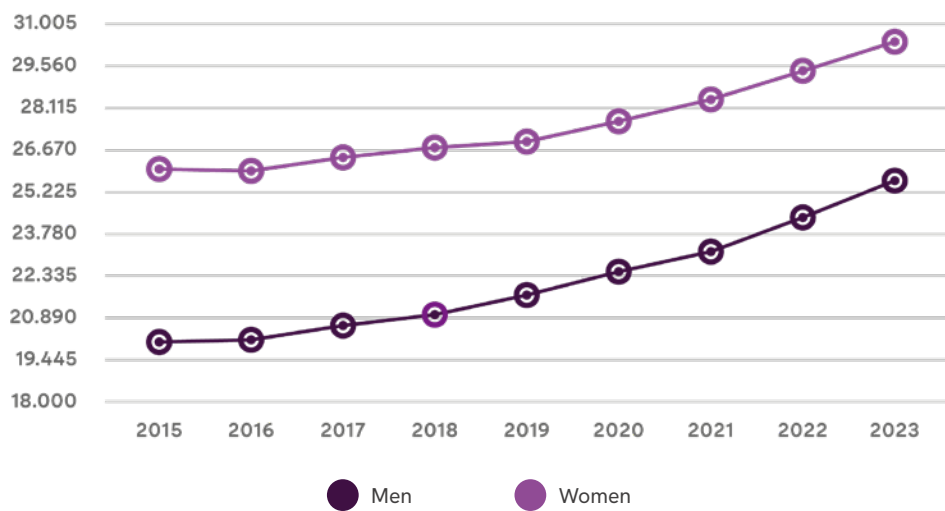
According to the 2021 Wage Structure Survey, the average pay gap between men and women, measured in terms of gross hourly pay, stood at 10% and had narrowed by 16% in 2021 compared with 1995.

From 2020, in a context influenced by the pandemic and the entry into force of regulations such as Royal Decree 902/2020 on equal pay, a clearer downward trend was observed. The gap fell to 20% in 2020, to 18.3% in 2021 and to 15.7% in 2023, the sharpest decline in the last decade. This progress has coincided with increased institutional oversight and control, as well as demands for company wage audits. However, female-dominated sectors such as hotels and catering, commerce and transport continue to show above-average gaps.

Wage inequality is also exacerbated by wage supplements, which account for around 40% of the gap in monthly pay, as these are typically linked to working conditions more commonly found in male-dominated jobs. At the same time, the feminisation of care, both paid and unpaid, strongly conditions women's professional careers. In 2024, more than 350,000 women were working part-time for care reasons compared to only 33,000 men, an 11-fold increase. The lack of public services for work-life balance and the still dominant family model still expel many women from quality employment, which makes it urgent to reinforce structural equality policies so as not to perpetuate this generation gap.

This inequality is most pronounced among migrant women, Roma women and women with disabilities, for whom poverty and job insecurity are particularly high and for whom there is less of a reduction in the labour and economic gender gaps.

**MEANS AND PERCENTILES BY SEX AND AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY
ANNUAL SALARY STRUCTURE SURVEY, GENDER, NATIONAL TOTAL, AVERAGE**



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE. Average by sex, male and female, national total.

GENDER INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality analyses how identities and social categories (gender, race, social class, etc.) intersect, overlapping and leading to multiple discrimination.

Women, in particular, often face double discrimination or multiple discrimination due to the intersection of their gender with characteristics such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation, etc.

MIGRANT WOMEN

In recent decades, Spain has undergone a profound social transformation linked to the feminisation of migratory flows, with a notable increase in the number of female migrants in

the country. Between 1991 and 2001, female immigration grew by 417%, and since then, this phenomenon has continued with a strong economic component. Today, women represent 46% of the immigrant population, although their presence in the Social Security system is lower, being mostly concentrated in feminised sectors such as domestic work and care for dependent persons.

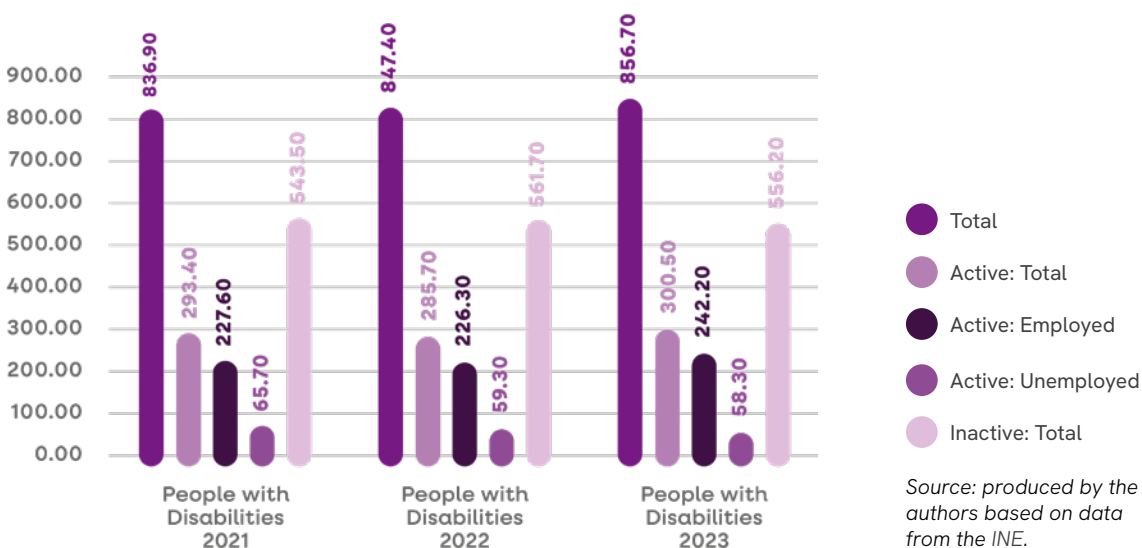
WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND OCCUPATION

In recent years, the labour participation of women with disabilities in Spain has shown an uneven evolution, with progressive but still limited improvements. In 2021, only 27.2% of women with disabilities were employed, which shows a significant gap compared to the non-disabled population. Although the number of women in work fell slightly in 2022, there was a slight increase in employment, suggesting that measures such as remote working and sheltered employment schemes have had some positive impact. However, activity and employment rates remained well below desirable levels, due to structural obstacles such as lack of accessibility, multiple discrimination and little attention to general labour market policies.

In 2023, there was a further significant improvement, with 15,900 more women in employment than in the previous year, bringing the employment rate to 28.3%, the highest recorded in recent years. This growth reflects the positive effect of active employment policies, such as hiring incentives, subsidies to companies and the strengthening of Special Employment Centres, framed in the Spanish Strategy on Disability 2022-2030. Despite this, women with disabilities still face cultural and social barriers that hinder their integration into the labour market, especially in skilled areas, where prejudices about their productive capacity persist. This underlines the need to move towards more equitable and cross-cutting inclusion.

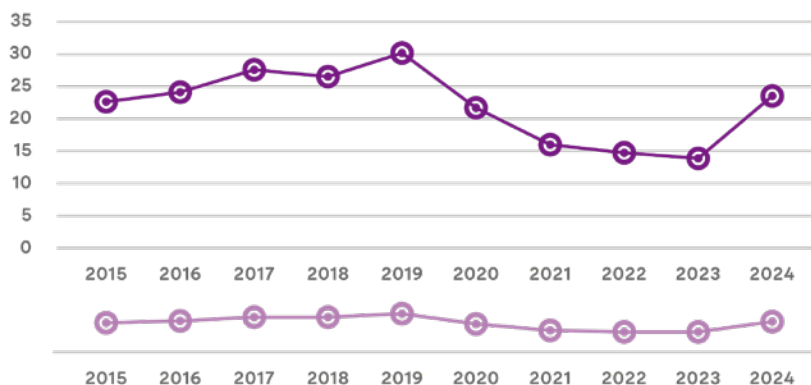
Comparison with men with disabilities shows that the gender gap also affects this group. In 2023, the employment rate for men with disabilities was 28.6%, while for women it was 28.3%, a smaller difference than in the general population but still showing inequality in terms of access to employment. Although the gap is small, it reflects the double impact faced by women with disabilities, who are confronted with both gender discrimination and disability. In 2024, the pay gap among people with disabilities was 8.9% lower for women with disabilities (based on their gross annual pay).

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND OCCUPATION



Between 2014 and 2024, Spain has shown a remarkable evolution in reducing the employment gap for women with activity limitations (moderate or severe). This has fallen from 17.2% in 2014 to a low of 12.4% in 2022 and 2023, before rising again to 18.1% in 2024. This reduction reflects, in part, a greater institutional effort to promote labour inclusion policies, but the upturn in 2024 could warn of a slowdown or reversal if structural measures and personalised support for these workers are not reinforced. Factors such as economic instability, the adjustment of incentives to companies or the lack of digital training could be influencing this upturn.

EMPLOYMENT GAP OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BY LEVEL OF ACTIVITY LIMITATION AND SEX



Source: EUROSTAT (Tables on EU policy - European pillar of social rights (EPSR). 2023).

ROMA WOMEN

The situation of Roma women in Spain, according to the report of the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma People 2021-2030, reflects a reality marked by multiple forms of discrimination and significant structural inequalities.

Roma women face a combination of factors such as anti-Roma prejudice, poverty, social exclusion and gender inequality, which results in higher illiteracy rates (14% compared to 6% among Roma men), reduced access to secondary and higher education, and a very low labour force participation rate (only 16.8% are in employment). In addition, many of them take on family responsibilities that make it difficult for them to enter the labour market, and 98% of those engaged in unpaid domestic work are women. These inequalities are also reflected in access to public services and in the perception of health, with Roma women reporting worse conditions.

In the labour market, the situation is particularly worrying. The unemployment rate among Roma women stands at 60.4%, compared with 47.4% for Roma men and 16.2% for non-Roma women. Furthermore, 57.6% of young Roma women aged between 16 and 30 are neither in education nor in employment. The Strategy acknowledges these gaps and proposes specific measures to improve the employability of Roma women. It therefore includes training programmes, recruitment incentives, support for entrepreneurship and awareness-raising actions to combat stereotypes. The need to ensure access to work-life balance services and to promote co-responsibility in the home is also addressed.

Similarly, only 16.8% of Roma women are employed, compared to 44.1% of Roma men. The activity rate is 38.5% for Roma women, compared to 76.2% for Roma men and 53.1% for non-Roma women.

The structural causes behind the high unemployment rate among Roma women are deeply related to a combination of intersectional discrimination factors. These women face barriers due

to their gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status, which limit their equal access to education, employment and public services. The disproportionate burden of family and household responsibilities, which falls almost exclusively on them, prevents their full participation in the labour market, even when they have attained medium or higher levels of education. Moreover, negative stereotypes, the lack of job opportunities adapted to their circumstances and the scarce presence of positive references in the professional sphere reinforce their exclusion. This is compounded by the structural and cultural discrimination that persists in many areas of society, which hinders their empowerment and economic autonomy.

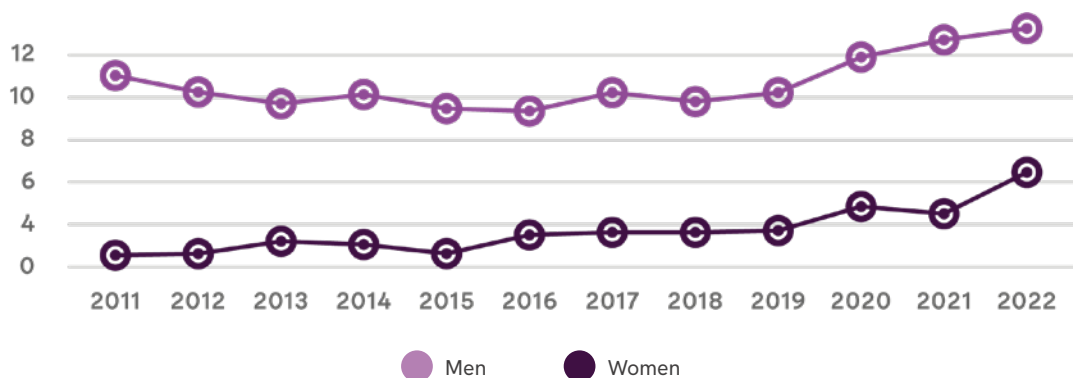
STEM

Women's participation in STEM areas (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) still shows significant inequalities in Spain, as EsadeEcPol's 2024 report reveals. From an early age, significant gaps in mathematics can already be detected, which are not due to innate abilities, but to social factors such as negative self-perception, mathematical anxiety and gender stereotypes. At the age of 15, girls are 21% more likely than boys to feel nervous about solving mathematical problems, and this anxiety has increased compared to a decade ago. This lower confidence has a direct impact on their academic performance, which in turn affects their future orientation towards STEM studies.

These inequalities become more evident as the educational trajectory progresses. Although girls have higher promotion rates in the Baccalaureate, their representation in science streams is still lower, especially in the technological stream. At university level, the situation is worse: women account for only 13% of students in computer science, 27% in physics and 36% in mathematics. This phenomenon is also repeated in Vocational Education and Training, where only 7% of women opt for STEM degrees, compared to 52% of men. Although girls score higher in STEM careers and have lower drop-out rates, their lower initial presence leads to a persistent gap in graduation.

In the labour market, women's access to STEM occupations is also limited. Only 5.5% of employed women in Spain work in these sectors, compared to 13% of men. Even though the proportion of young women in these roles has increased, only one in four STEM positions is held by a woman. Moreover, having a STEM degree does not guarantee that women will work in STEM: five years after graduation, they are 2.7% less likely to be in a STEM job than their male peers.

TRENDS IN THE PERCENTAGE OF STEM EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER (2011–2022)



Source: EsadeEcPol - Center for Economic Policy
(Women in STEM. From basic education to working careers).

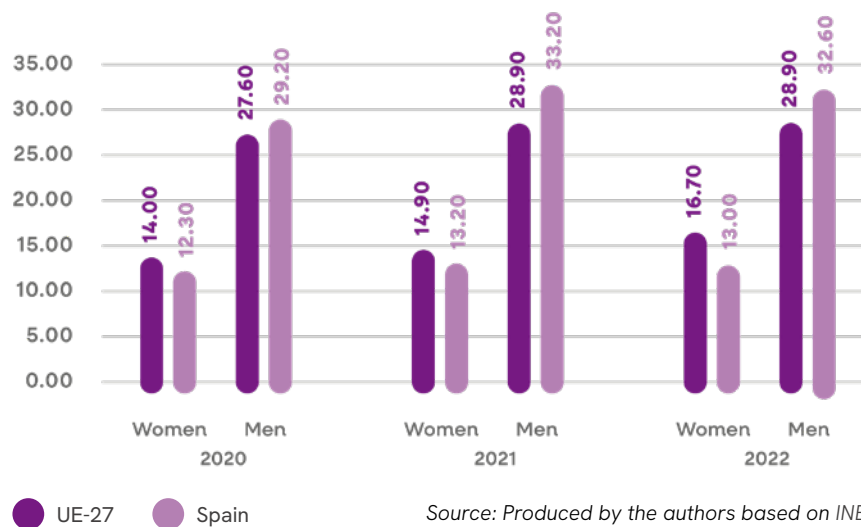
STEM GRADUATION RATE

The gender gap in STEM degrees in Spain remains deep and persistent, despite the better overall academic performance of women. Men still predominate in degrees such as Computer Science, where only 14.9% of students are women, and in Engineering, with only 26.5% female representation. Although women outperform men in the promotion rate in baccalaureate and show lower dropout rates in the first year of university, their presence in STEM careers has not increased in relative terms; it has even decreased in areas such as mathematics and computer science since the 1990s.

This inequality also carries over to the Master's level, where only 11% of women graduate with STEM degrees, compared to 26% of men. These data show that, beyond academic performance, there are still structural and cultural barriers that condition women's educational decisions, limiting their access to key sectors for innovation and professional development.

Since 2021, the participation of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) sectors in Spain has shown a positive evolution in both absolute and relative terms, marking a trend that, while encouraging, still faces important structural challenges. In that year, female employment in these sectors exceeded the 5 million mark for the first time, reaching 5,073,600 jobs held by women, representing a 4.9% increase compared with 2020. This growth has accelerated in recent years, with 204,300 new jobs created in 2022 and 215,100 in 2023, highlighting the increasing participation of women in the STEM labour market.

STEM GRADUATE RATE



WOMEN INVENTORS

Spain is among the countries with the highest proportion of female inventors and more than 40% of Spanish applications have at least one female inventor (42%) compared to an average of 25% in neighbouring countries. Among all national patent applications filed in 2024 (a total of 1,294 patents), the percentage of female inventors was 27.6%. On the other hand, 34.9% of patents filed in 2024 include at least one woman inventor. These percentages rise to almost 50% in key strategic subsectors such as Pharmaceuticals, Analysis of Biological Materials and Biotechnology, which lead the ranking of subsectors with a female presence.

Although the number of national patents grows by 2%, the drop in the number of national phase Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCTs) in 2024 brings the total down compared to 2023.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4. TOPIC 1. GENDER EQUALITY.

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Average annual earnings per worker.	↗	↗	Wages increase, but the gap remains.
Evolution of the percentage of women in STEM occupations.	↑	↑	Significant increase in the presence of women, but still a considerable gap.
Graduates in science, mathematics, computer science, engineering, industry and construction in the EU.		↑	Female rate below the European average.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.1: GENDER EQUALITY

72

Increase the EIGE Gender Equality Index to 80% by 2030.

Indicator: Gender Equality Index (EIGE) in Spain.

SDG 5.c: Adopt and strengthen policies for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

73

Reduce the gender pay gap to 10% by 2030, including a decrease in the percentage of women's part-time contracts to 55% of men's and an increase in the female activity rate of 5% compared to 2015.

Indicator: This is a weighted target:

60%: Wage gap by sector and type of contract.

20%: Part-time employees.

20%: Female activity rate.

SDG 5.4: Recognise and value unpaid domestic work and promote policies that support shared responsibility in the household and family.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

74

Reduce the unemployment rate of Roma women by up to 40%.

Indicator: Monitoring of the Action Plan for the Improvement of the Employability of the Roma Population 2025-2028, Source MITES.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 5.c: Strengthen policies for gender equality.

75

Reduce the unemployment rate of women with disabilities by up to 40%.

Indicator: Unemployment rate of women with disabilities.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 5.c: Adopt and strengthen policies for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

76

Achieve gender parity in undergraduate and doctoral enrolments in STEM disciplines by 2030, with parity defined as no gender representing less than 40% and no gender representing more than 60% of all students. This ratio must be met individually in each of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) areas.

Indicator: % of women enrolled in undergraduate and doctoral programmes in each STEM field (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields.

SDG 4.3: Ensure equal access to higher education.

SDG 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people.

SDG 5.5: Ensure the full and effective participation of women on equal terms at all levels.

77

Reach 40% of patent applications with at least one female inventor by 2030.

Indicator: % of patents with at least one female inventor.

SDG 4.3: Ensure equal access to higher education.

SDG 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people.

SDG 5.5: Ensure the full and effective participation of women on equal terms at all levels.

SDG 9.5: Increase scientific research and improve the technological capacity of industrial sectors, promoting innovation.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority in state action, articulated through strategic plans, policy reforms and specific programmes that seek to transform the social, economic and cultural structures that perpetuate inequality. The **Third Strategic Plan for the Effective Equality of Women and Men 2022-2025** is the Government's main instrument in this area, with 676 measures distributed in four axes: good governance, economy for life, lives free of male violence and effective rights for all women.

Within the General State Administration, the **Fourth Plan for Gender Equality in the General State Administration and Public Bodies** aims to eliminate persistent gender inequalities, thereby promoting a balanced representation of men and women at all levels of the administration to ensure effective equality of treatment and opportunity. It also places special emphasis on reducing the pay gap by carrying out a pay audit and on strengthening co-responsibility and work-life balance, which facilitates the compatibility of work and personal life.

The **Co-Responsibility Scheme** is a public policy, an initiative of the Ministry of Equality, launched in 2021 and renewed in 2025, which seeks to guarantee the right to care from a perspective of equality between women and men. Its main objective is to move from reconciliation to co-responsibility, and to this end it promotes care as a shared responsibility between the State, families, the market and the community. To this end, public professional care services for children up to the age of 16 are financed, employment in the care sector is promoted, and training and awareness-raising on co-responsibility for men is promoted. The plan is being implemented in collaboration with the autonomous communities, with an investment of €142.5 million. In the field of communication and culture, **the Code of Self-Regulation of Children's Toy Advertising**, in force since December 2022, has been updated to eradicate sexist stereotypes in messages aimed at minors. This new framework, the result of an agreement between the government, the toy industry and AUTOCONTROL, establishes 64 ethical rules that prohibit the association of gender roles with colours, activities or behaviours, and promote an equal and plural representation of girls and boys in advertising.

In rural areas, the **Strategy for the Equality of Rural Women** is deployed through initiatives such as the programme *Creceamos Juntas* (Let's Grow Together), which combines training, mentoring and visibility of projects led by rural women. In its second edition (2024-2025), the programme includes training in key skills and competencies, professional accompaniment and a docuseries that tells stories of female entrepreneurship in the field

The **Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities** complies with the provisions of Axis 3.1. of the Spanish Strategy on Disability 2022-2030, which seeks to ensure that women and girls with disabilities have equal access to their rights and to eradicate situations of violence and discrimination against them, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG) aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and to this end proposes as a measure the development of a plan for women and girls with disabilities.

Furthermore, the **Roma Women's Network**, created by agreement of the Council of Ministers on 23 December 2025, is integrated into the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma People 2021-2030 as a decisive step towards gender equality.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Gender equality is consolidated as a fundamental legal principle in the Spanish legal system through a robust and constantly evolving regulatory framework. **Organic Law 3/2007, for the effective equality of women and men**, establishes the mainstreaming of the principle of equality in all public policies, regulates measures against direct and indirect discrimination, and promotes positive actions in areas such as employment, education, health and culture.

In 2024, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5, **Organic Law 2/2024 on equal representation and balanced presence of women and men** was approved, which introduces substantial modifications to our legal system in order to further the effective realisation of equality between women and men in the decision-making spheres of political and economic life.

In the labour field, **Royal Decree 902/2020, on equal pay for women and men**, has been key to progress in wage transparency. It obliges companies to carry out pay audits and keep gender-disaggregated pay records in order to detect and correct pay inequalities for work of equal value.

Furthermore, in the context of employment, **Royal Decree 901/2020** was passed, regulating equality plans and their registration, and amending Royal Decree 713/2010 on the registration and filing of collective labour agreements. The purpose of this Royal Decree is the regulatory development of equality plans, as well as their diagnosis, including the obligations of registration, deposit and access, in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 3/2007, for the effective equality of women and men and the provisions contained in articles 17.5 and 85.2 of the revised text of the Workers' Statute Law, approved by Royal Legislative Decree 2/2015, all without prejudice to the provisions established in this regard by collective agreements, within the scope of their competences.

In addition, **Royal Decree 901/2020, which regulates equality plans and their registration**, refers to equality diagnoses and plans, which must be implemented in companies with 50 or more employees.

In the area of sexual and reproductive rights, the reform of Organic Law 2/2010, approved by **Organic Law 1/2023, strengthens access to voluntary termination of pregnancy**, eliminates barriers such as parental consent for minors under 16 and 17 years of age, regulates conscientious objection and guarantees public provision of the service in conditions of territorial equity.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

BASQUE COUNTRY: the *Plan for Equality between Women and Men 2022-2024* is a strategy promoted by Emakunde and the Basque Government to advance towards real equality between women and men in all areas of life.

CATALONIA: *Comprehensive Plan for Menstrual Equity and Menopause 2023-2025*. National strategy on sexual and reproductive rights.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

ANDALUSIA: The *More Equity Programme* has been implemented in the 2024/2025 school year with the aim of reducing educational inequalities and promoting inclusion in public schools.

CATALONIA: *Action Plan to combat aesthetic pressure 2023-2026*, by means of the Decree GOV/264/2023, of 12 December and the Plan for the treatment of obstetric violence and the violation of sexual and reproductive rights 2023-2028.

MEASURES OF LES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

AMPUDIA (PALENCIA): the local government has made progress in mainstreaming gender in its local policies and actions, focusing on the *promotion of sexual and gender diversity and the creation of inclusive environments*.

CÁCERES: the City Council's *Equality Plan* aims to guarantee real equality between women and men in the field of local administration.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, and in particular violence against women, remains one of the most serious and widespread forms of human rights violation in Spain. In recent years, this phenomenon has experienced a worrying upward trend, which justifies the need to combat it in all areas, including sex education.

The most serious form of gender-based violence has claimed the lives of 522 women between 2015 and 2024, whilst 87 women have been murdered in femicides committed by non-partners or ex-partners between 1 January 2022 and 30 June 2025.

Between 2015 and 2023, the number of reporting victims increased from 27,624 to 36,582, a cumulative increase of 32.4%. Data for 2024 show a slight decrease, with 34,684 registered victims.

Furthermore, women with disabilities suffer more gender-based violence than women without disabilities: 40.4% of women with disabilities suffer these types of intimate partner violence and 20.7% at some point in their lives, compared to 31.9% and 13.8%, respectively, of women without a proven disability.

The number of reported persons reflects a similar evolution and has increased from 27,562 persons in 2015 to 34,529 in 2024. This increase can be related both to greater social awareness and better access to judicial mechanisms and to the persistence of the problem in the social structure.

There is also an increase in child victims, from 1,376 in 2022 to 1,758 in 2024, an increase of 27.8% in two years. This data indicates the growing presence of violence among girls and adolescents, a group that requires specific strategies aimed at early prevention, affective education in schools and rapid and effective intervention by social, health and educational services.

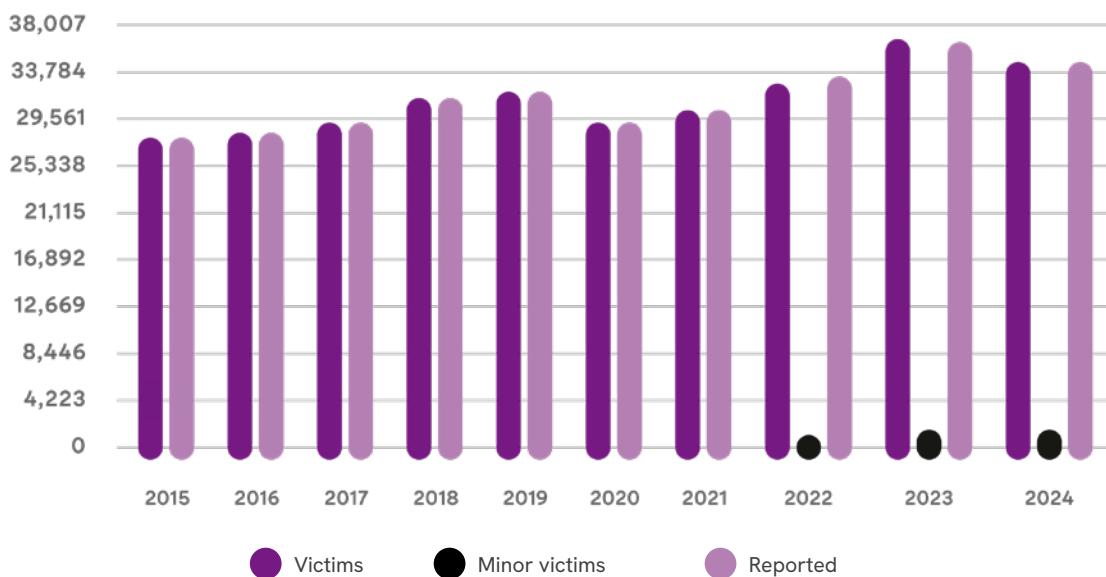
The creation of the State Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence 2022-2025 represents a paradigm shift by broadening the focus beyond intimate partner violence. It also incorporates sexual, digital, economic, vicarious and other forms of structural violence, thereby responding to the Spanish State's commitment to the Istanbul Convention.

Regarding sexual violence, 7.7% of women aged 16 or over living in Spain have experienced sexual violence at the hands of a partner at some point in their lives, and 14.5% have experienced sexual violence outside a relationship at some point in their lives.

Furthermore, of the 7,714,773 women living in Spain aged 16 and over, 36.2% have suffered sexual harassment at some point in their lives, figures that are increasing due to technology-facilitated sexual harassment.

The renewal of the State Pact against Gender-Based Violence, whose validity has been extended until 2027, reinforces the State's political and financial commitment to the eradication of all forms of violence against women.

CASES BROUGHT, VICTIMS, REPORTED PERSONS
STATISTICS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, TYPE OF INDICATOR, BASIC DATA



Source: produced by the authors based on data from the INE.

The seriousness of the situation is accentuated when considering the prevalence of violence suffered by women throughout their lives: 25.7% have suffered physical or sexual violence, and 28.2% have been victims of threats or aggression. These percentages show that gender-based violence in Spain is not an isolated phenomenon, but a structural one, with a direct impact on the lives of millions of women. Although Spain is slightly below the European average in some indicators, it is not among the best performers. This suggests that, while there is an advanced normative framework, there are still social, cultural and institutional barriers to the eradication of violence.

The intergenerational dimension of gender-based violence also shows an upward trend. The 32% increase in the number of child victims between 2022 and 2023 (from 1,376 to 1,816) indicates that girls and adolescents are being disproportionately affected, which poses challenges in terms of protection, early detection and specialised support. New forms of digital violence, gender-based bullying and exposure to models of affective relationships on social networks require an adaptation of public policies, educational programmes and prevention strategies.

VISUAL SUMMARY
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4. TOPIC 2. VIOLENCE

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Victims and reported persons.	↑	↑	Increase in victims and complaints.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.1: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

78

Reduce by 5% the prevalence of intimate partner violence (current or past) in the last 12 months as a % of all women living in Spain aged 16 and over by 2030.

Indicator: Percentage of women victims of intimate partner violence in the last 12 months.

SDG 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.

SDG 16.1: Reduce all forms of violence and related deaths.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The Spanish Government has strengthened its commitment to combating gender-based violence through a range of strategic measures, spanning from prevention and awareness-raising to the comprehensive protection of victims. The **State Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence 2022-2025**, with 267 measures distributed in four key areas, expands the traditional approach to address all forms of violence against women. These include digital, vicarious, institutional and economic violence. It also promotes the active involvement of men and the improvement of statistical data.

In February 2025, Parliament approved the **renewal of the State Pact against Gender-Based Violence**, which includes 462 measures and a budget allocation of €1.5 billion. This new framework reinforces protection against vicarious, digital and economic violence, and proposes the approval of a comprehensive Organic Law against trafficking and exploitation of human beings, as well as the creation of 24-hour comprehensive care centres for victims of sexual violence.

The **Joint Multiannual Plan on Violence against Women (2023-2027)** is an agreement between the Ministry of Equality and the Autonomous Communities approved at the Sectoral Conference on Equality on 3 March 2023. Its objective is to consolidate and give stability to the public policies derived from the State Pact against Gender-Based Violence, which guarantees its permanence and reinforces cooperation between administrations.

At the institutional level, the **Fourth Plan for Gender Equality in the General State Administration** includes 20 objectives and 45 measures to be implemented, organised into six key areas of action. Focus area 5 addresses violence against women: the measures it includes aim to eradicate this scourge among female public sector employees and also among the victims with whom they may come into contact. In this sense, the consolidation and effective application of the protocol for action against sexual harassment and gender-based harassment is reinforced, as an essential tool to guarantee safe and respectful working environments.

In specific sectors, the **2021–2027 Plan for Gender Equality in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector** promotes the full integration of women into the sector, improves their working conditions and fosters their leadership in decision-making bodies, with more than 40 measures organised around three strategic priorities.

Meanwhile, the **"Spain Protects You" Plan against gender-based violence**, which forms part of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, is allocating more than €150 million to improve comprehensive support services, expand remote care services, modernise protection measures and set up 24-hour support centres for victims of sexual violence in every province.

Other highlights include the **Protocol for police assessment and management of the level of risk of gender-based violence and monitoring of cases through the new VioGén 2 System**, which classifies and structures police protection measures according to each level of risk and the personalised security protection plan; and the deployment of the **First Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Sexual Violence 2023–2027**, which has led to the creation of the National Office against Sexual Violence (ONVIOS).

Meanwhile, the **National Strategic Plan against Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings 2021–2023** sets out five priority objectives and sixteen lines of action to tackle this issue from a multidisciplinary perspective. To this end, it focuses on aspects such as victim identification, prosecution and institutional cooperation.

Finally, in the international sphere, in July 2024 Spain signed the **Interministerial Cooperation Agreement for the care, transfer and return of Spanish women victims of violence against women abroad**, which guarantees a coordinated and effective response to victims of any form of gender-based violence abroad, strengthening our country's capacity to offer assistance to Spanish women and their minor children abroad in situations of violence.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The State's regulatory measures regarding gender-based violence are based on a set of laws that establish a comprehensive, cross-cutting and rights-based approach. **Organic Law 1/2004, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender-Based Violence**, was a pioneer in Europe in establishing a multidisciplinary system based on prevention, protection and recovery of victims. This has involved the involvement of multiple ministries and the creation of specialised courts and a Government Delegation on Violence against Women.

In addition, **Law 1/2021, on urgent measures for the protection and assistance to victims of gender-based violence**, reinforced the consideration of care services as essential, especially during emergency situations such as the pandemic, and guaranteed universal access to comprehensive assistance, regardless of the personal or administrative situation of the victims.

Likewise, in 2022, **Organic Law 10/2022** was approved, **on the comprehensive guarantee of sexual freedom**, whose scope of application covers sexual violence, including those committed in the digital sphere as a form of violence against women and girls.

In the framework of the renewal of the State Pact against Gender-Based Violence in 2024, a **commitment** has been included **to approve a Comprehensive Organic Law against Trafficking in Human Beings** for all its purposes, the preliminary draft of which was approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2024. This future regulation adopts for the first time a comprehensive approach covering prevention, awareness raising, criminal prosecution and protection of victims, including all forms of exploitation and the criminalisation of offences such as forced labour, servitude and slavery.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO ELIMINATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ANDALUSIA: *training programmes in awareness and specialisation on gender-based violence* are aimed at health professionals and vulnerable groups and aim to improve the detection, care and prevention of this problem.

NAVARRRE: *Foral Law 14/2015* aims to combat violence against women through a comprehensive approach. To this end, it establishes measures for the prevention, detection, care, protection, access to justice and reparation of victims, which also include their children.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CATALONIA: the *Catalan Pact against Gender-Based Violence*, seeks to consolidate a common and sustained strategy over time to eradicate all forms of male violence. To this end, it strengthens prevention, care, protection and reparation for victims and institutional coordination between administrations.

NAVARRRE: the *Second Action Plan against violence against women* reinforces the regional commitment to prevention, comprehensive care and reparation for victims of gender-based violence.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CORDOBA: the *Remote assistance Programme for Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence (ATENPRO)* offers an immediate and personalised assistance service for women victims of gender-based violence.

ORCERA (JAÉN): *Municipal Violet Point and training on gender-based violence.*

3. DISCRIMINATION



INTRODUCTION

Discrimination in Spain continues to be a major social challenge, characterised by various manifestations and a worrying trend in hate crimes, exclusion from employment and education, and limitations in accessibility, especially for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, women and social minorities. Although some progress has been made in the last decade, the data show that deep structural inequalities and cultural biases still persist and require more effective public policies, comprehensive approaches and specific territorial strategies.

From an educational perspective, people with disabilities face significant structural barriers. Although the proportion accessing tertiary education has increased slightly from 18.6% in 2021 to 19.2% in 2023, this increase has been more significant among women with disabilities, from 22.1% to 23.7%, showing remarkable resilience in the face of socio-economic and cultural barriers. In contrast, men with disabilities maintain lower levels of access to higher education (around 15.7%).

On the other hand, known recorded hate crime events (which include incidents and offences) have recorded a marked increase of 47% between 2015 and 2024. Particularly noteworthy are those motivated by racism, xenophobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Although the situation in this respect has improved in 2024, when 1,955 hate crime incidents were recorded (a significant reduction of 13.8% compared to 2023), the available data reflect a worrying normalisation of discriminatory discourse and behaviour in some sectors of society, as well as pointing to the inadequacy of current prevention and sanction policies.

Data from the Crime Statistics Portal show an increasing trend in cleared criminal offences for racism and xenophobia recorded between 2015 and 2024, rising from 223 in 2015 to 659 in 2024.

The report *The Impact of Racism in Spain (2024)* reveals that racial discrimination and xenophobia are still deeply rooted phenomena in Spanish society, manifesting themselves in both direct and subtle ways. Although explicit rejection of racism has grown socially, covert discriminatory attitudes persist that affect racialised people on a daily basis, especially in access to housing, employment, health, education or the relationship with security forces. These forms of discrimination, often invisible, are aggravated when they interact with other factors such as gender, social class or age, and generate situations of multiple and intersectional discrimination. Moreover, structural and institutional racism perpetuates historical inequalities and reinforces systemic barriers that limit the rights and opportunities of certain groups, especially Roma, migrants and people of African descent.

Racism against Roma in Spain is a structural problem that manifests itself in many areas, from education and employment to access to housing and social representation. Despite progress in equality legislation, the Roma community still faces historical prejudices and stereotypes that fuel daily discrimination. These prejudices are reflected in social attitudes that associate Roma people with marginality or criminality, which limits their opportunities and reinforces exclusion.

While legislation has advanced, hate crimes against LGTBI+ people have increased. The LGTBI+ State Federation estimates that the group has suffered more than 57,000 physical attacks in five years, and hate speech on social networks has grown by 130%.

In conclusion, effectively combating discrimination in Spain requires joint and cross-cutting action, including specific educational interventions, comprehensive public policies on equality and accessibility, as well as institutional strengthening to ensure the effective protection of rights for all groups, especially the most vulnerable, with a view to meeting the targets set for 2030.

LGTBI+ PEOPLE

According to the report State of Hate: According to FELGTBI+'s 2025 LGBTI+ Report, the LGBTI+ population in Spain is growing, now numbering approximately 5,000,000 people, as an increasing number of young people identify with the community (up to 27.8% of those aged 18 to 24, according to Barometer 3501 from the Centre for Sociological Research, January 2025) and the arrival of migrants who can express themselves more freely in Spain than in their country of origin.

In ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map 2025, which evaluates LGTBI+ rights in 49 European countries, Spain ranks fifth among the most advanced countries in terms of legal protection and public policies for LGTBI+ people with a score of 78 out of 100, which denotes the great advances in terms of LGTBI+ rights that have been made and consolidated in Spain.

Notable legislation in 2022 includes the so-called Zerolo Law, and in 2023, Law 4/2023, which promotes genuine and effective equality for transgender people and safeguards the rights of LGBTI+ people, once again placing Spain among the leading countries in terms of LGBTI+ rights.

Among its main actions are: the recognition of the right to gender self-determination from the age of 16 without the need for medical reports; the prohibition of conversion therapies; the creation of protocols against LGTBI+ harassment and violence in companies with more than 50 employees; the mandatory inclusion of content on diversity in the education system; and the nullity of discriminatory contractual clauses. It also promotes specific measures in areas such as employment, health, housing and institutional participation, and establishes the LGTBI+ Participation Council as a consultative body to strengthen dialogue between administrations and civil society.

Despite this, there remain social and political challenges that require continued attention, mainly LGTBI+phobia, which is still a serious reality in Spain, as reflected in the State of Hate report: FELGTBI+'s LGBTI+ Report 2025. According to the data collected, 42.5% of LGTBI+ people have suffered some kind of hateful act in the last year: 16.38% have suffered harassment, 25.25% discrimination and 16.25% physical or verbal aggression. Trans people are the most affected, with 37.04% of trans people having experienced harassment in the last 5 years. However, under-reporting is overwhelming: 83.5% of those who suffered assaults did not report.

This situation is aggravated by under-recognition, as only a tiny fraction of cases are officially recognised as hate crimes. The impact of this violence is profound, as it seriously affects the emotional health of the group, with high levels of anxiety, fear, anger or depression. In contrast, the report notes that respondents perceive a low level of commitment on the part of the judiciary and the security forces, especially with regard to physical or verbal aggression (65.38% and 70.8%), despite the efforts made in recent years in this area. This underlines the need to strengthen institutional and social prevention, protection and awareness-raising policies.

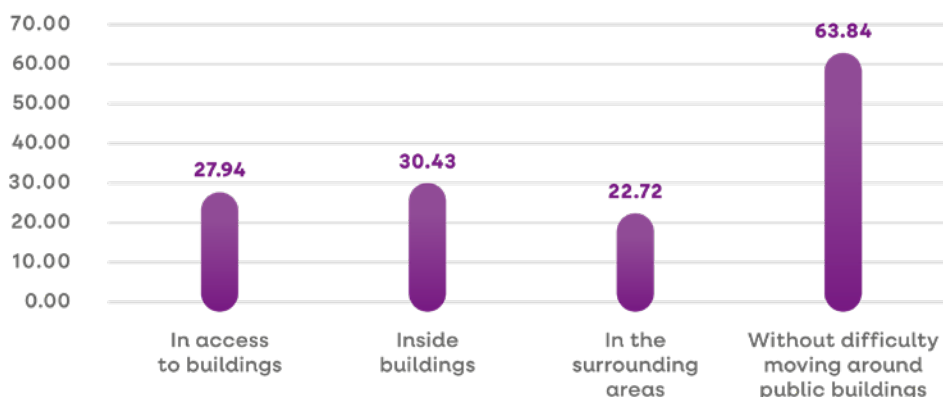
DISABILITY

ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Since 2020, accessibility in public environments in Spain has shown limited progress as there is a great disparity in the situation between Autonomous Communities and still a significant proportion of the population with disabilities face barriers in access to public buildings, their interior and surroundings. Nationally, in 2020, only 63.84% of people with disabilities reported that they had no difficulty in navigating public spaces, meaning that still more than one third of people with disabilities face barriers in accessing essential services, government buildings and transport.

The most frequent problems are found in access to buildings, where 27.94% of the disabled population face difficulties, while inside buildings the proportion rises to 30.43%. This highlights the existence of shortcomings in interior adaptations such as ramps, lifts, accessible signage or adapted toilets. In the areas surrounding buildings, the situation improves slightly, but 22.72% of people with disabilities still encounter obstacles, demonstrating that architectural and urban barriers, such as narrow pavements, kerbs without ramps and uneven paving, remain one of the main obstacles to ensuring safe and inclusive mobility.

AREAS WITHIN PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND THEIR SURROUNDINGS WHERE IT IS DIFFICULT TO MOVE AROUND DUE TO A DISABILITY



Source: produced by the authors based on INE data.

This reality contrasts with international trends and universal accessibility guidelines promoted by both the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030. They emphasise the need to ensure accessible environments as a basic condition for equal opportunities and full social participation. Moreover, in a context of an ageing population such as the one Spain is going through, improving accessibility not only responds to the needs of people with disabilities, but also becomes a key policy for adapting public spaces to a growing population with reduced mobility.

At the territorial level, there are significant inequalities in accessibility for people with disabilities in Spain. Communities such as Andalusia, Galicia, Asturias and Murcia present greater barriers, with more than 30% of this population facing difficulties in accessing and using public buildings, due to factors such as orography, urban ageing or low investment in adapted infrastructures. In contrast, Navarre, the Basque Country, Ceuta and Melilla stand out with the best accessibility indicators, possibly thanks to inclusive policies, modern urban planning or specific interventions.

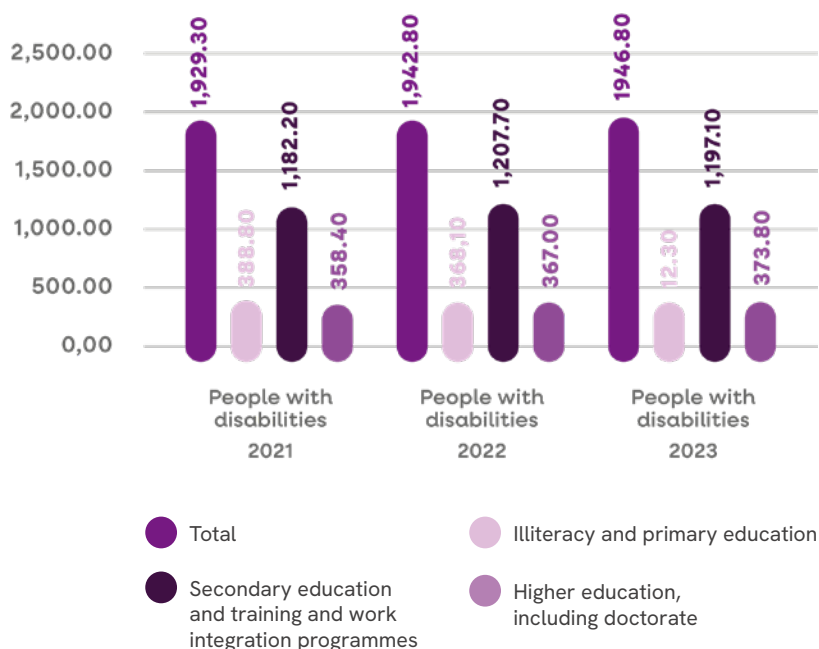
Furthermore, according to the *Observatory of Universal Accessibility in Spanish Municipalities*, barely 17% of the municipal buildings analysed can be used by all people in conditions of safety and autonomy, and only 3% have adequate space-person communication systems, such as understandable signage or staff trained in accessible care. The biggest issues are found in the use of accessible toilets (which are locked, poorly designed or used as storage rooms in 72% of cases) and in emergency evacuation procedures, with 91% of local councils lacking accessible protocols.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Since 2021, the share of people with disabilities with tertiary education or advanced technical training has grown steadily from 18.6% to 19.2% in 2023. This 4.3% increase over two years reflects a positive impact of inclusive policies such as specific scholarships, curricular adaptations and accompanying programmes. Progress has been most notable for women with disabilities, who have increased from 22.1% to 23.7% in the same period, with a growth of 7.2%, suggesting greater effectiveness of support measures for this group, despite the additional barriers they face.

In contrast, men with disabilities show lower and more stagnant participation in higher education, with figures that have barely changed between 2021 (15.9%) and 2023 (15.7%). This gap points to the persistence of structural barriers such as early school leaving or orientation towards sectors less linked to formal education, highlighting the need for differentiated strategies to address gender inequalities and equitable access to education for this group.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY GENDER



Source: INE (n.d.). Level of education by sex. Employment of people with disabilities. 2021–2023 series.

As regards the overall educational attainment of the disabled population, the majority of people are still concentrated at secondary education level or in technical training and workplace integration, with figures ranging from 61.3% in 2021 to 61.5% in 2023, indicating that secondary education remains the main route of education for this group. While this trend reflects some consolidation of intermediate levels of education, it is also evidence of a barrier to access to higher education, which is still a challenge. On the other hand, the proportion of people with disabilities with only primary education or who are illiterate is still significant, although it has shown a slight decrease (from 20.2% in 2021 to 19.3% in 2023). This decline may be linked to adult basic education policies and literacy efforts in rural or more vulnerable contexts, but it still reflects an important structural education gap.

In 2022, Spain had one of the highest percentages of people with disabilities with low educational attainment (ISCED 0-2) in Europe: 52.3% of those with some limitation and 63.7% of those with a severe limitation, well above the EU average (30.3% and 42.5% respectively). These data reflect a structural problem of accessibility and equity in the Spanish education system, which particularly affects people with disabilities.

In addition to the high proportion of people with disabilities who have a low level of education in Spain, the Sixth University and Disability Study reveals that, although the presence of this group in higher education has increased slightly over the last decade (from 1.1% in 2011 to 1.6% in 2022), their representation within the higher education system remains very low. In the 2021-2022 academic year, only 0.8% of the total number of face-to-face and distance students were people with disabilities. Despite the fact that almost all universities have Services for People with Disabilities (SAPDU) and support programmes, there are still significant barriers related to accessibility, visibility of disability and lack of curricular adaptation.

HATE CRIMES

Since 2015, known recorded hate crime events (which include both incidents and offences) in Spain have followed an increasing trend (from 1,328 cases that year to 1,955 cases in 2024), an increase of 47%.

This trend highlights both greater public awareness of and reporting of these crimes, as well as a worrying rise in intolerant rhetoric. Since 2018, the number of annual incidents has consistently exceeded 1,500, with notable milestones such as 1,706 cases in 2019, a slight drop in 2020 (1,401 cases, probably due to lockdown), and continued growth to an all-time high in 2023, albeit with a 13.28% drop in 2024. The social environment, characterised by ideological polarisation, the expansion of hate speech on social networks and the impact of phenomena such as the migratory crisis or the pandemic, has generated a breeding ground where these aggressions find more visibility and legitimisation.

Among the types of hate crimes, those motivated by racism and xenophobia have been the most frequent, reaching 855 cases in 2024.

The increase coincides with greater exposure of migrant and racialised communities in the public and digital space, as well as the proliferation of anti-migration discourses. This reflects the persistence of structural racism in the country and the urgency of implementing active policies of inclusion and intercultural coexistence. Offences related to sexual orientation and gender identity increased from 477 in 2021 to 539 in 2024 (an increase of 12.9%), making it the third most common type of crime (the second most common crime in 2021). This increase shows that LGBTBI+ people continue to be the target of aggressions, often encouraged by public and social discourses that question their rights.

Likewise, the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia monitored a total of 2,870 hate speech contents on the five monitored social media platforms targeting people of foreign origin in 2024. In particular, the data show a prevalence of hostility towards North Africans (35%), followed by Africans and people of African descent (24%), immigrants in general (21%) and Muslims (21%). Hostility towards unaccompanied children and adolescents (5%), the Roma community (3%) and the Jewish community (3%) was also identified. In terms of the typology of the content, those that resort to dehumanisation (37%) and discrediting based on personal attributes (32%) predominate, followed by incitement to violence (29%) and calls for the expulsion of people of foreign origin from Spain (15%). In addition, more than half of the content uses explicit aggressive language, although more subtle forms of hostility such as irony or sarcasm (11%) and non-explicit discriminatory expressions (36%) are also detected, which makes it difficult to identify them and favours their social normalisation. Such content creates a hostile environment that fuels fear and resentment towards certain groups, increasing social fragmentation and conflict. The culture of hate on social media has a devastating impact on migrants. These discourses deny the humanity of those affected and have psychological and physical consequences that increase their vulnerability and sense of insecurity, and hinder their ability to lead normal lives.

Hate crimes based on ideology have also maintained relevant figures: although far from the peak of 615 cases in 2019, 152 cases (including incidents and offences) were recorded in 2024.

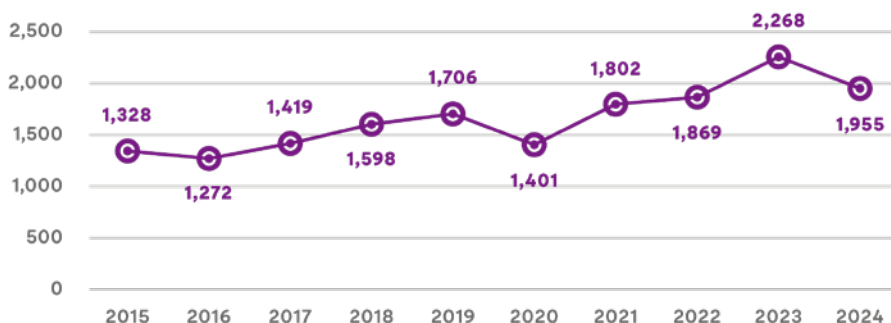
This category has shown great variability depending on the political and media climate, reflecting how the instrumentalisation of ideology, especially in electoral or highly confrontational social contexts, can lead to aggression and discrimination. At the same time, sex and gender discrimination offences have increased significantly in just three years, from 110 in 2021 to 188 in 2024.

Other types of hate crimes have also shown significant increases. Offences for religious beliefs reached 59 cases in 2024, while those targeting persons with disabilities (so-called dysphobia offences) reached 32 in 2024, doubling the figure for 2022.

Although their absolute numbers are smaller, their growth reflects a diversification in the motivations for hatred and a greater vulnerability of groups that have traditionally been less visible in this area. These trends indicate that the phenomenon does not only affect specific groups, but extends to multiple dimensions of personal identity, which calls for a cross-cutting strategy combining legal reforms, educational campaigns, preventive actions and effective protection mechanisms for victims.

In summary, the period 2021-2023 has been particularly critical, with an overall increase of 25.8% in hate crimes and significant growth in categories such as racism, LGBTI+phobia and gender discrimination. Although this upward trend has been broken in 2024, as we have already pointed out, continued efforts are essential to curb the rise in this type of assault. This includes instruments such as the Hate Crime Action Plan, the third edition of which for the period 2025-2028 has started to be implemented in the second quarter of 2025.

TOTAL KNOWN HATE CRIME INCIDENTS



Source: Produced by the authors based on data from the Crime Statistics Portal.

The 2024 report of the Council for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (CEDRE) reveals that, beyond the statistical data on hate crimes, a widespread perception of structural and everyday discrimination persists among racialised people in Spain. According to the survey, 45% of respondents reported having been discriminated against in the last five years, especially in areas such as employment, housing, education and access to public services. In addition, a growing prevalence of subtle racism and indirect discrimination, less visible but equally harmful forms that perpetuate stereotypes and social exclusion, is documented. The research highlights that these covert forms of racism are difficult to identify even for the victims, which limits their denunciation and institutional visibility.

Another relevant finding of the report is the identification of racism as a structural and institutional phenomenon. The report emphasises that this form of discrimination is not only evident in individual interactions, but is deeply rooted in social practices, norms and structures that perpetuate historical inequalities. This structural racism is expressed, for example, in residential segregation or barriers to access to the labour market. The study notes that victims face multiple forms of intersectional discrimination which aggravates their conditions of exclusion. A stronger public response is therefore called for, combining targeted policies, legislative changes, anti-racist education and ethnically disaggregated data collection, to achieve real and lasting institutional transformation.

To combat hate crime, a preventive approach is needed to anticipate and reduce the factors that give rise to it, through coordinated action between institutions, civil society and the public. This approach includes ongoing training for police, judges and prosecutors to identify and respond to discriminatory behaviour, as well as educational campaigns to promote tolerance and diversity from an early age.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4. TOPIC 3. DISCRIMINATION

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Level of education of people with disabilities.	↔	↔	Most people are still concentrated in secondary education or technical training and labour market insertion.
Places in public buildings and their surroundings that are difficult to navigate due to disability.			There are no data available to measure developments.
Known hate crime cases.	↗	↗	Offences related to racism and xenophobia are prevalent.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.3: DISCRIMINATION

79

Increase the proportion of persons with disabilities who enrol in and complete tertiary education or advanced technical training by 50% by 2030, with a focus on women with disabilities.

Indicator: Proportion of people with disabilities who attain higher education (base year 2021) according to data from INE.

SDG 4.3: Ensure equal access to higher education.

SDG 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people.

SDG 5.5: Ensure the full and effective participation of women on equal terms at all levels.

80

Increase the number of people with disabilities over the age of six who can function in public environments without difficulty by 30%.

Indicator: % of accessible public spaces (base year 2020), INE data. A 30% increase would mean 82.93%.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 11.2: Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

81

Reduce the underreporting rate in the area of hate crimes and hate speech in order to promote visibility and awareness of such crimes and incidents.

Indicator: Under-reporting rate in the area of hate crime and hate speech, expressed as the percentage of crimes or incidents of discrimination that are not reported to the authorities.

SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

SDG 16.b: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING DISCRIMINATION

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The fight against discrimination in Spain is articulated through comprehensive strategies that address the multiple forms of exclusion and inequality. The **Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Diversity (2020-2025)** lays the foundations for a fairer society.

It also recognises diversity as a value and promotes the full participation of all people, regardless of their origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion.

Regarding disability, the **Second National Plan for Universal Accessibility (2023–2032)** sets out six strategic priorities and more than 40 measures to ensure full access to environments, products and services. The plan strengthens the regulatory framework, promotes innovation and improves institutional coordination, in line with the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, on a more specific level, the Cultural Rights Plan includes as an objective the guarantee of universal accessibility in public cultural buildings, such as museums, libraries and art centres.

In addition, the **Spanish Disability Strategy 2022-2030** remains in force as a state roadmap to guarantee the effective exercise of the human rights of persons with disabilities. It covers key areas such as active citizenship, social inclusion, personal autonomy and support for families, taking an intersectional approach and a feminist perspective.

Regarding hate crimes, the **Third Action Plan to Combat Hate Crimes (2025–2028)**, spearheaded by the Home Office, includes 109 measures across six areas of action. It prioritises victim support, prevention of online hate speech, training of police forces and the creation of specialised hate crime teams in sport. It also introduces new indicators for discriminatory motivation and strengthens international cooperation.

In the context of hate speech and discrimination, the **Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion against Racism and Xenophobia 2023–2027** addresses both as key issues affecting social cohesion and equality in Spain, highlighting their recent rise, particularly in digital environments, and proposing measures to prevent them through social awareness-raising, specialised training, the development of detection tools and the promotion of inclusive narratives. At the same time, it considers racial and xenophobic discrimination as a structural phenomenon present in areas such as employment, education, housing and public services, and proposes actions to reinforce the protection of victims, improve complaint mechanisms, strengthen institutional coordination and promote evidence-based public policies that guarantee equal treatment.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

Legislative action by the State has taken decisive steps to guarantee equality and eradicate all forms of discrimination, with a focus on human rights, intersectionality and social justice. **Organic Law 10/2022, on the comprehensive guarantee of sexual freedom**, known as the "only yes is yes" law, unifies the crimes of abuse and sexual aggression, recognises consent as the central axis and reinforces protection against sexual violence in all spheres, including the digital, labour and institutional spheres.

Law 4/2023, for the real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of the rights of LGTBI+ people, recognises the right to gender self-determination from the age of 16, prohibits conversion therapies and establishes specific measures in health, education, employment and protection against violence.

While **Royal Decree 1026/2024** develops the planned set of measures for equality and non-discrimination of LGTBI people in companies. The purpose of this Royal Decree is the regulatory development of the business obligation to have a planned set of measures and resources to achieve real and effective equality of LGTBI people (hereinafter, "planned measures"), established in article 15.1 of Law 4/2023, for the real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of LGTBI people's rights.

Law 15/2022, a comprehensive law for equal treatment and non-discrimination, known as the Zerolo Law, guarantees the right to equality in all areas, public and private, and prohibits discrimination on grounds such as racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.

In July 2025, the first LGTBI+ Strategy and the first State Transgender Strategy were approved. **The State Strategy for equal treatment and non-discrimination of LGTBI+ people** is the main instrument of territorial collaboration for the promotion and development of the policies set out in Law 4/2023. The document incorporates the basic principles for action on non-discrimination, as well as measures aimed at preventing and eliminating discrimination. It also includes information, awareness-raising and training initiatives, with a special focus on the prevention of LGTBI+phobic violence.

The State Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Transgender People is the Government's first strategic instrument aimed specifically at transgender people and aims to fulfil the constitutional duty to remove the obstacles that hinder the effective equality of transgender people. Among other actions, the trans strategy includes positive action and priority measures in the fields of employment, education, health and housing, while emphasising the eradication of discrimination and transphobic violence. It also aims to improve knowledge of the situation of transgender people through the development of analyses and studies.

In the field of disability, **Law 8/2021, on the reform of civil and procedural legislation**, transforms the model of judicial incapacitation into a system of personalised support that respects the will and preferences of persons with disabilities. This reform adapts Spanish law to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recognises equal legal capacity and promotes autonomy in decision-making.

Law 2/2025 should also be noted, which amends the consolidated text of the Workers' Statute Act, approved by Royal Legislative Decree 2/2015, regarding the termination of employment contracts due to permanent incapacity of workers, and the consolidated text of the General Social Security Act, approved by Royal Legislative Decree 8/2015, regarding permanent incapacity. The aim of this regulation is to guarantee, in a more effective way, the right to equal employment for people with disabilities.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING DISCRIMINATION

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ASTURIAS: the *Observatory against LGTBI+phobia* has been an important step forward in the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: The *Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Castilla y León* has sought to guarantee inclusion and effective equality.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CASTILLA Y LEÓN: the *Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities 2024-2027* aims to guarantee the full social, labour and educational participation of people with disabilities in the region.

NAVARRRE: the *Disability Plan 2026-2030* will update the strategic lines of care, inclusion and universal accessibility for people with disabilities in the Autonomous Community.

MEASURES BY LES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CÁCERES PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: the *Investment Plan for the universal accessibility of spaces and buildings* is aimed at ensuring that municipalities in the province have fully accessible public infrastructures.

ROTA (CÁDIZ): implementation of several *municipal awareness-raising campaigns against discrimination and LGBTI+phobia* in educational and cultural spaces.

4. MIGRANTS



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, migration in Spain has been marked by a constant increase in international flows, conditioned by global crises such as armed conflicts, climate change or economic inequalities. While a significant proportion are people seeking international protection, the majority migrate for work, education or family reasons, making it necessary to consider policies aimed at integration and not only at emergency management or security control.

Thus, on 1 January 2025, the resident population in Spain reached 49,077,984 inhabitants, of whom 9,379,972 were born abroad (19.1%) and 6,852,348 were foreigners with non-Spanish nationality. As of 1 January 2025, the largest groups of foreign nationals residing in Spain are Moroccans, numbering 968,999 (14%), followed by Colombians, numbering 676,534 (9.8%), and Romanians, numbering 609,270 (8.8%). Other notable figures include Venezuela, with 377,809 people (5.5%), Italy with 345,777 (5%) and Peru with 260,544 (3.8%). In addition, other relevant nationalities with more than 100,000 residents include the United Kingdom, China, Ukraine, Honduras, Argentina, Germany, Ecuador, France and Brazil, reflecting the diversity of backgrounds in the migrant population in Spain.

Since 2021, the number of foreigners with valid residence documents in Spain has increased significantly, from 5,980,939 people (data as of 30 June 2021) to 7,371,577 people (data as of 30 June 2025), which represents an increase of 23%. There has also been a notable increase in the demand for visas and residence permits for regular migration to Spain. At present, foreigners are mainly employed in economic sectors such as domestic work, care work, agriculture or the hotel and catering industry. Most of these people have documentation that, in addition to residency, allows them to work legally in Spain.

There has also been an increase in refusals of entry and exit orders. This situation means that many people find themselves in an irregular administrative situation, without full access to rights such as employment or housing.

While there is no complete official data on deaths or disappearances of migrants en route to Spain, since 2021 it can be estimated that around 10,000 people have died or disappeared trying to reach Spain (mainly to the Canary Islands via extremely dangerous sea routes from Mauritania, Senegal and Gambia).

The inclusion of migrants is still a challenge because of the structural barriers they face in Spain. Migrant women are more exposed to risks due to factors such as gender, origin and administrative status. To move towards effective integration, priority areas identified include legislative reforms, simplification of procedures, recognition of qualifications, intercultural education policies, anti-racism campaigns and a migration policy aligned with international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact on Migration.

The foreign population in Spain has played an important role in economic growth, employment and social security contributions. Between 2021 and 2024, the contribution of the immigrant population to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has increased. According to Bank of Spain estimates,

between 2022 and 2024, GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of 2.9%, with the foreign population directly contributing between 0.4 and 0.7 percentage points to this growth each year. This contribution has been mainly linked to a higher employment rate among migrants and a favourable demographic structure, with a high proportion of people of working age. By comparison, in 2021 the contribution was estimated at around 0.3 percentage points. Moreover, since 2019, foreign workers have accounted for up to 80 % of GDP growth in Spain, according to the European Central Bank. This increase has been favoured by the improvement in the level of education and the incorporation into sectors with higher added value, although differences with respect to the averages of the total population are still maintained.

Between 2021 and 2024, total Social Security affiliation in Spain will grow steadily, from approximately 19 million affiliates in 2021 to 21,337,962 in 2024, representing an increase of more than 2.3 million contributors (+12%). Over the same period, foreign affiliation increased from 2,263,432 in 2021 to 2,880,818 in 2024, a growth of 27.3%, more than double that of the general population. In terms of hiring, 18.1 million contracts were recorded in total in 2021, while in 2024 the figure was 15.6 million, reflecting an overall fall in the volume of hiring, attributed to the labour reform that reduced temporariness. However, the hiring of foreigners increased from 3,946,517 in 2021 (21 % of the total) to 3,730,096 in 2024 (24 % of the total), which shows a relative growth within the labour market. These data show that, although the total volume of contracts has decreased, the migrant population has gained weight in employment and was responsible for almost 69% of the total increase in enrolment in 2024.

The social, economic and demographic contribution of the migrant population is therefore remarkable, and their full inclusion in community life must be ensured through the promotion of equal treatment, non-discrimination and effective access to public services and resources under equitable conditions.

Women and migrant youth face multiplied vulnerability due to the intersection of gender, ethnicity and migration status, and thus have higher unemployment rates than their national peers.

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Regarding migrants without legal status, there is no precise official record of the number of migrants in Spain who are in an irregular situation, but some organisations provide rough estimates. In 2024, Cáritas assisted 550,000 migrants in an irregular situation, which represents approximately half of all the clients accompanied by the organisation in Spain.

In Spain, migrants in an irregular administrative situation can access regular administrative status through different channels.

Thus, with the entry into force, in May 2025, of the Regulation implementing the Organic Law on Foreigners, approved by Royal Decree 1155/2024, the types of roots have been extended (to include, along with social, socio-occupational, family and socio-training roots, second-chance roots) and the requirements to be met and the characteristics of these authorisations have been modified. In particular, the period of stay in Spain is reduced to two years to apply for "arraigo" (except for family roots) and all authorisations granted entitle the holder to work in any sector of activity and in any part of the national territory without having to go through any additional procedures, which boosts the inclusion of foreigners in the labour market.

On the other hand, on the occasion of the Isolated High Level Depression (DANA) at the end of October 2024, the extension and renewal of the authorisations for long-term stay, residence and/or work for those foreigners whose domicile or place of work is in one of the municipalities affected by the DANA was approved, and the procedure for requesting an exceptional authorisation for persons affected by the DANA in an irregular situation was established.

In April 2024, after the collection of almost 700,000 signatures, the Plenary of the Congress approved the consideration of a Popular Legislative Initiative (ILP) for an extraordinary regularisation for foreigners living in Spain in an irregular administrative situation, promoted by a network of 900 NGOs. Once the parliamentary procedure was confirmed, the period for tabling amendments and debating them in committee began.

IMMIGRATION FORMALITIES

In 2025, processing times for the regularisation of foreigners in Spain have improved thanks to the entry into force of the new Regulation for the development of the Organic Law on Foreigners, approved by Royal Decree 1155/2024, which aims to streamline procedures and reduce red tape.

In addition, in the Strategic Plan of the General State Administration in the Territory 2024-2027, various measures have been promoted to improve the management of immigration procedures. These actions are mainly articulated in the strategic axes of accessibility, digitalisation, service quality and organisational efficiency, focusing on the automation and digitalisation of administrative procedures. The main objective of this line of action is to reduce resolution times, improve management efficiency and facilitate citizens' access to public services, especially in the area of immigration authorisations.

The plan envisages the progressive transformation of administrative processes by incorporating technologies to automate repetitive tasks and reduce manual intervention. In particular, priority has been given to the digitalisation of renewals of aliens' authorisations through the Mercurio Renovations platform. To this end, improvements have been developed that further simplify the user experience, such as the automatic incorporation of personal data and the prior validation of the required documentation.

In addition, work is being carried out to integrate the reports and queries necessary for the resolution of files directly into the ACEX management application, as well as to automate the issuing, signing and notification of resolutions and summons.

Digitisation is not seen as an end in itself, but as a tool to improve the quality of public service, to ensure equal access throughout the territory and to respond to needs. Everything is done with the specific realities of migrants in mind.

VISUAL SUMMARY

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4. TOPIC 4 MIGRANTS

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Affiliation of foreigners to the Social Security system.	↗	↗	Continued growth until 2020 and more accelerated growth from 2022 onwards.
Processing times for the regularisation of foreigners in Spain.	↗	↘	Thanks to regulatory reforms and administrative improvements, times are being reduced since 2023.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.4: MIGRANTS

82

Grant legal status to 500,000 people in an irregular administrative situation (according to ILP estimates).

Indicator: number of people with legal status OPI (Permanent Immigration Observatory).

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

SDG 16.B: Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

83

Ensure all immigration procedures are made 100% digital, simplified, and unified, with significantly reduced processing times, and guarantee in-person assistance for those who need it, preventing digitalisation from becoming a barrier.

Indicator: Percentage of immigration procedures that are fully digitised and unified, with significantly reduced resolution times. Source: The Ministry of Territorial Policy and Democratic Memory will provide the data.

SDG 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions.

SDG 9.C: Increase access to information and communication technologies.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

84

Ensure the existence of public resources to attend to 90% of the people requesting access to the international protection reception system (SAPI).

Indicator: Percentage of persons seeking international protection who are attended to in the resources that make up the international protection reception system. Source: The Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration will provide the data.

SDG 10.2: Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

SDG 10.7: Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.4: MIGRANTS

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Spanish migration policy is aligned with the commitments of the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**, adopted by the United Nations in 2018, and is articulated through a comprehensive approach that places the human rights of migrants at the centre. Spain has developed a strategic framework that recognises migration as a structural and multidimensional phenomenon, and promotes its governance based on international legality, multilateral cooperation and attention to vulnerabilities. Spain has reaffirmed its commitment to the Global Compact in international fora and has produced progress reports highlighting the implementation of measures in line with the 23 goals of the Compact, such as improving reception systems, access to basic services, protection of minors and vulnerable persons, and promoting the social and economic inclusion of migrants and improving the establishment of safe, orderly and regular pathways.

In this context, and with the aim of favouring the maintenance of social cohesion and the harmonious coexistence of people of different cultural origins in Spanish society, grants are awarded annually to carry out projects in collaboration with public and private entities in the defence of the human rights of foreigners. These projects include, among others, actions in the field of prevention and awareness raising against racism, xenophobia, hate crimes and other forms of related intolerance; awareness raising for victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence, as well as projects aimed at both categories of victims and their descendants or projects for equipment and adaptation of buildings.

Likewise, and with the commitment to continue advancing towards a society that ensures the inclusion of all foreign residents and to prevent and combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance present in our society, the drafting of the **Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion against Racism and Xenophobia 2023 - 2027** has been promoted under the coordination of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in July 2023.

The Framework is a voluntary and flexible document designed to inform public policy, as well as the actions of civil society and relevant stakeholders. It is structured in six blocks of policies (which in turn include lines of action and objectives) that refer to the basic areas for the inclusion of immigrants and for combating discrimination, and which are framed within the perspective of Human Rights, gender, intersectional and children's rights.

The **first monitoring report** of the Strategic Framework was presented in February 2025, incorporating the main indicators of progress and remaining challenges in relation to the defined tactical objectives, as well as the situation and evolution of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The new **Foreigners' Regulation**, approved by **Royal Decree 1155/2024**, has been in force since May 2025 and is adapted to migration and European legislation. In addition to taking into account the demands of the labour market, the needs of migrants and the demographic challenges facing Spain, it introduces measures that facilitate access to legal status and strengthen the rights of migrants.

The Regulation strikes a balance between, on the one hand, extending and protecting the rights of migrants (offering new opportunities to those who have decided to build a life in Spain and to their families) and, on the other hand, reducing and simplifying administrative procedures, whilst safeguarding legal certainty.

In addition to these new measures designed to strengthen regular migration, the Regulation contributes to the greater and more effective inclusion of individuals, as evidenced by the amendments aimed at extending the duration of renewed temporary residence permits to four years (in order to prevent situations of subsequent irregularity), improve the regulation of family reunification and make the procedure for changing from one migration status to another more flexible, create a residence permit for relatives of Spanish nationals, and improve the procedure and requirements for residence permits based on established ties in order to facilitate access to regularised status. In addition, an authorisation for exceptional circumstances for victims of sexual violence is incorporated.

Meanwhile, the adoption of **Royal Decree 220/2022, which adopts the Regulations governing the reception system for international protection**, has provided an opportunity to clarify and organise the international protection reception system from the perspective of its operating principles, its phases, its duration, the actions carried out within them, as well as from the perspective of the rights and duties of the beneficiaries of the system, amongst other issues. It also regulates the management and financing mechanisms linked to concerted action with specialised entities. To this end, it establishes the obligations arising from such collaboration and the requirements for the provision of reception services.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

CANTABRIA: the work carried out by the regional government, in coordination with entities in the field of migration and refuge, represents an important step forward in the care and protection of migrants and refugees.

CATALONIA: the *Citizenship and Migration Plan 2017-2020* has consolidated a comprehensive framework for social inclusion and the protection of migrants' rights.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

CANARY ISLANDS: the *Canary Islands Plan for Immigration and Intercultural Coexistence 2026-2029* seeks to strengthen social cohesion and guarantee the rights of migrants in the archipelago, promoting coexistence based on cultural diversity.

CATALONIA: the *Citizenship and Migration Plan 2026-2029* aims to update reception, participation and social integration policies. The aim is to strengthen intercultural coexistence and equal opportunities in all areas of public and community life.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

PONTEVEDRA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL: in 2024 the council launched a *Programme of linguistic and social inclusion* aimed at the immigrant population.

SAN ESTEBAN DE GORMAZ (SORIA): in 2025, the local council was implementing a *municipal programme to support and promote the social inclusion of migrants living in the municipality*. The programme offers support in administrative procedures, job counselling and access to community resources.

5. CULTURE



INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda recognises the importance of culture as a cross-cutting component of sustainable development, although it has not been assigned a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). From this perspective, multiple actions are identified that can be promoted by the cultural sector to contribute to the achievement of the 17 SDGs.

One of the key actions is to incorporate the cultural dimension into development plans at local, national and international level. This implies reformulating cultural policies to align them with the SDGs and promoting normative frameworks that guarantee cultural rights.

Cultural education should be promoted at all levels, including non-formal education. It is essential to promote critical thinking, creativity and appreciation of cultural diversity. Arts and cultural expressions can be used as tools to raise awareness on issues such as climate change, gender equality and peace.

SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Cultural institutions should adopt sustainable practices, such as footprint reduction, recycling and energy efficiency. It is also essential to develop indicators to measure the impact of culture on sustainable development and, consequently, to make public support conditional on sustainability reporting.

Furthermore, basic cultural services must be guaranteed across all regions, while promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as women, young people, migrants and people with disabilities, in cultural life. Similarly, progress must be made in the visibility and protection of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

As regards the economic dimension, culture should be promoted as a driver of employment and growth. To this end, cultural entrepreneurship, the professionalisation of the sector and the digital transformation of cultural industries should be encouraged.

In addition, culture can play a strategic role in community resilience to social, health and environmental crises. In this sense, the recovery of traditional knowledge and the strengthening of collective memory are key tools for adapting to climate change.

Similarly, international cultural cooperation with developing countries is essential, including cultural cooperation for sustainable development, which forms part of Official Development Assistance (ODA). For this reason, a new Spanish Development Cooperation Culture and Sustainable Development Strategy will be approved, updating the framework of the 2007 strategy.

Finally, a cultural reading should be applied to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), so that it is possible to identify specific targets where culture can have an impact. In this context, culture must be recognised as the fourth pillar of sustainable development, alongside the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO CULTURAL GOODS AND SERVICES

According to the Synthesis of Cultural Statistical Indicators 2024, 67.5% of the population aged 15 and over participated in some cultural activity in the past year. The most frequent activities were reading books (64.1%), going to the cinema (43.9%), visiting monuments (36.7%), attending current music concerts (25.4%) and going to the theatre (23.2%). On the other hand, the Survey of Cultural Habits and Practices 2021-2022 reveals that 31.5% of the population engaged in some active cultural practice, such as playing an instrument, writing, painting or dancing. The most common were artistic photography (15.2%), writing literary texts (9.8%), musical performance (6.7%) and drawing or painting (6.3%). As regards spending on culture, the 2024 Yearbook of Cultural Statistics indicates that average per capita spending on cultural goods and services stood at €298.2 in 2023, representing 2.3% of total household expenditure. The highest expenditure was on books and periodicals (27.4%), cultural services such as cinema, theatre and concerts (24.1%) and audiovisual and multimedia equipment (21.6%). With regard to barriers to accessing culture, the Survey of Cultural Habits and Practices 2021-2022 identifies lack of interest (45.3%), lack of time (32.7%), high prices (18.4%), lack of nearby supply (11.2%) and health or mobility problems (7.6%) as the main obstacles.

According to the Survey of Cultural Habits and Practices 2024-2025, there are significant differences between men and women in cultural participation. Women outnumber men in reading books for leisure (63.8% vs. 53.6%) and in theatre attendance (27.8% vs. 21.4%). In the period 2021-2022, men were more likely to attend cinema and current music concerts. This situation has changed over the last year, with 49% of cinema attendance by women and 47.9% by men, and 32.9% of women attending current music concerts compared to 31.2% of men. In terms of active cultural practices, women stand out in literary writing (7.9% vs. 5.8%) and in drawing or painting (18.1% vs. 10.3%), while men have a higher participation in music performance (10.2% vs. 6.8%).

Cultural participation is significantly higher in urban than in rural areas. Cities offer greater access to cultural infrastructure such as theatres, museums and libraries. In rural areas, the cultural offer is more limited, which translates into lower attendance rates and less diversity of cultural practices. The territorial divide is still a challenge for cultural equity.

PARTICIPATION OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR IN THE SPANISH ECONOMY

According to the most recent data from the Ministry of Culture, the cultural sector in Spain made a significant contribution to the national economy in 2024. The Culture Satellite Account estimates that cultural activities accounted for 2.3% of Spain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). When activities related to intellectual property are also included, this figure rises to 3.5% of GDP, reflecting the growing importance of the creative and knowledge-based economy within the national production system as a whole. With regard to its evolution, the contribution of cultural GVA to the Spanish economy as a whole will be, on average, practically constant since 2020 (2.1% in 2020, 2.2% in 2021 and 2.3% in 2023).

According to the 2024 Yearbook of Cultural Statistics, expenditure on cultural goods and services amounted to €360,309,000 in 2021 and €457,776,000 in 2022, compared with total expenditure of €870,389 million and €1,183,836 million respectively, representing 41% in 2021 and 39% in 2022.

Public spending on culture by local councils in municipalities with more than 5,000 inhabitants amounted to €2,947,798 million in 2024, compared with €710,014 million in municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, representing 24% of total municipal spending on culture. In 2021, these figures stood at €2,560,253 and €581,567 million in small municipalities, accounting for 22.7%.

In terms of employment, the cultural sector generated 771,000 jobs in 2024, equivalent to 3.6% of total employment in Spain. This figure represents an increase of 6.6% over the previous year and 8.6% more than in 2019, consolidating the recovery of the sector after the pandemic. Most of these jobs are full-time (88.6%) and highly qualified: 71.2% of the people working in the sector have higher education, compared to 46.7% of the national average. In addition, there has been a notable increase in female and youth employment in the cultural field. The percentage distribution of cultural employment is 58.3% for men and 41.7% for women in the first quarter of 2025, a gap of 28.5%. In 2024 this gap was 31.6%, and in 2023 it was 32.7%.

With regard to the business fabric, in 2023 there were more than 130,000 active cultural companies in Spain. These companies cover a wide range of activities, from book and press publishing to performing arts, film, music, design, photography, translation and video games. Most of them are micro-enterprises, with less than five employees, reflecting the atomised and entrepreneurial structure of the Spanish cultural sector.

VISUAL SUMMARY
COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1. TOPIC 5 CULTURE

INDICATOR	TREND 2015 - 2021	TREND 2021 -	COMMENTS
Participation of the cultural sector in the Spanish economy.		↗	Continued moderate growth.
Employment generated in the cultural sector.	↓	↗	Significant drop in 2020. Closing the gender gap and recovery from the pandemic.

2030 RSDS TARGETS TOPIC 4.5: CULTURE

85 **Increase by 20% equitable access to cultural participation and cultural goods and services for all people, promoting cultural diversity and social inclusion.**

Indicator: Expenditure settled on culture by the General State Administration (the yearbook of cultural statistics 2024).

SDG 4.7: Ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and competences to promote sustainable development, including cultural diversity.

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 11.4: Double efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

86

Reduce by 30% the territorial gap in cultural life by ensuring equity in access and participation.

Indicator: Expenditure paid on culture by local councils according to the size of the municipality (public expenditure on culture in local councils).

SDG 10.2: Enhance and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic status.

SDG 11.a: Support economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas.

SDG 11.4: Safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

87

Reduce the gender gap in cultural life by 40% by ensuring equal conditions and opportunities.

Indicator: gender gap in cultural employment (cultural employment statistics).

SDG 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation on equal terms in all areas, including culture.

SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through policies, including regulatory ones.

SDG 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people.

88

Increase the share of the cultural sector in the Spanish economy as a whole by 0.8% compared to 2015.

Indicator: Contribution of cultural GVA to the Spanish economy as a whole. (culture satellite account).

SDG 8.3: Promote policies aimed at productive development and decent employment.

SDG 9.2: Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation.

SDG 12.6: Promote sustainable practices in companies.

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

STATE REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CULTURAL LIFE

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Culture as a human right and a common good is at the heart of the new approach to state cultural policies. The **Cultural Rights Plan 2025-2030**, presented in July 2025, marks a paradigm shift by positioning culture as an enforceable right, linked to well-being, democracy and social justice. The plan includes 146 measures structured in five strategic priorities: guaranteeing cultural democracy, addressing contemporary challenges from within culture, strengthening the creative ecosystem, consolidating the framework of cultural rights and adapting public administration to this approach.

The **Culture and Citizenship Programme**, which has been running for a decade, continues to promote active cultural participation, territorial diversity and dialogue between

communities. The Eleventh Meeting was held in 2025, focusing on cultural rights, artificial intelligence and the culture of peace, and a new line of grants was launched for cultural cooperation projects in rural areas.

In the area of heritage, the State maintains the **Plan for the Defence of Historical Heritage**, based on Law 16/1985, which regulates the protection, conservation and transmission of Spain's historical heritage. This plan is implemented through the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage and Fine Arts, and includes acquisition, restoration, inventory and institutional cooperation measures to ensure public access to and preservation of cultural property.

RELEVANT REGULATORY PROVISIONS

The **Law on Cinema and Audiovisual Culture**, currently in parliamentary procedure after its approval by the Council of Ministers in June 2024, seeks to modernise the regulations in force since 2007. To this end, it adapts new models of audiovisual production and consumption, such as digital platforms.

It also recognises audiovisual heritage by declaring the Filmoteca Española an Asset of Cultural Interest, defines more precisely the figure of the independent producer to guarantee support for real creators, maintains screen quotas for European cinema in cinemas, and regulates the exhibition window between cinema releases and platforms.

AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CULTURAL LIFE

PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ASTURIAS: the programme *Asturies, Cultura en Rede* and the creation of the Cultural Projects Office have been implemented as part of the strategy to strengthen cultural cooperation and project management.

BALEARIC ISLANDS: the *Strategy Plan for Digitalisation and Promotion of Technology in the Cultural Sphere* seeks to improve access to cultural content, optimise the preservation of heritage and promote citizen participation through digital platforms.

PLANS AND REGULATIONS UP TO 2030

NAVARRRE: the *Fourth Master Plan for Cooperation 2025-2028* establishes the strategic planning of public policy on international cooperation and incorporates the cultural dimension as a key element of cooperation.

CATALONIA: the *2023-2026 Development Cooperation Master Plan* reinforces the Generalitat's external action in the area of development cooperation. It also highlights the inclusion of culture as a driver of sustainable human development.

MEASURES BY LES TO IMPROVE CULTURAL LIFE

MUNICIPAL PLANS AND REGULATIONS 2021-2025

ALHAMA DE MURCIA (MURCIA): In 2024, it launched a *municipal programme to support the local film industry*. The programme includes a cycle of social cinema, community theatre and participatory cultural activities.

ALJARAQUE (HUELVA): in 2025 the city council promotes *projects to enhance local heritage and create new cultural facilities*. Ongoing measures include the rehabilitation of cultural spaces, the provision of stage equipment and intergenerational cultural programming.

B) POLICY COHERENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (PCSD)

ACTION BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), which is reflected in target 17.14 of the SDGs, requires governments to coordinate and align their policies to address interconnected global challenges such as the climate crisis, pollution, biodiversity loss and social and economic inequalities. These challenges require simultaneous approaches to ensure equitable and sustainable well-being within planetary boundaries.

The OECD defines the PCSD as "a process for integrating sustainable development dimensions into the national and international policy-making process". This PCSD system incorporates an approach that places sustainable development within the limits of the planet, with the aim of placing value on shared well-being and not exclusively on growth. It is an essential principle to ensure that public policies are designed and implemented in an integrated manner, which avoids contradictions and maximises synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions. This approach aims to ensure that decisions taken in one area do not have negative impacts on others, either nationally or internationally, contributing to the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the commitment to leave no one behind.

The PCSD implies the incorporation of cross-cutting criteria in all sectoral policies and highlights the need for governments to coordinate and align their policies to address interconnected global challenges (the climate crisis, pollution, biodiversity loss or social and economic inequalities), including the perspective of human rights, gender equality and sustainability. On the environmental side, it includes the *Do No Significant Harm (DNSH)* principle at the heart of the NextGeneration EU funds, whose application reinforces policy coherence by ensuring that the measures promoted promote growth and resilience without compromising the environment and integrate a holistic view on sustainable recovery and transition.

It also requires a solid system of governance, with inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, participation of autonomous communities and local entities, and permanent dialogue with civil society and the private sector. It also demands tools to identify and manage policy interactions, anticipate undesirable effects and establish corrective measures. These challenges require simultaneous treatments to ensure equitable and sustainable well-being within planetary boundaries.

In Spain, a first boost to these aspects was initiated with the approval of the Action Plan for the 2030 Agenda (2018) which identified the necessary implementation of a system to address the PCSD. However, the creation of the comprehensive PCSD system was not formalised until the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (2021). It establishes the necessary mainstreaming of the principles of sustainable development in all public actions, which ensures that policies:

1. Do not contradict each other.
2. Generate simultaneous positive economic, social and environmental impacts.
3. Avoid negative cross-over effects between sectors or administrative levels.

In order to comprehensively address the Policy Coherence System for Sustainable Development and to consolidate this approach in the whole of government action, the configuration of an analysis-monitoring framework and an institutional governance framework was envisaged.

The analytical framework combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to assess policy coherence with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This framework includes the Report on the Alignment of the General State Budget with the 2030 Agenda, which allows identifying interactions between policies, their contribution to the goals, and possible cross-border and long-term impacts. To this end, collaboration between public administrations and multidisciplinary scientific research is essential,

establishing mechanisms to disseminate results and recommendations. In addition, the incorporation of SDG impact analysis into new policy frameworks is set to continue, reinforcing the integration of sustainability into decision-making.

The institutional framework of the 2030 Agenda governance system articulates competencies, coordinates and establishes mechanisms to implement Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). This framework ensures integration in the definition and evaluation of public policies at all levels of government, with the capacity to scale up and adapt to ensure their full incorporation into decision-making and monitoring processes.

The monitoring framework, with specific tools and indicators, allows for a cross-cutting assessment of progress on PCSD. These indicators are integrated into the monitoring system of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy review and analyse coherence not only in processes and outcomes, but also in positive or negative impacts, both at national and international level, in the medium and long term.

The following is a summary of the main advances existing at international and European level with regard to the state of the PCSD issue, and the main tools already existing in the sphere of the General State Administration are presented.

STATE OF PLAY OF THE PCSD ISSUE AT INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN LEVEL

The PCSD emerged in the 1990s, within the OECD, with an approach that sought to avoid contradictions in public policies in developing countries. Over time, its meaning has broadened, so that today's PCSD is a driver not only for eliminating inconsistencies and contradictions between public policies, but also for orienting and coordinating them towards sustainable development.

The application of the OECD's PCSD approach requires a systematic consideration of its four dimensions:

- Vertical: analysis of the coherence between objectives and results.
- Horizontal: analysis of interdepartmental harmonisation using the *whole-of-government approach*.
- Temporal: analysis of the future effectiveness of current policies.
- Cosmopolitan: transnational cross-impact analysis, called external coherence.

The OECD adopted in 2010 the Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, revised in 2019, to align it with the 2030 Agenda. Its methodological framework is based on eight principles and three pillars (analysis, governance and monitoring). Currently, 23 of the 27 EU Member States have adopted this OECD Recommendation on PCSD. Spain is a member of the OECD PCSD Focal Point Group.

From the European Union, there has been a clear political will to move towards PCSD. The EU Council underlined the key nature of the PCSD for the realisation of the SDGs and proposed a comprehensive approach.

Accordingly, in the framework of the EU Council Working Group on the 2030 Agenda, the guide "Improving EU PCSD through innovation in governance" was developed in 2024, which recommends various tools such as the *Better Regulation Toolbox*, budget alignment with the SDGs, integration of indicator 17.14.1 in Eurostat reports, training of civil servants, among others.

Additionally, SDG 17 indicator 17.14.1 measures the number of countries that have mechanisms in place to improve policy coherence to achieve sustainable development. Specifically, it assesses whether countries have established systems to ensure that their public policies are aligned with the principles of sustainable development in the following areas:

- Institutionalised political commitment
- Long-term considerations in decision making
- Inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral co-ordination
- Participatory processes
- Assessment of policy impacts and policy linkages
- Alignment between levels of government
- Monitoring and reporting
- Financial resources and tools

Similarly, the Council Conclusions adopted at its 4072nd meeting on 17 December 2024 call for:

- Integrating the SDGs into the Improving the European Administrative Space (*ComPAct*).
- Strengthening inter-sectoral coordination and avoid compartmentalisation.
- Conducting systematic *ex ante*, *in itinere* and *ex post* impact assessments.
- Improving monitoring and accountability on PCSD.

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE PCSD SYSTEM: STATE OF PLAY AND 8 KEY TOOLS

In Spain, the commitment to the PCSD was included in the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (2021) and in Law 1/2023 on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity. It is further complemented by a number of sector-specific instruments, such as the Green Public Procurement Plan, the Fifth Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation, the 2050 Decarbonisation Strategy, the indicators for Goal 17.14, the 'Spain 2050' document, and Law 27/2022 on the evaluation of public policies.

The Voluntary National Review (2024) presented by Spain to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2024 summarises the main advances in the area of PCSD classified into thematic areas (policy and budget alignment, governance and vision, coherence tools, training of public employees, etc.).

Meanwhile, the Directorate-General for the 2030 Agenda is working to coordinate the efforts of the other ministries responsible for each tool. Governance is also promoted through the Government Delegate Commission for the 2030 Agenda, the Sectoral Conference, the Sustainable Development Council and specific working groups.

In international cooperation, Law 1/2023 created new bodies: the Interministerial Commission for Sustainable Development Cooperation, the Sectoral Conference for Sustainable Development Cooperation, and the High Council for Sustainable Development Cooperation, which at its constituent meeting in October 2025 announced the creation of a Working Party on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Cooperation.

On the other hand, as has been advanced in previous pages, in order to take a significant step in the constitution of the Integrated PCSD System, 8 priority work areas have been identified in Spain that function as strategic tools to permeate the processes of elaboration, execution and evaluation of public policies.

The following is a summary of the content and progress of the 8 PCSD tools: 1) Regulatory coherence, for which the competent Ministry is the Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Courts; 2) Budgetary alignment, for which the competent Ministry is the Ministry of Finance; 3) Coordination of strategic planning and impact assessment of public policies, whose competences are exercised by the Institute for the Evaluation of Public Policies; 4) Intergenerational impact analysis, carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and the Ministry of Youth and Children; 5) Sustainable public procurement, a mission led by the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with three other ministries (Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Ministry of Science, Innovation and

Universities, and Ministry of Labour and Social Economy); 6) Training of civil servants, mainly driven by the National Institute of Public Administration; 7) External coherence, for which the competent Ministry is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation; and 8) Accountability, coordinated by the General Directorate for Agenda 2030.

TOOL 1: POLICY COHERENCE

Policy Coherence is an essential tool to identify the impact of policy on the Strategy's goals and to support policy planning by all actors involved. This allows for the analysis of synergies and the prevention of possible inconsistencies or incompatible actions between draft regulations.

Its competence is attributed to the Ministry of the Presidency, Justice and Relations with the Courts, through two key instruments: the Regulatory Impact Analysis Reports and the Annual Regulatory Plan. The Ministry of the Presidency is carrying out its task of analysing the possible impacts of the regulation and the medium-term planning of future actions of all actors of the General State Administration.

The Regulatory Impact Analysis Report (RIA) accompanies all regulatory proposals and ensures that draft regulations are rigorously prepared, the need for them is justified and their potential impacts are estimated. This preliminary analysis contains various sections dedicated to an exhaustive assessment of the different impacts that may result from the approval of the planned regulations: economic, budgetary, gender-related, on children and adolescents, on the family, on accessibility for people with disabilities, and on climate change. This analysis identifies the coherence of the standard with the SDGs and other standards, as well as its contribution to meeting the goals of this Strategy, ensuring that it does not generate negative social, economic and environmental impacts.

Its added value lies in the analysis of the impact of regulatory projects on the achievement of targets and their effects on monitoring indicators (which are essential to assess the real impact of regulations, improve accountability and correct deviations).

Adequate compliance with the principles of good regulation (art. 129 of Law 39/2015) contributes to guaranteeing the coherence of a broad regulatory production, which is necessary to coordinate all agents in the achievement of the agreed goals.

On the other hand, the Annual Regulatory Plan (NAP) is an *ex ante* planning instrument for regulatory activity. Its task is to provide information to all stakeholders so that they can anticipate the regulatory activity of the National Government for the coming year. By incorporating the annual planning of regulatory projects of each ministerial department, the NAP allows the different actors of the NSA to identify regulatory actions in advance. This favours the coordination of their actions under the guidance of the Ministries and also the avoidance of duplication, overlapping and inconsistencies between the different proposing units.

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Continue to promote policy coherence in the Regulatory Impact Analysis Reports (MAIN) and in the Annual Policy Plan (NAP) to foster coordination in the achievement of the goals of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN REGULATORY COHERENCE

At the regional level, several communities are making progress in incorporating policy coherence into their legislative frameworks and sustainable development strategies. Among the most noteworthy actions are the following:

- **CANARY ISLANDS:** by *Decree 85/2023 of 25 May*, the Canary Islands has established a strategic planning and management model that reinforces the coherence between regulatory action, administrative planning and regional sustainability objectives.
- **CASTILLA-LA MANCHA:** has promoted a *proposal for an agreement of the Governing Council to align regulations with the 2030 Agenda*. This encourages the regional regulatory projects of the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha to consider their impact on the sustainable development goals.
- **CASTILLA Y LEÓN:** has incorporated *energy efficiency and accessibility criteria in its calls for urban renovation grants*. This ensures coherence between its housing, inclusion and environmental sustainability policies.
- **CATALONIA:** through the *Regulatory Plan 2025 and the deployment of the Accessibility Code of Catalonia*, reinforces regulatory coherence in terms of social rights, equality and sustainability. In this way, it aligns its legislative action with the 2030 Agenda.
- **NAVARRRE:** has developed *social inclusion tools, a Circular Economy Observatory* to assess the impact of sustainability regulations, and has included SDG criteria in the assessment of projects and public calls for proposals carried out by the region.

TOOL 2: BUDGET ALIGNMENT

This tool, whose competence is vested in the Ministry of Finance, is key to linking what spending is geared towards achieving sustainable development and the SDGs. In the 2022 General Budget Act, the Report on the Alignment of the General State Budget (PGE) with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda was introduced, fulfilling a milestone of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan.

Spain has received international recognition for being one of the pioneering countries in aligning its PGEs with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. This effort has been appreciated by bodies such as the European Union, the OECD and other international fora, mainly for the incorporation of an innovative methodology that links each budget programme to the 17 SDGs. This is conducive to fiscal transparency, accountability and policy coherence to achieve sustainable development.

In addition, the European *Green Budgeting* methodology is applied, which identifies funds earmarked for decarbonisation and foresees the incorporation of an analysis of "environmentally harmful" expenditures (brown dimension). Impact analyses on the social and economic dimensions are also included.

In order to facilitate simplification at the national level and achieve a better adaptation to the Spanish reality, this Strategy includes a validation between the SDGs and the national targets that allows for their rapid inclusion in the budget alignment analysis process.

The system must be consolidated and the quality and usefulness of budget alignment ensured. To this end, the departments and units responsible for implementing it must rigorously reflect each programme's contribution to the achievement of the SDGs and their associated targets, as well as the expected impacts and methodology applied. This will result in more reliable, comparable and higher quality data. This is why the training of civil servants in budget alignment is essential to optimise the preparation of inputs to be provided by each unit.

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Maintain budget alignment on all SDGs.

SDG 17.1: Strengthen domestic resource mobilisation to improve fiscal and redistributive capacity.

SDG 17.2: Ensure that developed countries meet their official development assistance commitments.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN BUDGET ALIGNMENT

Autonomous communities are also making progress in integrating the approach of aligning budgets with the SDGs, by applying their own methodologies to identify, classify and evaluate public spending based on its contribution to sustainable development. Among the main initiatives are the following:

- **ANDALUSIA:** the Andalusian community prepares an annual *report on the alignment of the regional budget with the 2030 Agenda*, which analyses the correspondence between spending programmes and the SDGs. It also incorporates a complementary report on the budgetary impact on climate change.
- **CASTILLA LA MANCHA:** since 2021, it has been producing a *Report on the Alignment of General Budgets with the SDGs* in order to provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of the contribution of regional budgets to the achievement of the SDGs. To this end, the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha carries out a detailed analysis of each of the budget programmes, with the purpose of identifying and assessing their level of correspondence with the relevant SDGs.
- **CATALONIA:** has incorporated the *methodology of environmental and social markers* in the 2024 Budget of the Government of Catalonia, with labelling of items according to the SDGs. It also carries out a specific evaluation, attributed to the Catalan Water Agency, to measure its contribution to sustainable development.
- **NAVARRRE:** the region has strengthened *coordination between budgetary and development cooperation areas*. In addition, it values positively projects and public calls for proposals that demonstrate alignment with the SDGs (in particular as they affect social equity and environmental sustainability).
- **BASQUE COUNTRY:** the Basque Government has promoted a *comprehensive budget alignment with the SDGs* in the three provincial councils. In doing so, it consolidates an advanced territorial model of sustainable budgeting with a multi-level cooperation approach.

TOOL 3: COORDINATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES

To ensure consistency across ministerial strategic plans, structures, indicators and methodologies must be standardised, so as to ensure that each strategy can be evaluated from the design stage onwards. Examples such as the 2050 Decarbonisation Strategy and the Spain 2050 report demonstrate forward-looking progress in the design of long-term policies; however, they do not include standardised or uniform criteria applicable across the entire central government.

The Institute for the Evaluation of Public Policies (IEPP) is leading this process through methodological guidelines and support to ministries in order to improve coordination and impact analysis. Thus, the role of the Institute (created by Law 27/2022 on the institutionalisation of public policy evaluation in the General State Administration) is to promote replicable pilot projects, based on common statistical indicators and homogeneous planning methodologies.

There are various guides for assessing public policies in the evaluation phase:

- Guide to the evaluability of public interventions. It analyses, from the design phase of a public policy, whether it can be subject to external evaluations.
- Public Policy Design Evaluation Guide. It is primarily intended for ex-ante evaluations, but is also useful for the design of public policy implementation.
- Evaluation Guide for the implementation of public policies. It examines the implementation of policies in two of their phases: the initiation (design and preparation) and the monitoring of their development.
- Outcome Evaluation Guide. Focused on promoting efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

However, there are still no monographic guides available that incorporate standardised criteria for the elaboration of strategic plans in a coordinated manner and that allow for their systematic ex ante evaluability.

Likewise, Law 1/2023 contemplated the creation of the new Spanish Cooperation Evaluation Office, as a unit attached to the State Secretariat for International Cooperation, to define and carry out the evaluation plan for the international cooperation of the General State Administration and its dependent bodies (in coherence with the Government's Strategic Evaluation Plan). The OECE, finally created a year later by Royal Decree 1184/2024, is in charge of managing strategic evaluations in this field, coordinating the actors of the Spanish cooperation evaluation system within the General State Administration and promoting coordination mechanisms with the rest of the actors.

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Promote the development of methodological guidelines with standardised criteria for drawing up strategic plans in order to coordinate the application of the public policy evaluation system.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

SDG 17.18: Improve the availability of reliable and timely data for monitoring.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

At the regional level, several regions have developed instruments to improve coordination between strategic plans and the evaluation of the impact of public policies. The following examples stand out:

- **ANDALUSIA:** the community has approved the *Andalusian Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030*, accompanied by a Delegate Commission for the 2030 Agenda and annual reports on the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. This enables ongoing strategic planning and systematic accountability for progress on sustainability.
- **CATALONIA:** The Catalan government has created an *Interdepartmental Commission on Climate Change*, with representation from all departments of the Generalitat, to ensure the coordination of environmental, energy and climate planning policies. The Generalitat has also developed *strategic environmental assessments* in river basin

management plans, which integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation criteria in their sectoral planning.

- **NAVARRRE:** the region has drawn up the *First and Second Action Plans for the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Circular Economy in Navarre 2030 (2023-2026)*. Through them, it incorporates impact assessment of planning in areas such as social economy, employment and cooperation. In addition, Navarre participates in the *Interdepartmental Commission for Agenda 2030*, which coordinates coherence between sectoral plans.

TOOL 4: INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Against a backdrop of complex demographic challenges, the incorporation of an intergenerational perspective into Spanish public policy is still in its infancy. At present, most strategic plans have a sector-specific medium-term timeframe in which youth participation is limited to consultative processes.

Despite the establishment in 2020 of the National Foresight and Strategy Office as the body responsible for the Spain 2050 plan, and the alignment of its publications with the expectations of international organisations in various sectoral areas, it is necessary to incorporate a greater intergenerational vision in public policies. In particular, progress should be made towards establishing a framework of indicators that will enable an analysis of the intergenerational impact of public policies.

The coordinating role played by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) in relation to the statistical units of each ministerial department is particularly noteworthy in this regard, as is the Ministry of Youth and Children's leading role in defining a set of indicators for analysing the intergenerational impact of various sectoral public policies. The challenge is to integrate this perspective into strategic planning processes, so that indicators can be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and existing foresight exercises and so that current decisions do not compromise the opportunities of future generations.

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Establish a set of indicators and monitor them to measure the intergenerational impact of public policies.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

SDG 17.19: Develop measures of progress on sustainable development, including additional indicators.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN THE ANALYSIS OF INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT

CATALONIA: has carried out the preparation of the *Evaluation Report of the Catalan Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030*. This report examines the environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate policies in the medium and long term. The forward-looking approach it incorporates integrates indicators of ecological transition, mitigation and adaptation, and assesses the ability of current policies to ensure the well-being of future generations.

TOOL 5: SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

The PCSD, aligned with SDG 12.7, integrates green, innovative and social criteria in public procurement, a key aspect of sustainable development.

At the international level, the EU promotes Strategic Public Procurement and the UN promotes Sustainable Public Procurement, both of which coincide in the triple environmental, economic-innovative and social dimension.

In Spain, Presidential Order PCI/86/2019 of 31 January approved the Green Public Procurement Plan, which promotes procurement with low environmental impact, the circular economy, efficiency in public funds and the incorporation of green clauses in procurement. In this context, the Catalogue of Ecological Technical Requirements, approved in September 2025 (in compliance with article 31.1 of Law 7/2021 of 20 May on climate change and energy transition), establishes 20 categories of technical requirements that will allow tendering units to include sustainability elements in their procurement documents.

In addition, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities has promoted Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI) through the Centre for Technological Development and Innovation (CDTI) and a new Plan for Innovation in Public Procurement has been launched. This plan aims to boost demand-driven innovation and foster public-private collaboration. To this end, it incorporates the call for proposals through the Line for the Promotion of Innovation from Demand (FID Line), aimed at public purchasers acquiring or developing innovative products and services available on the market.

Both tools are coordinated by the Interministerial Commission for the incorporation of ecological criteria in public procurement and by the Interministerial Commission for the incorporation of innovation criteria in public procurement, with the participation of MITECO, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and the Ministry of Finance.

In order to move towards a comprehensive PCSD system, a third aspect needs to be added: social sustainability through responsible public procurement. In this sense, the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy is making progress in the configuration of a Responsible Public Procurement Plan, which is still in the design phase. One of the key elements in this procurement model is the reinforcement of public procurement reserved for insertion companies and special employment centres of social initiative, as set out in the current regulations. In this sense, work will be done to increase this percentage of the state public sector contracting reserve to 15%, an objective included in the draft Integral Law for the Promotion of the Social Economy, as well as to promote training, awareness and technical adaptation for state public sector contracting units.

The main challenge in this respect is to integrate the three dimensions (ecological, innovative and social) coherently into procurement specifications. Thus, the catalogue of sustainable technical specifications allows public employees to incorporate sustainability elements in the preparation of procurement specifications and to encourage companies to internalise the SDGs in their economic activity.

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Produce a catalogue of technical specifications on sustainable public procurement that integrates the efforts of all administrations.

SDG 12.7: Promote sustainable public procurement practices.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Autonomous Communities have made progress in incorporating environmental, social and innovation criteria into public procurement. This reinforces the role of this tool as a driver of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. Prominent examples include:

- **ANDALUSIA:** has produced a *Guide for the incorporation of social and environmental clauses in public procurement*. The guide guides the contracting bodies of the Andalusian Regional Government in the introduction of sustainability and circular economy criteria in the contracting specifications.
- **CANARY ISLANDS:** has created the *Observatory for Responsible Public Procurement*. It is a space for monitoring and best practices that promotes transparency and coherence of public procurement with the SDGs.
- **CANTABRIA:** promotes the *integration of social, environmental and economic sustainability criteria in public procurement*, with particular attention to aspects related to energy efficiency and waste reduction.
- **CATALONIA:** the Generalitat promotes *socially responsible public procurement* and monitors respect for human rights in the supply chain. In addition, environmental and social clauses have been incorporated into the Catalan Water Agency's contracting specifications.
- **NAVARRRE:** the regional government has included *green requirements* in public procurement (e.g. the use of recycled materials or the promotion of energy efficiency). The Community also promotes the integration of green and social clauses in tenders for technological equipment to contribute to sustainable digitisation.

TOOL 6: TRAINING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Training for public sector staff is key to integrating PCSD into every stage of the public policy cycle. The aim is to enable them to design, implement and evaluate policies with a strategic approach to achieving the SDGs.

In Spain, the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) has promoted specific training to rethink the planning and evaluation of public policies and has provided training on the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. However, the incorporation of sustainability into the design and implementation of public policies still needs to be systematised.

In fact, the most important challenge is to ensure that both managers and other public employees acquire a cross-cutting analytical vision capable of:

- Detecting economic, social, environmental, cross-border and intergenerational impacts early.
- Identifying possible synergies with other actors for coherent public action.
- Orienting public action towards a proactive and transformative management, aligned with sustainable development and the achievement of the goals included in this Strategy.

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Systematise the incorporation of sustainable development in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies through the training of public employees.

SDG 4.c: Increase the supply of technical and vocational training.

SDG 17.9: Strengthen international support for capacity building.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN THE TRAINING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Autonomous Communities are promoting training programmes to integrate sustainability, equality and policy coherence into the civil service, with the aim of establishing a public administration focused on sustainable development. Among the main initiatives are the following:

- **ANDALUCÍA:** provides annual *training actions for public employees* that incorporate specific content on sustainability, equality and Agenda 2030.
- **BALEARIC ISLANDS:** the government of the Balearic Islands promotes the provision of *monographic training on the 2030 Agenda* and the SDGs for public employees that incorporates awareness-raising and practical training itineraries on institutional sustainability.
- **CASTILLA-LA MANCHA:** the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla La Mancha has launched the *Training Plan for Administration Staff and the Emplead@ 360 Project*. Both aim at modernising public management and strengthening the planning, evaluation and sustainable digitisation capacities of the people involved.
- **CATALONIA:** the Generalitat has developed the *Plan for the Culture of Innovation in Public Administrations*. For its part, the Catalan Water Agency has provided training on sustainability policies, responsible public procurement and policy coherence.
- **NAVARRRE:** the Autonomous Community promotes *training in subjects such as equality between women and men and violence against women*. Also noteworthy is the development of the *Navarra Zirkular training programme*, which integrates training actions on circular economy and sustainability.

TOOL 7: EXTERNAL COHERENCE

External Coherence is one of the key dimensions of the PCSD and is linked to the cosmopolitan dimension. It consists of ensuring that national policies do not respond exclusively to domestic interests, but are also coherent with global challenges and Spain's international commitments. This is why its core competence is attributed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, which ensures the alignment of public policies with treaties, multilateral frameworks and international commitments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation has made progress in the institutional governance of External Coherence with the constitution, in October 2025, of the Plenary of the High Council for Sustainable Development Cooperation and Global Solidarity. This is the last of the three coordination and consultation bodies provided for in Law 1/2023 on cooperation. The Plenary has representation from the autonomous communities, local entities through the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) and the Confederation of Cooperation and Solidarity Funds (CONFOCOS). In addition, for the first time, it includes representatives of peace organisations and the Spanish Youth Council. Finally, Royal Decree 898/2025 itself, which regulates the High Council, provides for the mandatory existence of a Working Group on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, from the perspective of international cooperation, to promote the coordination of the efforts of the different actors in the field.

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Explore options for moving towards external coherence information systems.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

96

Integrate the external perspective into the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in our country.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

97

Conduct policy coherence analysis of sustainable development cooperation policies within the High Council for Sustainable Development Cooperation and Global Solidarity.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN EXTERNAL COHERENCE

Autonomous Communities have made progress in integrating external coherence into their policies, which promotes interdepartmental coordination and the participation of social and territorial actors in international sustainable development commitments. Among the main initiatives are the following:

- **ANDALUSIA:** has promoted the *2030 CAYALYSTS Project* and the creation of the *Foro Red Reversa (2023)*. Both are spaces for collaboration between the Regional Ministry of Sustainability and Environment and Andalusian municipalities to coordinate their local actions on sustainability with the global commitments of the 2030 Agenda.
- **BALEARIC ISLANDS:** the Balearic Government carries out cooperation and humanitarian action programmes. It also organises the *"Educational Centres for Sustainable Development"* Awards to promote the involvement of the educational community in international cooperation and global awareness.
- **CANARY ISLANDS:** this region has the Canary Islands Council for Sustainable Development and an *Inter-Institutional Working Group (GOTI)* to coordinate policies in coherence with the Canary Islands 2030 Agenda. They also develop social responsibility plans for public and commercial companies that are aligned with international sustainability standards.
- **CATALONIA:** the Government of Catalonia has created the *Social Roundtable on Climate Change*. It is conceived as a participatory instrument for social and governmental actors to strengthen the international and solidarity-based dimension of climate policies, in coherence with the multilateral commitments of the EU and the UN.
- **NAVARRRE:** the region has *interdepartmental commissions and monitoring forums* to coordinate policies on circular economy, equality and development cooperation. All of this in order to ensure that the different regional initiatives contribute to the global objectives and prevent negative impacts on third countries.

TOOL 8: ACCOUNTABILITY

The Directorate General for Agenda 2030 of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030 is responsible for coordinating accountability to international organisations regarding the fulfilment and monitoring of the SDGs in Spain. It also drafts and reviews Spanish sustainable development strategies, prepares progress reports and carries out voluntary national reviews.

The Directorate General uses indicator 17.14.1 to report on PCSD, following the methodology designed by the UN custodian agency for PCSD (the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP). This indicator allows for an overall analysis of the adoption of the PCSD approach at the national level. It assesses eight key components including political commitment, inter-ministerial coordination, participation, policy evaluation and financial resource allocation.

Spain started reporting on this indicator in 2023 and in 2025 and has remitted it again, scoring 70 points, reflecting significant progress on PCSD. This analysis exercise is part of a collaborative inter-agency and accountability effort linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy.

Similarly, Spain is subjecting itself, through the elaboration of the Voluntary National Reviews (2018, 2021 and 2024), to the national exercise of carrying out the collection of data and information to measure the degree of compliance with the SDGs. These Reviews are presented to the UN High Level Political Forum.

To strengthen this tool, the following is essential:

- Maintain continuity in the reporting of indicator 17.14.1, in order to assess progress.
- Conduct the Voluntary National Review (VNR).
- Generalise the practice of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to strengthen multi-level accountability.

In this way, accountability not only fulfils a technical monitoring role, but also becomes a mechanism of democratic legitimacy to promote transparency, participation and effectiveness in the implementation of the SDGs.

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Generalise multi-level accountability, through greater participation of municipalities in Voluntary Local Reporting.

SDG 11.a: Support economic, social and environmental linkages between urban and rural areas.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

SDG 17.16: Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

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Deepen the integration of the local perspective on sustainable development in its international implementation.

SDG 17.14: Improve policy coherence for sustainable development.

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Integrate continuous improvement in the field of policy coherence for sustainable development.

SDG 17.14: Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development

PROGRESS MADE BY THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY IN THE AREA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Autonomous Communities are strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and public communication of their progress in sustainability, in line with transparency and continuous improvement. The main actions undertaken on its part include:

- **BALEARIC ISLANDS:** has a *public website of SDG indicators* that compiles and updates the indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the Balearic Islands. In addition, the website facilitates citizen consultation and enables territorialised monitoring of the objectives.
- **CASTILLA-LA MANCHA:** the Junta publishes a *portal of commitments and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda* in addition to progress reports and the development of monitoring commissions. In doing so, it is making progress in the traceability of its policies and in fostering public evaluation of its policies.
- **CANTABRIA:** the Autonomous Community has incorporated the *2030 Agenda Indicators* operation into the Regional Statistical Plan, so that the measurement of progress in sustainability has been integrated into its official statistical system.
- **CASTILLA Y LEÓN:** the Junta offers open reports on budget execution and sustainable development measures on its transparency portal, which facilitates public control of actions linked to the SDGs.
- **NAVARRRE:** the region stands out for *its system of annual monitoring reports on the 2030 Agenda Action Plan (ECNA 2030)* and for its reports on other sectoral plans (equality, gender-based violence and cooperation). The Community also has a balanced scorecard that measures the degree of implementation of the main strategic instruments.

03

COUNTRY DRIVE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The Spanish Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (SDS) is based on the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. The SDGs are indivisible and complementary, requiring comprehensive policies that address critical issues such as poverty, inequality, climate emergency, job insecurity and discrimination. Accordingly, its national priorities have been reorganised around four key areas: the welfare state; a just transition in response to the climate crisis, with a focus on decent work and labour rights; social and territorial cohesion with an environmental and climate focus; and the promotion of gender equality and rights.

Governance is articulated between the different public administrations through bodies such as the Government Delegate Commission, the Sectoral Conference and the Sustainable Development Council, which include ministries, autonomous communities, local entities and civil society, to guarantee multilevel participation and coordination. It also promotes the participation of business, trade unions, universities and youth, which reinforces policy coherence, multi-stakeholder approach and accountability.

Finally, the localisation of the SDGs is key: more than two-thirds of the SDGs depend on local governments. Spain promotes this dimension through subsidies, tools such as the Guide for Localisation and the Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, with more than 600 municipalities adhered to it. At the international level, a key event was the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development (Seville, 2025), which reaffirmed Spain's commitment to multilateralism and decentralised cooperation.

In this way, Spain reinforces its role as a driver of sustainable development through a comprehensive, participatory and territorialised strategy that articulates multilevel governance, multi-stakeholder partnerships and localisation of the SDGs to ensure that sustainable development advances without leaving anyone behind.

A. NEW GENERATION OF SDGS: INTERCONNECTED AND MULTIPLIERS

From an integrative perspective, it is crucial to underline that the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, both international and local, are indivisible and interdependent, global in scope and universal in application. At the same time, they recognise the different realities, capacities and levels of development of each country.

These international goals, together with the challenges and targets of this Sustainable Development Strategy, are universal, comprehensive, ambitious, people-centred, interrelated and balanced across the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, in an integrated manner. Its purpose is to guarantee human rights for all people by incorporating essential cross-cutting elements such as gender equality.

This vision, reaffirmed in the latest ministerial declaration of the United Nations High Level Political Forum (2025), confirms that development and sustainability are concepts that condense interconnection, multiplication, indivisibility and integrality, both in international and national objectives. This approach not only drives a new generation of global goals, but ensures that no one is left behind, promoting prosperity, peace and protection of the planet for all people.

A ROADMAP OF OBJECTIVES, CHALLENGES, TARGETS AND MEASURES ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED.

As stated in the declaration of the UN High Level Political Forum, this Localised Strategy assumes that "the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest challenge facing the world today and a central objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development".

To tackle poverty, exclusion and inequality, we rely on the multiplier action of the 17 SDGs and the 4 country challenges defined in the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS).

Furthermore, we recognise the urgent and interconnected nature of the challenges arising from rising inequality, including gender inequality; racism; persistent poverty, hunger and malnutrition; unemployment; economic uncertainty; the widening digital and technological divides; climate change; and the loss of biodiversity.

To address this reality and promote peaceful societies, our country will provide its roadmap based on the SDGs, country challenges, targets and actions in a comprehensive, interlinked and multidimensional manner, ensuring that no one is left behind.

The same is true of the country challenges and associated SDS targets, whose interconnections underline the importance of adopting a holistic approach to implementing policies that promote sustainable and equitable development for all people. This approach involves understanding reality as an interconnected system, avoids isolated analyses and recognises the interdependence between different phenomena.

In other words, each of the country challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that underpin them are interdependent and complementary. All form a comprehensive framework that guides policy and action at local, national and international levels.

The global goals addressed in SDS present interrelated challenges, the success of which depends on managing these interconnections effectively. To maximise their impact, the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (approved in 2021) has identified those goals with the greatest number of interconnections and has prioritised their treatment due to the high multiplier potential they generate in the public actions aligned with them.

FIRST NETWORKING EXERCISE: 2024 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

Spain's Voluntary National Review (VNR) presented in 2024 initiated an exercise to identify the complex relationships between different aspects of society, the economy and the environment. This analysis defined interconnections exclusively between targets corresponding to the various strategic priorities.

This system of interconnections, identified in the VNR, constitutes the starting point for the revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) and the restructuring of its country challenges from 8 initial challenges to 4. As a result, four priority areas for action were identified, which bring together the original SDS challenges as follows:

FOCUS AREA 1. STRENGTHEN THE WELFARE STATE TO END POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

This strategic priority links National Challenges 1 (Ending poverty and inequality) and 6 (Reversing the crisis in public services), which focus on combating poverty and inequality, as well as on strengthening the welfare state, given the close interconnection between these two areas.

The targets with the highest number of interconnections are those linked to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, with the target to reduce the proportion of people at risk of poverty and/or exclusion by less than half, which has 18 interconnections. The eradication of severe material deprivation among children and adolescents and the reduction of the relative child poverty rate, both with 17 interlinkages, also stand out.

These results highlight the critical importance of prioritising these goals in the formulation of social justice-oriented public policies. Furthermore, the strengthening of the welfare state and the fight against poverty have a direct impact on gender equality and the guarantee of fundamental rights for all citizens.

FOCUS AREA 2. ADVANCE JUST TRANSITION TO ADDRESS CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY

This strategic priority sets out solutions to tackle the climate emergency, biodiversity loss and the transformation of production and consumption patterns, in line with National Challenges 2 (Tackling the climate and environmental emergency) and 4 (Overcoming the inefficiencies of an excessively concentrated and dependent system). The latter challenge drives the transition towards a green, fair and innovative economic model, based on science and sustainability, especially in sectors with high environmental impact.

This approach extends to Country Challenge 8 (Revitalising our rural areas and tackling the demographic challenge), which seeks to generate economic and employment opportunities in rural areas and areas at risk of depopulation in order to attract and fix population. It also links to Country Challenge 7 (End global injustice and threats to human rights, democratic principles and planetary sustainability), which includes advocating for a more sustainable, liveable, resilient and green planet.

The targets with the highest number of interconnections are those aimed at promoting sustainability and decarbonisation. These include the goal of increasing R&D and innovation funding for decarbonisation and sustainability, with 25 interconnections. Also noteworthy is the goal of completing specific measures in all action lines of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2021-2030, with 23 interconnections.

These results highlight the critical importance of prioritising these goals in the formulation of public policies to ensure a just transition, address the climate and environmental emergency and move towards a sustainable economic and social model.

FOCUS AREA 3. PROTECT LABOUR RIGHTS TO END JOB INSECURITY

This priority area focuses on protecting labour rights to eliminate job insecurity and is centred on National Challenge 5, which aims to put an end to this problem. The response is based on two essential pillars: promoting job stability and improving the quality of employment.

The targets with the highest number of interlinkages are geared towards promoting full and productive employment, as well as improving incomes and equality in the world of work. Prominent among these is the goal of achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, which has fifteen interlinkages.

These results highlight the importance of tackling job insecurity and promoting equality at work as key elements in building a fairer and more equitable society. Development-oriented policies that promote productive activities, encourage formalisation and foster the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are essential to ensure decent and sustainable jobs for all people.

FOCUS AREA 4. BRIDGE THE GENDER GAP AND FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION

This priority area focuses on closing the gender gap and combating all forms of discrimination. It falls under Country Challenge 3 of the Sustainable Development Strategy, which aims to close gender inequality and end discrimination. Given the cross-cutting nature of the gender perspective, the measures included under this priority area are also linked to National Challenge 1, which aims to eradicate poverty and inequality, and to National Challenge 7, which seeks to put an end to global injustice and threats to human rights, democratic principles and the sustainability of the planet.

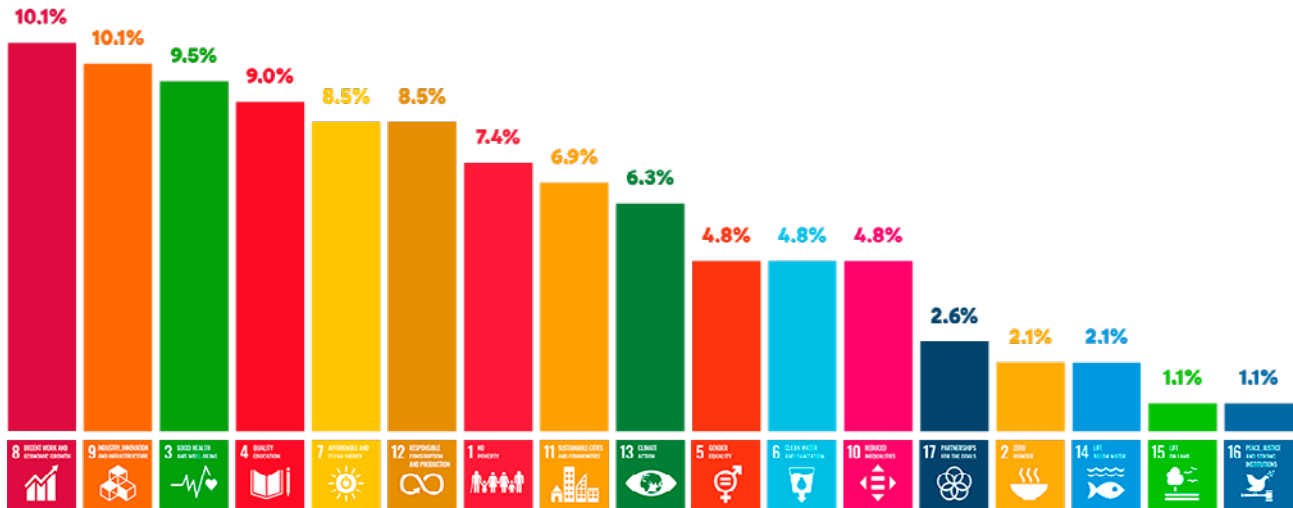
The goals with the highest number of linkages focus on promoting gender equality and incorporating intersectional principles into all public policies to tackle inequality and various forms of discrimination based on sex, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and gender identity, amongst other factors.

Finally, the cross-cutting goals highlight key elements for the equitable and sustainable development of rural areas, with twenty-two initiatives to ensure healthcare and other services in remote areas, sixteen initiatives to promote rural digitalisation, and a further sixteen to encourage youth entrepreneurship in these areas.

These objectives are closely linked to the first strategic priority, which aims to build an equitable and prosperous society, and to Focus Area Three, which seeks to create quality jobs across the country. Addressing these goals together allows for a holistic approach to promote sustainable development and equal opportunities in rural areas. This prioritisation of mainstreaming helps to balance the achievement of the different SDGs, allowing for a more cohesive distribution of interconnections as opposed to the more pronounced jumps of the current strategy.

SECOND EXERCISE: ANALYSIS OF INTERCONNECTIONS OF EACH SDG AND TARGETS OF THE 2021 SDS

**INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN GOALS / REVISED SDS
(% OF INTERCONNECTIONS FOR EACH SDG OUT OF TOTAL IDENTIFIED INTERCONNECTIONS)**

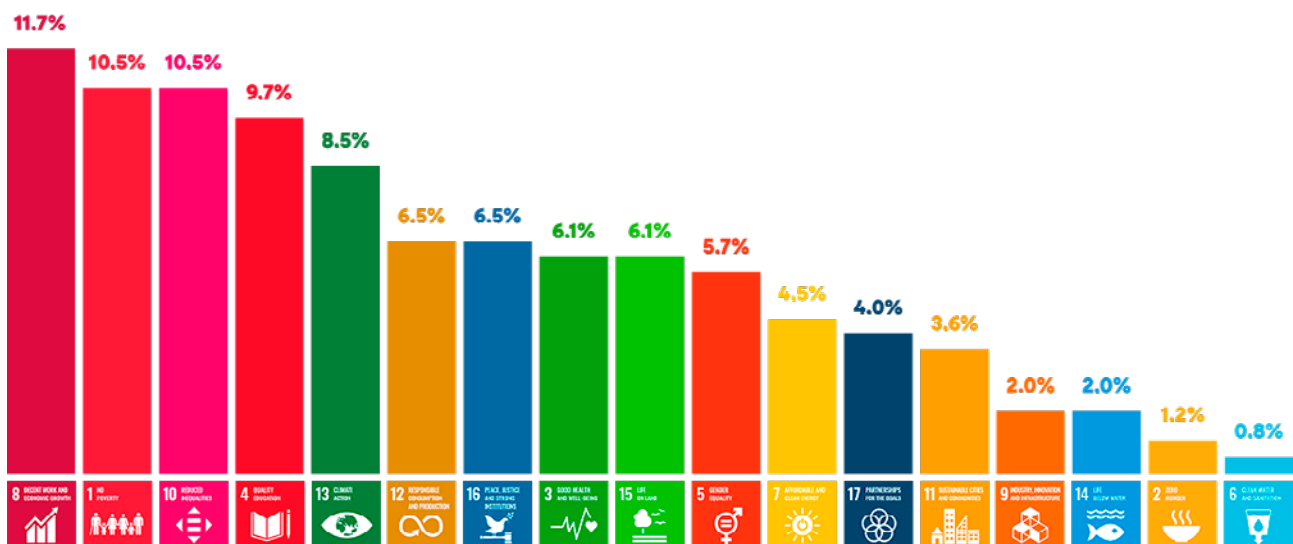


This exercise suggests that the SDGs with the greatest interconnectiveness are:

1. **SDG 8:** Decent work and economic growth.
2. **SDG 9:** Industry, innovation and infrastructure.
3. **SDG 3:** Health and well-being.
4. **SDG 4:** Quality education.
5. **SDG 7:** Affordable and non-polluting energy.
6. **SDG 12:** Responsible production and consumption.

SDG 14 (Life Below Sea), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) are found to be less interconnected, placing them further behind in the analysis.

**INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN GOALS/CURRENT SDS
COMPARISON WITH THE INTERCONNECTIONS OF THE CURRENT SDS
(% OF INTERCONNECTIONS OVER SDS TARGETS)**



The analysis of the 2021 Sustainable Development Strategy shows that some targets are further strengthened due to their multiplier effect on other goals. These include those linked to the economic SDGs, such as SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 1 on ending poverty and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, as well as targets related to SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 12 on responsible production and consumption.

In contrast, targets associated with natural resources and intergenerational justice, such as SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, SDG 14 on underwater life and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, are less reinforced within the strategy.

THIRD EXERCISE: REGROUPING OF COUNTRY CHALLENGES IN THE REVISED SDS

Subsequently, a qualitative exercise of thematic and causal analysis was carried out in order to identify the four country challenges with the highest level of interconnectedness and to break them down into twenty-five thematic areas that grouped outstanding and highly interrelated objectives.

The initial framework, which was based on key areas, evolved into country-specific challenges that incorporate these priorities within a framework focused on specific objectives for each of them.

Country Challenge 1 focuses, like Focus Area 1 of the Voluntary National Review, on the fight against poverty and social exclusion, with special attention to child nutrition and the strengthening of the welfare system in areas such as education, health, housing, social benefits, institutional strengthening and redistributive fiscal policies.

For its part, Country Challenge 2 brings together the interconnections arising from Focus Areas 2 and 3 to promote an integrated vision that drives a just transition towards a new economic and productive model. This ensures at the same time the protection of labour rights and progress towards the decarbonisation of the economy, through the promotion of value-added industries, research and a change in production and consumption patterns.

The analysis also concludes that social cohesion is closely linked to territorial development, rural revitalisation, environmental protection and adaptation to climate change. Therefore, Country Challenge 3 aims to address these challenges, which ultimately pursue equality in harmony with the care of natural resources and environmental sustainability.

Finally, Focus Area 4 derives from Country Challenge 4, which places gender equality and the fight against discrimination at the centre, together with other issues such as culture and citizens' rights.

The progress made in this area in the period 2021-2025 is thus transferred to the reorganisation of the country's challenges. This brings coherence to the findings of the networking exercise developed in the Voluntary National Review and their subsequent comparison with the SDGs and the targets of the 2021 Sustainable Development Strategy.

B. MULTILEVEL AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DEMOCRACY: PARTNERSHIPS IN THE ELABORATION OF THE SDS (GOVERNANCE)

The SDS2030 is not just a programmatic framework, but a commitment to a new way of making public policy: more participatory, integrated and territorialised. To this end, governance is reinforced as a transversal dimension that guarantees coherence between institutional levels, accountability and articulation with social, business and academic actors. The need for policy coherence becomes even more urgent given the complexity of the transitions proposed by the 2030 Agenda with its different components:

- **MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE:** effective coordination between the State, autonomous communities and local entities, with stable frameworks for cooperation and dialogue.
- **SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP:** institutionalised spaces for civil society, academia and the private sector in the design, implementation and monitoring of SDS 2030.
- **POLICY COHERENCE:** mechanisms to align budgets, strategic plans and regulations with the SDGs.
- **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** national system of indicators, data transparency, regular evaluations and public communication.

GOVERNANCE BODIES

Since its inception, the 2030 Agenda has stood out for its comprehensive approach and its effort to actively engage all levels of government and different civil society actors. During the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, mechanisms for participation and dialogue, together with effective institutional and cross-sectoral governance organised around structured and functional bodies, have been essential.

At ministerial level, the body in charge of promoting partnerships to coordinate and sustain the review work is the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and Agenda 2030. In particular, the Directorate General for Agenda 2030 has been in charge of ensuring harmony in the functioning of the governance bodies working on the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy: the Government Delegate Commission for the 2030 Agenda, the Sectoral Conference for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Council.

THE GOVERNMENT DELEGATE COMMISSION FOR AGENDA 2030

Chaired by the Second Vice-President of the Government and Minister of Labour and Social Economy, this body brings together 19 Ministries, including representatives from the Ministries of Social Rights, Social Inclusion and Social Security, Economic Affairs, Labour and Social Economy, Education, Health and other departments with competences in the implementation of the SDGs. Responsibilities include overseeing public policies relating to the 2030 Agenda, defining action strategies and monitoring Spain's compliance with its international commitments on sustainable development. This body has a technical working group, whose membership is open to all ministries, allowing for broad and effective coordination in the implementation of government policies and programmes.

THE SECTORAL CONFERENCE FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

It is currently the main mechanism for cooperation between the central government, the autonomous communities, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and the local administration. It is chaired by the Minister for Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030, and is made up of the regional councillors for Agenda 2030. Its aim is to coordinate policies at decentralised level, to ensure the coherence of regional strategies with the national one and to promote the exchange of good practices between the different levels of government. All of this is done with respect for the principles of

institutional loyalty, cooperation and respect for the distribution of competences between the State and the Autonomous Communities.

This body is assisted by a Sectoral Commission chaired by the Secretary of State for Social Rights of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030 and is made up of representatives of the autonomous communities, autonomous cities and the FEMP. It is a support and advisory body of the Sectorial Conference that acts both in Plenary and through Commissions and Working Parties. Specifically, in July 2025, a working group for the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) and the promotion of the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development System (PCSD) was approved at the meeting of the Sectoral Commission, which held its constituent meeting on 16 September 2025.

AT THE LEVEL OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES AND CITIES. SECTORAL CONFERENCE

Autonomous Communities and Cities play a key role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They have been providing territorial solutions for years, thanks to their proximity to the population.

The executive branch guarantees a permanent dialogue and effective collaboration between the central government and the regional administrations. In this framework, the Sectoral Conference for the Agenda plays a key role as it provides a space for institutional exchange and coordination. This facilitates the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at all policy and territorial levels, as well as bringing the 2030 Agenda closer to citizens.

SDS 2030 emphasised the great importance of these levels of administration, as they are in constant communication with citizens. This territorial approach provides a "bottom-up" view, allowing policies to be developed, implemented, measured and improved in response to the specific needs of the Autonomous Community or City.

The regional administrations, considering the 2030 Agenda as a roadmap to achieve the SDGs, have implemented various mechanisms to move towards sustainable development. This has involved the creation of governance bodies dedicated to the 2030 Agenda in many of the Autonomous Communities, the elaboration of action and implementation plans, the development of own measurements of indicators and accountability, thus enabling voluntary local progress reports and reviews.

All the contributions, plans and tools of the Autonomous Communities are in constant interaction with the government of the local entities and the General State Administration. This generates a constant learning process of knowledge and experience that is very useful for the proper implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Spanish territory.

AT THE LOCAL ENTITY LEVEL

Local entities have a special importance in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, as we start from the bottom-up vision explained above and, in addition, more than half of the 17 SDGs are to be achieved at the local level. This view that local authorities play a very important role in achieving the SDGs is recognised by both the United Nations and the European Commission.

The main objective of local entities is to translate a global proposal such as the 2030 Agenda into concrete and tangible local public policies and actions. It is therefore essential to strengthen local governments in their efforts to implement Agenda 2030, especially in the planning, execution and accountability of their policies.

We cannot mention local entities without emphasising the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), and its Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, made up of 705 local entities, 29 observer partners, 14 collaborating partners and representing a total of 32,234,708 inhabitants. This network is

responsible for promoting the coordination of actions between Local Governments, in order to achieve better results in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in municipalities and provinces.

This revised Strategy provides an updated framework for local entities to develop, implement, localise and measure public policies that ground the 2030 Agenda at the local level; and, on the other hand, to promote local society's awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

The involvement of civil society in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda is of particular importance for one simple reason: they are the main recipients of the policies and also the ones who should promote their fulfilment. At the same time, they are another key part of the SDG partnership flows.

Civil society has contributed to the development of inclusive and sustainable public policies, as well as playing a key role in the awareness-raising process. In addition, civil society organisations have reviewed their practices and aligned their actions with the SDGs, and have entered into partnerships with each other to achieve sustainable development.

On the other hand, the social organisations represented in the Sustainable Development Council have participated in the drafting of documents and opinions of particular relevance in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda. They have also managed to make valuable contributions.

In addition, the Directorate General for Agenda 2030 has a line of grants on a competitive basis, aimed at non-profit organisations, to finance projects aligned with the 2030 Agenda, SDGs and country challenges, on an annual basis. These grants have been available since 2021 and have provided nearly €40 million in funding to more than 200 organisations through the calls for applications held up to 2025.

In addition, the Directorate General for Agenda 2030 has reactivated the functioning of the Sustainable Development Council. Under the chairmanship of the Minister for Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and Agenda 2030 and with a representative of the Third Sector as Vice-Chair, it has sixty-one members representing 34 platforms and civil society organisations, including business, trade unions, academia, environmental and human rights organisations. Its functions include formulating proposals on the implementation of the SDGs, assessing progress and promoting initiatives that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals in Spain. This Sustainable Development Council can work both in plenary and as a standing committee.

It also includes two Working Parties on the review of the Sustainable Development Strategy and on Policy Coherence. Both groups, made up of members of civil society representing non-governmental organisations, businesses and citizens, among others, have contributed their views on the basis of documents prepared by them, and participated in meetings to influence the revision of the Strategy.

On the creation of the former, it dates back to September 2024 with the review process of the Sustainable Development Strategy. On 12 December 2024, following the Eighth Plenary Session, the Sustainable Development Council agreed to set up a Working Party to work on the Strategy review process. Two Working Parties have supported this process: the first, the Working Party on the Review of the Sustainable Development Strategy, which focused on the review itself with a view to drafting an opinion, with a sub-working group for each of the challenges; and the second, the Working Party on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development, which is a standing body.

For the development of the Strategy review work, an internal organisation was agreed based on the designation of a civil society coordinator for each of the four challenges, which made it possible to form four working sub-groups. Each civil society organisation was assigned to the corresponding sub-group according to its area of specialisation, participating in the analysis and formulation of proposals under the assigned coordination.

The input of the Sustainable Development Council has been crucial in the revision of the strategy, as will be its regular contribution to the implementation, execution and measurement of localised targets of the 2030 Agenda in our country.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTION

WITHIN ACADEMIA AND KNOWLEDGE

It is necessary to highlight the crucial role played by the University in relation to the transfer of knowledge and consolidation of the 2030 Agenda as the backbone of sustainable development.

The implementation of studies on Agenda 2030 in the university fabric not only allows students to become familiar with and contribute to its fulfilment, but also encourages teaching, research and management staff to delve deeper into these issues. This promotes the preparation of reports and studies aimed at implementing sustainable development in all its areas, as well as the generation of multi-stakeholder alliances and the promotion of R&D&I.

Various mechanisms have been put in place to implement the 2030 Agenda, including collaboration with the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) through an agreement. Between 2021 and 2024, as part of the multi-stakeholder contribution, €2,300,000 has been allocated in grants to universities, aimed at promoting the production of specialist reports, strengthening training on the 2030 Agenda for students, and facilitating their participation in conferences and educational activities.

Through these tools, the University not only positions itself as a driver of change and a generator of knowledge, but also becomes a key player in achieving sustainable development. It is essential to continue strengthening synergies between the administration and academia, promoting an education that helps future generations to integrate sustainable development in all areas of their lives, both personal and educational.

Strengthening collaboration with specialist networks and organisations is equally essential in the field of knowledge. In this respect, the agreement with the Spanish Network for Sustainable Development (REDS) stands out. This collaboration, which has also materialised in the support of REDS in various events, conferences and spaces for participation, has made it possible to guarantee that scientific evidence and specialised knowledge are systematically integrated into decision-making, consolidating itself as a transversal and essential pillar for the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies aimed at sustainable development.

AT THE TRADE UNION LEVEL

We must highlight the fundamental work they are doing to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The work of trade unions is particularly relevant from SDG 8, which deals with economic growth and decent work, and Country Challenge 2, to the rest of the international and country goals with an inclusive and multiplying vision.

Trade unions actively contribute to achieving the aims of the 2030 Agenda, especially those related to achieving labour rights for workers, ensuring decent employment, fair and sufficient wages, and work-life balance. They also promote collective bargaining to improve working conditions.

Trade unions play a crucial role in the transition to sustainable development. They put working people at the centre, seek improvements in their employment conditions (equality, adaptation to climate change, in areas of well-being, etc.) that affect their way of life, making them an agent of change in sustainable development.

In addition, the Administration promotes social dialogue between these trade unions and employers' organisations and the Government, in order to achieve the labour priorities of this Strategy. This dialogue is key to designing employment policies, improving the quality of work and contributing to the balance between the interests of the productive sector and the rights of workers.

In this regard, trade unions are key actors in the renewed global push for social development (economic, labour and environmental) reaffirmed at the UN Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha in November 2025.

IN THE BUSINESS SPHERE

Businesses play an important role in relation to sustainable development, as they are one of the main generators of the economy, employment, and also participate in the just ecological transition, development and transformation of the production model, and respect for labour rights. Its role is crucial to ensure a balance between economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.

Business associations and trade union organisations articulate the social dialogue, striving for a fair production model that respects both labour rights and planetary boundaries. This dialogue is a key element in promoting and reflecting on reforms and practices that benefit both working people and the economy as a whole.

In addition to the participation of large companies, we must highlight the work of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are one of the major driving forces of the Spanish economy, as well as the self-employed, who are responsible for generating the economy and employment, and who are major players in the change. These entities represent a significant part of the productive fabric, and it is therefore necessary to support them so that they can implement sustainable strategies and adapt to the demands of the current market. Input from all companies and economic sectors is collected through their contributions to the Sustainable Development Council.

It is necessary to seek synergies and work jointly between the administration and the business community, through the promotion of public-private collaboration mechanisms, in such a way that this union brings benefits to society as a whole. This cooperation facilitates and promotes the generation of innovative initiatives and strengthens private commitment to sustainable development.

One of the mechanisms to be promoted is sustainable public procurement, so that public contracts include criteria based on sustainability and the inclusion of the SDGs in their specifications and special conditions of execution.

This strategy aims to promote dialogue with the business sector, provide training on Agenda 2030, especially for SMEs and the self-employed, ensure sustainability criteria in public procurement and ensure that companies actively contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

REGARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In order to respond to the need and interest in guaranteeing the contribution of children and young people, the participation of the State Council for the Participation of Children and Adolescents (CEPIA) has been incorporated. This is a collegiate body of a consultative nature, attached to the Ministry of Youth and Children, which constitutes a permanent space for dialogue between the General State Administration and children and adolescents, in accordance with the right to participation recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to ensure the effective integration of the children's and adolescents' perspective in the Strategy, the CEPIA was presented with the updating working document and a specific working session was held

in which its members analysed the main strategic axes and formulated proposals for improvement. This participatory process made it possible to gather the priorities, concerns and expectations of children and adolescents in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and associated public policies.

CEPIA's contributions have been incorporated as a relevant input in the definition of the Strategy's priority areas of action, which reinforces its coherence with the principles of intergenerational equity, citizen participation and a rights-based approach that guide sustainable development.

AT THE PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL, JOINT CONGRESS-SENATE COMMISSION

The Joint Congress-Senate Commission for the 2030 Agenda, composed of representatives of all parliamentary groups and led by a deputy or senator elected by consensus, plays a key role in the parliamentary oversight of the Sustainable Development Strategy. Its work focuses on assessing the implementation of Spain's commitments, promoting debates on the progress of the 2030 Agenda and formulating legislative recommendations for its strengthening.

C. LOCALISATION 2030: A JOINT EFFORT OF ALL ADMINISTRATIONS

The 2030 Agenda, from its principle of universality, establishes responsibilities for all countries and all levels of government in order to contribute to the solution of the great global and local challenges that afflict us.

In this sense, the role of local governments is noteworthy, as they are in an ideal position to transform the 2030 Agenda into a concrete framework for action from and at the local level by integrating its goals and targets into their particular context and contributing to the participation of citizens in its implementation.

LOCALISING THE SDGS IN SPAIN

From the beginning, our country has dedicated efforts to localisation, with the creation of a solid government and governance structure to facilitate multi-stakeholder and multi-level coordination, the adaptation of country challenges to the national context, coordination with other initiatives that bring together part of the SDGs, such as the Spanish Urban Agenda and the strategies linked to the circular economy; an inclusive language, or the promotion of local actions.

Even in a decentralised country like Spain, according to articles 45, 46, 75 and 76 of the General State Budget 2023 extended for 2024, 7.4% of the consolidated budget was allocated to the autonomous communities and 4.3% to local entities, the localisation of the SDGs is a key element. More than two thirds of the SDGs and climate solutions depend on the efforts of local and regional governments. Moreover, enduring theories of local and global action argue that interconnections between the SDGs are necessary to generate a multiplier effect on policies in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda targets.

In this regard, DG Agenda 2030 has noted how local and social entities multiply the impact of the 2030 Agenda. With the aim of supporting and strengthening the action of local entities in relation to the implementation and localisation of the 2030 Agenda, the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030 has launched calls for public subsidies in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 for actions to promote the 2030 Agenda in local entities. Almost 2,500 projects were submitted, of which a total of 192 have been funded, with a total budget (2022–2025) of €24.6 million. In addition, over €40 million has been invested in the last four calls for proposals open to civil society, in innovative social projects that reflect the 2030 Agenda, with initiatives spanning all 17 SDG goals.

Furthermore, an increasing number of local and global initiatives are being developed through participatory processes involving voluntary reporting and local and regional engagement, which are included in our third VNR 2024. This made Spain the highest-rated European country in terms of sustainable development commitments.

In this regard, Spain's contribution to the United Nations Joint Fund for the SDGs stands out. Spain is the fund's main contributor and will have contributed €120 million by 2027, and the multi-level support for the Secretariat of the Local 2030 Coalition in the city of Bilbao, established through the signing, in 2023, of an Inter-administrative Agreement between the Spanish Government, the Basque Government, Bilbao City Council and the BBK Foundation, which has been extended by mutual agreement until December 2028.

As has been seen in the chapter on Governance, DG Agenda 2030 works with a participatory working culture or methodology that gives a voice to all levels of public administration, as well as to social and economic agents through the Sustainable Development Council. Youth, media, economic sectors, trade unions, universities and civil society as a whole are also part of the movement driving the transformations needed to make the 2030 Agenda a reality. All of them can address the transformations needed to achieve more humane and resilient communities.

Structures of a supra-municipal nature, such as Autonomous Communities, Provincial Councils or bodies such as federations of municipalities and provinces, are key to supporting municipalities in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Their competences in relevant areas or their capacity to provide resources and develop collaboration and coordination mechanisms are essential to achieve sustainable development goals at the local level.

In the case of the autonomous communities, regional governments translate the SDGs into their territory through the approval of strategies, plans and programmes, with a varied competence adapted to the territory and including territorial planning and management, ecological or social sustainability. Examples include:

- Andalusian Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030, Andalusian Energy Strategy 2030 and Strategy to face the Demographic Challenge in Andalusia 2025-2030;
- Galician Energy Transition Agenda 2021-2023 and the Statistical Indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Galicia;
- Territorial Strategy of Navarre and Sustainable Navarre Strategy;
- Simplified Guide to Design, Implementation and Mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda for Asturian Councils;
- Canary Islands Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the Guide for the localisation, implementation, dynamisation and monitoring of the Agenda 2030 by Canary Islands Councils and Municipalities;
- Social Innovation Plan and Agenda 2030 (2025-2028) of the Basque Country.

In this sense, experiences such as: the *E-mugi* platform (developed by the Basque Government to facilitate the management and monitoring of local sustainability plans of local entities) or the indicator viewers developed by Provincial Councils such as Barcelona (*Visor 2030*) also stand out. All of these tools support local authorities in the exercise of promoting local action plans and SDG localisation initiatives.

MUNICIPALISM AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION

Thanks to their proximity to citizens and the powers conferred on them by our legal system, the role of local authorities is key in the implementation of comprehensive localisation initiatives for the 2030 Agenda. It is of utmost importance that the 2030 Agenda is the cornerstone from which local policies and local government action are articulated. Only by closing the full cycle of public policies will it be possible to guarantee the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Spain.

In this context, many municipalities have developed their own instruments to adapt global commitments to their territorial reality. Municipalities such as Rafelbunyol and Alcobendas have drawn up Local Voluntary Reports in which they define objectives and actions for the 2030 horizon. Rafelbunyol has created the consultative body "*SDG Observatory*", while Alcobendas has applied the *Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF)* to identify in a structured way its strengths and main challenges.

Other local authorities have designed Strategies and Plans aligned with the Spanish Urban Agenda, the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Community Financial Framework 2021-2027, by integrating leverage targets and monitoring mechanisms. Alhaurín de la Torre has structured its work around 12 strategic objectives; Barcelona has developed a digital system with a dedicated website to monitor progress; the Provincial Council of Ourense uses tools such as TAO to track indicators. Likewise, municipalities such as Herrera del Duque and Peñíscola have carried out SWOT analyses and have promoted participatory processes to ensure citizen involvement in decision-making.

These experiences reflect how municipalism acts as a tool for transformation by fostering multilevel governance, innovation and social participation. The capacity of municipalities to generate accurate diagnoses, set local goals and articulate public-private partnerships makes local entities essential agents for moving towards sustainable, inclusive and resilient development. This ensures that the 2030 Agenda is translated into concrete actions that improve the quality of life in each territory.

On this path, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, through the Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, made up of more than 600 local entities, is the main driving force behind the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level. The Network has undertaken actions aimed at promoting and extending knowledge, awareness and implementation of the SDGs through institutional strengthening and the involvement of local actors.

This work has positioned the Network of Local Authorities for the 2030 Agenda as an international benchmark in terms of commitment and leadership for the localisation of the SDGs at the local level. Through the Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, local governments share and provide solutions to the challenges faced in the local implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this way, the necessary adaptation of planning processes has been achieved, so that the coordination and mainstreaming of all policies that contribute to sustainable development has been strengthened, always under the premise of leaving no one behind and leaving no territory behind.

The Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda facilitates the identification of good practices that enrich and complement the work of local governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The SDG Localisation Guide, developed by the FEMP in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030, has become a basic tool for local entities in Spain to work under the same common methodology for the localisation of the SDGs in local initiatives.

In addition to this tool, there are others such as the Budget Alignment Guide, the Indicators Guide, the Narrative Identity Manual, the Communication Guide, the Study on the application of the PCSD approach at local level in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, and the training and advisory actions in which the entities that are members of the network participate.

In 2020, REDS published the report "The SDGs in 100 Spanish cities" where it points out that 82% of the SDGs are at an intermediate stage of fulfilment and only 6.6% are lagging behind in the municipalities analysed. Since then, there have been significant advances in the local implementation of the SDGs, such as, to cite a few examples, the municipality of Alajeró (La Gomera, Canary Islands) which presented in April 2024 an Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which includes:

- Comprehensive diagnosis of the municipality's alignment with the SDGs.
- Definition of vision, goals and specific indicators to measure results.
- Integration of SDGs into local policies, with governance structure for monitoring and reporting.

The town council of Andújar (Jaén) has also launched "2030 Ahora Es Ya" (2030 Now is Now) which:

- implements projects for the recovery of natural spaces.
- revitalises cultural heritage and environmental sustainability.
- encourages active citizen participation.

In short, it is a commitment to develop a common working framework based on the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda (People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnerships), and to reinforce the commitment to advance locally in the fulfilment of the SDGs.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF LOCALISATION

The institutional commitment of the Spanish localisation practice was reflected in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) held in Seville from 30 June to 3 July 2025, an event that marked a milestone in the global and Spanish Government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this context, participating States reaffirmed the importance of localisation as a key tool to implement the SDGs in the territories, and recognised that eradicating extreme poverty and reducing inequalities require coordinated actions at the local level. The Seville Commitment underlines the need to strengthen institutional capacities, promote the participation of sub-national governments and ensure that global policies are translated into solutions adapted to local realities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Spain hosted and actively promoted the event and reaffirmed Spain's commitment to multilateralism and concrete action for sustainable development. Highlights included the participation of national and local

authorities in panels on territorial financing and the localisation of the SDGs, as well as a clear message: the key role of local and regional governments in the territorial implementation of the SDGs.

Ultimately, the Conference promoted decentralised cooperation and local financing to achieve, among others, equality and to activate climate action.

04

COMMITTED SPAIN

Spain reaffirms its commitment to human rights as a central axis of the 2030 Agenda, promoting sustainable development that prioritises people and the planet. This commitment is based on the Constitution (art. 10.2) and international treaties. It links more than 90% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to international law instruments including humanitarian law, human rights, labour standards, and environmental rights and commitments.

Recent advances include the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), where Spain presented progress in gender equality, children, migration, health, education and anti-discrimination, and accepted 93.5% of the 324 recommendations received.

The II National Human Rights Plan (2023-2027) was also approved, which includes 421 measures along four focus areas: international obligations, guarantee of rights, gender equality and protection of vulnerable groups. In addition, laws such as the Equal Treatment, Democratic Memory and Gender Identity laws have been promoted, in addition to strengthening institutions and campaigns against hate and trafficking.

Spain also defends a strengthened, inclusive multilateralism, based on international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, a commitment that was evidenced during July 2025 with the organisation in Seville of the Fourth Financing for Development Conference, promoting solid institutions, governance and international cooperation, in line with SDG 16.

A. NEW GENERATION OF SDGS: INTERCONNECTED AND MULTIPLIERS

INTRODUCTION

Spain is committed to human rights as a basis for implementing the 2030 Agenda, both nationally and internationally. In a global context marked by conflict, inequality and the climate crisis, the country promotes a just transition to people and planet-centred sustainable development and is a strong advocate for social, economic and environmental justice through a human rights approach. Understood in this light, the 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for a just transition to a truly sustainable development model that puts people, their rights and the planet at the centre.

The 2030 Agenda reflects international obligations assumed by Spain, as stated in Article 10.2 of the Spanish Constitution: *"The provisions relating to the fundamental rights and freedoms recognised by the Constitution shall be interpreted in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international treaties and agreements on the same matters ratified by Spain"*.

Spain is also committed to the mandates and competences of the international human rights mechanisms that oversee their fulfilment. To this end, it follows up on concluding observations and other reports submitted to the treaty bodies to which it is a party, as well as to some human rights mechanisms such as the special procedures of the Human Rights Council or the mechanisms of the Council of Europe.

Indeed, SDG 1 (end poverty) calls for ensuring basic rights such as food, health, education and housing, as well as quality public services and an inclusive social protection system. Spain is also committed to eliminating inherited poverty and all forms of discrimination, in line with Article 14 of the Constitution and treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

These commitments are interlinked with other SDGs such as 2 (no hunger), 3 (health), 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 6 (water), 8 (employment) and 10 (reducing inequalities). Spain also supports international human rights monitoring mechanisms, such as the UN treaty bodies and the Council of Europe. In short, more than 90% of the SDGs are connected to international law instruments, including humanitarian law, human rights, labour standards and environmental rights and commitments.

PROGRESS SINCE THE APPROVAL OF THE FIRST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Spain has made progress with the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), having made a number of commitments, and has also adopted the Second National Human Rights Plan (2023–2027). This progress is also reflected in the United Nations General Assembly's election of our country as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2025-2027.

In the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), held on 30 April 2025, Spain presented its national report to the UN Human Rights Council and detailed progress in key areas such as children, gender equality, migration, health, housing, education, LGBTI rights, disability and the fight against racism and xenophobia, and included emerging issues such as climate emergency, artificial intelligence and racial and ethnic profiling. Participation was positively assessed by 122 States, which acknowledged the progress made since the previous cycle.

Spain received a total of 324 recommendations from member states of the UN Human Rights Council. These recommendations covered a wide range of issues, such as the protection of the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; the fight against gender-based violence; the promotion of equal treatment and non-discrimination; access to housing, health and education; the protection of children and adolescents; and adaptation to climate change, among others. The process was valued by Spain as an opportunity for reflection and improvement in its public human rights policies.

As a result of the analysis carried out by the relevant ministries, Spain accepted in full 303 recommendations, i.e. 93.52% of the total. These recommendations are already in place or are compatible with existing policies. In addition, it partially accepted 3 recommendations, those whose content is partly shared, but whose full implementation is limited by legal, budgetary or constitutional factors. For example, the elimination of solitary confinement (recommendation 50.63), the elimination of exceptions to the minimum age for marriage (50.89), and the equality of rural women in the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (50.194) were partially accepted.

On the other hand, Spain took note of 18 recommendations, which means that it is not committed to implementing them at this stage. These recommendations include proposals such as ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers (50.1-50.3), accession to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (50.6-50.7), legislative amendments on torture (50.55-50.59), recognition of femicide as a specific crime (50.234), and elimination of stigmatisation of migrants by political authorities (50.314). Spain justified these decisions on the basis of its legal and constitutional framework and the practical feasibility of implementation.

The Second National Human Rights Plan (2023-2027), approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2023, reaffirms Spain's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, both nationally and internationally. The plan is structured along four main lines: international obligations and cooperation; guaranteeing human rights; equality between women and men; and equal treatment and protection of specific groups. In total, it includes 421 measures, articulated in 16 general objectives and 71 specific objectives, with the aim of advancing dignity, social justice and democratic quality.

Among the actions already carried out, the approval of laws such as the Equal Treatment Act, the Democratic Memory Act and the Gender Identity Act stand out. Institutions such as the Ombudsman have also been strengthened and the Secretary of State for Social Rights and Agenda 2030 has been created. Awareness-raising campaigns and human rights training have been promoted, and measures have been developed to combat hate speech, protect against the risks of artificial intelligence, combat trafficking and sexual exploitation, and ensure energy supply in homes.

The Revised Sustainable Development Strategy assumes our country's commitment at all levels to human rights in order to reinforce its integration with the Spanish localisation of the 2030 Agenda.

B. SPAIN COMMITTED TO DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

Our country is also firmly committed to supporting democracy as an essential pillar of the 2030 Agenda, as stated in point 9 of the declaration of the United Nations Assembly in 2015 in A/Res/70/1 (*"we aspire to a world (...) in which democracy, good governance and the rule of law, together with an enabling national and international environment, are the essential elements of sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger"*).

It also supports the duty to foster international governance and partnerships embodied in the latest HLPF 2025 ministerial declaration on promoting *"good governance, the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms, equal access to fair justice systems and measures to fight corruption and curb illicit financial flows will be central to our efforts. We emphasise the importance of good governance and strong institutions as key factors promoting sustainable development."*

In this regard, Spain is firmly committed to acting, promoting and fostering the system of democratic multilateralism, as reflected in the organisation of the Fourth Conference on Financing for Development held in Seville in July 2025, as well as in a multitude of initiatives by each and every one of the ministries in their areas of competence.

In this sense, VNR 2024 highlighted the defence of full democracy and the social and democratic rule of law - as the main instruments guaranteeing human rights - and the basis of political work since the restoration of democracy after the end of Franco's dictatorship. In line with SDG 16, which emphasises the inseparable link between historical memory policies and the strengthening of democracy, this led to the approval of the Law 20/2022 on Democratic Memory.

As regards the local-global dimension of the SDS, support for democracy is evident in the general support for rights and equity, as well as in participation as a fundamental tool for building partnerships.

In that vein, as SDG 16 reflects, the focus on strong institutions and peace, reaffirmed by the six transitions and the compact for the future launched last year by the UN Secretary-General, were reaffirmed in the HLPF 2025 declaration with the mandate to *"promote peaceful, prosperous and inclusive societies and safe and secure communities to achieve sustainable development, and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"*

In short, Spain supports the joint work of cooperation between countries, regions, localities and actors for a system based on rules and in favour of global public goods, from peace to work for the environment and against climate change.

05

METHODOLOGY

A. PREPARATION PROCEDURE

The revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 has been carried out through a structured, iterative and participatory methodological process. In an initial phase, a systematisation of the state of the situation was carried out, analysing the current Strategy, its targets and indicators, and assessing progress and gaps in the fulfilment of the SDGs in Spain. This diagnosis made it possible to identify priority areas and guide the strategic redesign.

Subsequently, a critical analysis of the Country Challenges was developed and the original eight challenges were reorganised into four strategic axes and a cross-cutting governance dimension. The targets for 2030 were reviewed and revised, and a robust system of indicators was designed, aligned with official sources (INE, Eurostat and sectoral systems), in accordance with criteria of relevance, comparability and statistical availability. In parallel, coherence with international and national frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda, the European Green Pact, the European Pillar of Social Rights, Spain 2050 or the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan was ensured.

The process combined internal technical work with peer review exercises, ministerial consultations and input from governance bodies such as the Sustainable Development Council. It also included the participation of Autonomous Communities, Local Entities, civil society, academia and the private sector, through public consultation processes and multi-stakeholder and multi-level workshops.

Finally, the revision underwent a technical and institutional validation process to ensure its consistency, legitimacy and operational feasibility. This approach has strengthened the strategic coherence, monitoring orientation and implementation capacity of the revised Strategy, aligning it with national objectives and international commitments on sustainable development.

It is important to note that the revised SDS is prospective in nature and is formulated as a roadmap that offers a diagnostic horizon and possibilities for action derived from the international commitments assumed by the Spanish government. Furthermore, the Strategy is complemented by the initiatives promoted by the different public administrations and social agents to guide their policies on sustainable development, through joint multilevel and multi-stakeholder actions, inspired by internationally recognised good practices.

The revised SDS promotes the localisation of the 2030 Agenda in Spain through a consensus-based forward-looking exercise, combining a quantitative dimension (expressed through targets) with a qualitative dimension (reflected in measures).

Likewise, given the interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals, the goals and measures are not assigned to specific ministerial departments of the General State Administration or to specific regional or local administrations, but rather they configure, as a whole, the Spanish Government's action horizon until 2030.

TECHNICAL CRITERIA SYSTEM

The review of the Sustainable Development Strategy responds to the need to update the framework adopted in 2021 to a substantially different context 2021-2025, marked by the exit from the health crisis with lingering social effects, inflationary and energy tensions, accelerating green and digital transitions, and new European and accountability requirements. This changed environment made it advisable to reorder priorities, strengthen the coherence of public policies and provide the Strategy with a more operational and verifiable system of targets and indicators.

Broadly speaking, the methodological process has been based on the strategic simplification of the Country Challenges, the strengthening of the system of targets and indicators and the integral alignment with the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development approach.

THE REORGANISATION OF THE COUNTRY CHALLENGES

The revision of the Strategy was based on an analysis of the interconnections between goals, with the aim of identifying those areas with the greatest transformative capacity. The first exercise, launched in the framework of the 2024 Voluntary National Review, identified the strategic nodes with the greatest multiplier effect, due to their high capacity to generate simultaneous impacts on multiple SDGs and reduce structural inequalities, among which the fight against poverty, ecological and productive transition, quality of employment and gender equality stood out.

A second exercise quantified the interrelationships between targets and Sustainable Development Goals, comparing the structure of the current Strategy with the revised proposal. This analysis showed that areas such as decent work, innovation, health, education, energy and sustainable consumption concentrate the main synergies, while biodiversity and institution building targets require specific reinforcement to ensure balanced progress.

Finally, a third qualitative exercise reorganised the original eight challenges into four major Country Challenges and a cross-cutting governance dimension. This reconfiguration consolidates a more coherent and operational structure, aligned with the evidence derived from the technical analysis and the participatory process, and adapted to the new strategic cycle 2025-2030, ensuring greater coherence between diagnosis, priorities and public policy decisions.

The new strategic framework allows for a clearer articulation of national priorities and reflects the principles of universality, equity, sustainability, territorial cohesion and social participation. It also provides stronger and more operational support for the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.

The five focus areas through which the strategy is organised, corresponding to the four Country Challenges and the cross-cutting dimension, are defined as follows:

1. **A strong and universal welfare state to end poverty and inequality:** brings together policies on social protection, essential public services, equal opportunities, housing and life security, with a special focus on children, youth and people in vulnerable situations.
2. **An economic system that generates well-being and social and environmental justice:** promotes a comprehensive productive transformation based on sustainability, innovation and the development of industries with high added value; the creation of decent jobs; the decarbonisation of the economy; the transition towards circular production and consumption models; digitalisation and the adoption of sustainable advanced technologies; sustainable mobility; and the eradication of energy poverty.
3. **A sustainable territorial and environmental model for cohesion and climate action:** integrates policies for territorial adaptation to climate change, environmental protection, territorial structuring and cohesion to face the demographic challenge, as well as strategies aimed at revitalising the rural environment, in order to guarantee resilience in the face of climate emergencies and reduce territorial inequalities.
4. **Free, equal and community lives:** places gender equality, the eradication of violence, the fight against all forms of discrimination, the guarantee of migrants' rights and the promotion of culture as an axis of social cohesion at the centre, with the aim of strengthening and guaranteeing a democratic, plural and inclusive society.
5. **Multi-level governance and policy coherence (cross-cutting dimension):** strengthens coordination between administrations, social and multi-stakeholder participation, policy and budgetary coherence, strategic planning and impact assessment. It also focuses on intergenerational perspective, sustainable public procurement, training of public staff, external coherence and accountability.

This new scheme facilitates the strategic reading of the Strategy, its multi-level implementation and monitoring, and brings clarity and cohesion to the national effort to accelerate the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda in Spain.

PREPARING DIAGNOSTIC REPORTS

The revised Strategy's diagnostic assessments have been developed using a comprehensive, evidence-based methodology, organised by Country Challenge and by topic. Each assessment begins with an initial contextualisation of the issue, followed by the definition of the relevant objective, the identification of the associated official indicator and its time series, and a combined quantitative and qualitative analysis that provides a clear understanding of current trends, progress and challenges.

The quantitative component has been based on official data from the National Statistics Institute (INE), Eurostat, the Bank of Spain, the OECD, relevant ministries, public observatories and sectoral statistical systems. In general, 2015 has been taken as the base year, subject to statistical availability and the methodological coherence of each indicator. Likewise, the evolution over time of the different areas of study has been analysed, territorial comparisons have been made and international references have been incorporated where possible.

In addition, the qualitative component includes a systematic institutional and regulatory analysis, covering the policies and measures implemented by central government, the Autonomous Communities and Local Entities. For each topic area, current state and sectoral strategies, regional plans, relevant legislation, funding instruments, as well as initiatives and best practices implemented at local government level have been reviewed. This multi-level approach has made it possible to identify differential progress, territorial capacities and local reference experiences, thus reinforcing the operational and territorialised vision of the Strategy. Similarly, European guidelines and international commitments linked to the Sustainable Development Goals have been taken into account.

Where it has not been possible to link a target to a quantifiable indicator, either due to the absence of consolidated statistical series or the unavailability of data, the assessment establishes the baseline situation using descriptive evidence and alternative sources. Likewise, the section on the contributions of the different public administrations includes qualitative criteria and explicit commitments aimed at the progressive development of information and metrics.

This methodology ensures the technical soundness of the analysis, the coherence between diagnosis, targets and indicators, and a comprehensive reading of the capacities and challenges of implementation at national, regional and local levels. It also facilitates strategic decision-making and rigorous monitoring of the Strategy throughout its implementation cycle.

THE SYSTEM OF TARGETS AND INDICATORS

The review process of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy has incorporated a comprehensive update of the monitoring framework, ensuring that each target has associated indicators that allow its statistical quantification and subsequent assessment of the degree of compliance in a rigorous, transparent and comparable manner over time.

This update has been guided by a central principle: aligning strategic ambition with effective public monitoring capacity, strengthening accountability and results orientation.

The methodological process for the design of the system of targets and indicators was articulated in four phases:

1. **Systematisation of the state of play.** A comprehensive analysis of existing strategic documents was carried out, including the existing Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, the Progress Reports (2019-2023), the Voluntary National Review (VNR-2024), national sectoral plans and the main European and international frameworks (Agenda 2030, European Green Pact and European Pillar of Social Rights). This phase made it possible to establish a clear baseline, identifying progress and gaps in each area. It also systematised existing targets, their indicators and baselines, as well as their traceability to the SDG targets.
2. **Country Challenge Analysis and update of targets and indicators.** The original eight Country Challenges were assessed and reorganised into four major Country Challenges and one cross-cutting challenge, reinforcing their strategic clarity and internal coherence. During this phase, the following steps were taken:
 - reformulate existing targets and propose new quantified targets;
 - refine and update the indicator framework;
 - align each indicator with official sources and international standards;
 - incorporate proposals from institutional and social stakeholders.

Where adequate official indicators did not exist, their progressive development was proposed, ensuring their future integration into the public statistical system.

3. Technical validation and institutional contrast. The proposals were systematically reviewed with technical units, ministerial focal points, sectoral experts and Agenda 2030 governance bodies to ensure methodological consistency, feasibility of implementation and technical rigour of the system. In this phase, priority was given to semantic coherence with the UN framework.
4. Consolidation of the monitoring system. The process culminated in the design of the revised 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy balanced scorecard, articulated around a reduced and strategic set of key indicators per target, aimed at facilitating regular monitoring, results assessment and accountability.

INDICATOR SELECTION CRITERIA

To ensure a robust system, the selection and review of indicators followed technical criteria aligned with national and international statistical standards, including:

1. Strategic relevance: direct measurement of public policy priorities.
2. Alignment with the SDGs and European and international frameworks.
3. Where possible, territorial and population disaggregation: gender, age, territory, origin.
4. Institutional availability and statistical continuity.
5. Technical relevance and conceptual precision.
6. Public interpretability and communicative clarity.
7. Operational feasibility and follow-up cost.
8. Capacity to measure the impact of public policies.
9. Regular updating and timeliness.
10. Topic-based coherence and absence of duplication.

This framework of criteria ensures methodological consistency, international comparability and transparency of the system.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

This process has been underpinned by a systematic exercise of statistical alignment with official sources, which ensures the traceability and comparability of indicators. For this purpose, the main statistical sources used were the indicators of the National Statistics Institute (INE) and its associated systems, information from the competent ministries and their public bodies and sectoral observatories, as well as data from the European Statistical System and Eurostat.

In addition, and in line with the multilevel nature of the Strategy, the official information provided by the autonomous communities and local entities has been incorporated as a reference. In a complementary manner, the methodological reference frameworks are the UN Global Indicator System for the SDGs and the technical guides of the custodian agencies of the UN system, with the aim of ensuring technical coherence, methodological continuity and international alignment of the monitoring system.

BASE YEARS AND QUANTIFICATION OF TARGETS

The structure of the Strategy is articulated around Country Challenges, themes and targets, each of which has been linked, whenever possible, to an indicator recognised in national or international statistical systems. It is a methodological approach based on the definition of targets associated with official indicators and clearly established base years, in order to ensure a solid, verifiable and homogeneous monitoring framework.

This scheme ensures the traceability, coherence and comparability over time of the targets, as well as their alignment with the methodological standards used in the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. The assignment

of a base year to each indicator responds to criteria of statistical availability, historical consistency and institutional reference, which facilitates a rigorous analysis of the evolution and performance of the public policies associated with the Strategy.

In general terms, the Strategy adopts 2015 as the main base year, as this is the year in which the 2030 Agenda was adopted at international level and is therefore the common benchmark for measuring global progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Where it is not possible to establish 2015 as the base year, other reference years are used depending on the nature of each indicator and the availability of official data. These include, by way of example:

- 2021, as the main alternative, as this is the year of approval of the 2021 Sustainable Development Strategy, which makes it possible to assess effective progress since its implementation and to set realistic and measurable objectives with a 2030 horizon. This base year is used, for example, for targets relating to disability, vocational training or severe material deprivation, because data collection started at that time, or for those targets for which quantification shows a disparate evolution between 2015 and 2021, in order to establish a clearer prospective framework up to 2030.
- 1990, for climate indicators, especially those relating to greenhouse gas emissions, as this is the reference date established in international and European commitments and the start of comparable official historical series.
- 2010, for indicators linked to the circular economy, waste management and resource efficiency, as harmonised series at European level start around that year.

In certain cases, it has not been possible to define a quantified target due to the complexity of establishing its evolution or the lack of appropriate official indicators, consolidated statistical series or sufficient data to allow a target value and a base year to be set with technical rigour.

In these situations, the goal has been formulated in a qualitative way, describing:

- the diagnosis of the problem or issue addressed;
- strategic orientation and public policy objective;
- the actions foreseen to advance in its fulfilment.

This approach combines technical rigour with operational realism, ensures that all targets have a clear quantitative frame of reference and allows them to be monitored to verify progress with quantifiable indicators to advance the development of the National System of Sustainable Development Indicators.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF INDICATORS

The Strategy incorporates a self-assessment and monitoring system designed to ensure traceability, transparency and effectiveness in its implementation. To this end, it combines quantitative analysis, based on official indicators, with qualitative assessment of the degree of implementation of the measures planned by the General State Administration, the Autonomous Communities and Local Entities.

Monitoring is structured around the regular updating of the indicators defined for each Country Challenge, according to their statistical availability. It is also carried out by reviewing strategic milestones and the degree of administrative implementation, which is classified as achieved, partially achieved or not achieved. This framework is complemented by qualitative exercises, including documentary analysis, participatory spaces and inter-agency technical review processes, as well as the possibility of producing complementary reports and Voluntary National Reviews.

The results will be publicly disseminated through institutional channels, through reports, executive summaries and dissemination materials, thus reinforcing accountability, social participation and continuous improvement of public policy with a 2030 horizon.

SDS REVISION CHRONOLOGY

LESSONS FROM THE PREVIOUS CYCLE (2018-2024)

The revision of the Strategy has substantially built on the accumulated acquis since 2018, integrating the main findings of the five annual Progress Reports (2019-2023), the Action Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda, developed in 2018, and the 2024 Voluntary National Review. This longitudinal analysis has identified sustained progress, especially in areas such as multi-level governance, territorial deployment and scaling up of the SDG statistical system, as well as areas where efforts need to be accelerated, including decarbonisation, securing social rights, gender equality and territorial cohesion. The present review thus incorporates the lessons learned during the initial phase of the Strategy's implementation and reinforces its priorities in line with emerging challenges and evidence.

PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP FOR THE REVIEW OF THE SDS 2030 (NOVEMBER 2024)

For the elaboration of the revised SDS, contributions from a wide range of social sectors have been integrated, with the aim of gaining a detailed understanding of their perception of the areas that require improvement in order to advance in the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the contributions that should be incorporated into this revision and that had not been considered in the first Strategy, as well as the main concerns of society.

In the initial phase of the Strategy review, experiences of multi-stakeholder and multi-level networking workshops were available. Specifically, on 14 November 2024, with the contribution of REDS-SDSN Spain, the cultural dimension perspective was integrated into the review through a process developed in three complementary stages. In the first of these, which focused on the initial review and testing of the SDS from a cultural perspective, a working document was produced that included specific contributions and recommendations for each Country Challenge, as well as recommendations of a cross-cutting nature for the Strategy.

Subsequently, in a second stage, a workshop was held, conceived as a space for multi-stakeholder and multi-level dialogue, with the participation of representatives of civil society, the business sector, academia and autonomous and local governments. Finally, the third stage was aimed at consolidating, presenting and disseminating the results of the process of contrasting and reviewing the Strategy, from which proposals for improvement were derived and subsequently incorporated into the general review process.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2024-APRIL 2025)

The revision of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy was supported by specialised external technical assistance, contracted between December 2024 and April 2025, with the aim of strengthening the systematisation of information, strategic analysis and multi-stakeholder participation.

Its main responsibilities included the methodological design of consultation processes with key stakeholders, support in organising forums for dialogue with ministries, autonomous communities and local entities, as well as the compilation and structuring of contributions from the 2030 Agenda's governing bodies. In addition, the technical assistance team carried out a comparative analysis of the indicator framework (SDS 2021, Progress Reports, the 2024 Voluntary National Review and official sources) and proposed a preliminary selection of targets and indicators for 2030, taking into account technical criteria such as relevance, availability of statistical data and the capacity for public monitoring.

Finally, it assisted in the technical drafting of documents, the development of tables and methodological tools, and the incorporation of the results into the revised strategic framework, thereby making a significant contribution to the coherence, traceability and technical rigour of the process as a whole.

As part of the technical support provided for the revision of the Strategy, the technical assistance organised a participatory session in online format on 2 April 2025, aimed at gathering input from civil society and key stakeholders in order to enrich the definition of the new Country Challenges. The session was specifically designed to ensure plural representation, incorporating profiles from the third sector, academia, the private sector and public administrations.

The event attracted more than 300 key stakeholders, with 198 formal invitations sent out. There were 67 registrations and 58 people actively participated, which represents an attendance rate of 86.6%, showing a high level of involvement and commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its implementation in Spain.

Participating entities included, among others, the ONCE Foundation, WWF Spain, SEO/BirdLife, Greenpeace Spain, the Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy (CEPES), the COTEC Foundation for Innovation, the Third Sector Platform, as well as specialised organisations such as ECODES or Fundación Renovables.

During the event, proposals and priorities aimed at strengthening the revised SDS strategic framework were gathered, the most notable of which included:

- the consolidation of the welfare state and universal access to rights;
- the transition towards a green, inclusive economic model that generates decent jobs;
- strengthening territorial cohesion and climate action with a local approach;
- structural equality, a rights-based approach and care;
- and the need to foster more coherent, participatory and results-oriented governance.

Inputs highlighted the importance of robust monitoring systems, accessible and disaggregated data, as well as stable mechanisms for participation, in order to ensure transparency and social co-responsibility in the implementation of the Strategy.

The event reflected an informed, constructive and engaged civil society, whose contribution has strengthened the revised SDS and ensured that it responds more ambitiously, inclusively and operationally to today's social, economic, territorial and environmental challenges.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS (FEBRUARY - MARCH 2025)

The preliminary public consultation for the revision of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy took place between 13 February and 14 March 2025 through the portal of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumption and Agenda 2030. This process made it possible to gather opinions and proposals from citizens and institutional, social, academic and economic actors, in line with the government's commitment to transparency, participation and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

In total, approximately 70 contributions were received, including 61 valid responses registered on the electronic platform and 4 additional contributions submitted by mail or other official means. Incomplete responses were classified as "no record", in accordance with methodological criteria for traceability and quality control of the information.

Both individuals and organisations representing the Spanish associative fabric took part. These included trade union, social, educational and professional organisations, which contributed diverse views and proposals, reflecting the plural and participatory nature of the process.

Contributions agreed on the need to strengthen the Strategy to respond to a context marked by climate emergency, socio-economic challenges and persistent inequalities. Among the main priorities identified, the following were highlighted:

- **Strengthening the welfare state:** universal social protection, strengthening public health, education, care and access to decent housing.
- **Just ecological and productive transition:** boosting the green and circular economy, inclusive digitalisation, decent jobs, innovation and investment in R&D&I.
- **Territorial cohesion and demographic balance:** priority attention to rural areas, guaranteeing public services throughout the territory and promoting sustainable mobility.
- **Rights, equality and active citizenship:** gender equality, rights of persons with disabilities, mental health care, promotion of culture and the fight against violence and discrimination.
- **Governance and participation:** greater coherence between administrations, transparent monitoring, disaggregated indicators and continued social participation.
- **Public communication:** improving the dissemination of the Strategy to increase public awareness and involvement.

These contributions have served to guide the updating of the contents, targets and indicators of the revised Sustainable Development Strategy, contributing to a more robust and inclusive formulation, aligned with the current context and with the ambition of accelerating the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda in Spain.

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION: THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (OCTOBER 2024-DECEMBER 2025)

The review of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy involved the active and continued participation of the Sustainable Development Council (SDC), which acted as a key body for structured dialogue with organised civil society. Through its Standing Committee, its Plenary and two specialist working groups—the SDS Review Group and the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Group—analyses, proposals and recommendations were put forward with a view to strengthening the strategic focus, transformative ambition and internal coherence of the revised Strategy.

Between December 2024 and March 2025, the SDS Review Working Group held several sessions focusing on methodological design, definition of strategic priorities and detailed discussion of the new Country Challenges. The first meeting, held on 10 December 2024, marked the formal start of the work, establishing the timetable, coordination with the National Voluntary Review 2024 and the need to update the Country Challenges. At the session on 14 January 2025, the methodology, timing and technical assistance were validated, and it was agreed that it was important that contributions be consensual rather than individual.

On 4 February 2025, the preliminary structure of the four new Country Challenges and the drafting roadmap were presented. The meetings held on 18 and 28 February focused on Country Challenges 2 and 3, prioritising areas such as decent employment, social economy, equality, care, community health, the fight against depopulation and just ecological transition. On 14 March, Country Challenges 1 and 2 were discussed, with a focus on public services, civic space, inclusive digitalisation and the articulation of cross-cutting priorities. Finally, on 28 March 2025, the final inputs were validated and it was agreed to strengthen the system of indicators, the measurement of results, the coherence between targets and means of implementation, as well as the clarity of deadlines and public responsibilities.

In parallel, the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Working Group carried out its work between November 2024 and May 2025, focusing on ensuring that the Strategy incorporates strong mechanisms for policy coherence, budget coherence and evaluation. In its sessions, the group formulated concrete proposals to measure the coherence of public policies, strengthen the training of public employees, improve budget alignment with the SDGs and integrate the analysis of territorial and intergenerational impacts. Progress was also made in defining indicators, institutional tools and monitoring criteria, reinforcing the link between the Strategy and the construction of a national system of policy coherence.

In addition, both the Standing Committee and the Plenary of the Sustainable Development Council acted as a forum for strategic discussion and validation. The Standing Committee, meeting in October 2024 and June 2025, underlined the importance of moving towards a comprehensive system of policy coherence, strengthening the strategic response to depopulation, racism and social inequality, and ensuring child and youth participation, as well as the inclusion of migrants and people with disabilities.

For its part, the SDC Plenary, held in December 2024 and June 2025, analysed the progress of the review, discussed the final draft and incorporated recommendations in areas such as just transition, the social economy, universal accessibility, the fight against corruption, the strengthening of the associative movement and the participation of the private sector.

Overall, the contribution of the Sustainable Development Council reinforced the technical and political quality of the process, providing an expert and pluralistic view and helping to ensure that the revised Strategy integrates a systemic, inclusive and transformative approach. Their contributions focused on strengthening the human rights approach, the role of civil society, territorial cohesion, the feminist and care approach, climate ambition and the commitment to accountability and policy coherence as pillars to accelerate the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

During this period, the Council for Sustainable Development produced two reports on the review of the Strategy. The first, approved in the June 2025 Plenary, positively assessed the review process, highlighting its comprehensive approach and its alignment with international and European frameworks, as well as its commitment to strengthening the welfare state, territorial cohesion, ecological transition and equality. It also acknowledged the promotion of multi-level and participatory governance, the strengthening of monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and the incorporation of measurable targets and official indicators.

On 9 and 17 December 2025, the Standing Committee and the Plenary Session of the SDC were convened, respectively, with the aim of facilitating an interim contribution from civil society to the monitoring process.

Overall, the Council considered that the revised Strategy reinforced the country's transformative ambition and contributed to orienting public policies towards fairer, more inclusive and sustainable development.

At the same time, the participation of the State Council for the Participation of Children and Adolescents (CEPIA), a consultative body attached to the Ministry of Youth and Children, was incorporated as a mechanism to guarantee the inclusion of the child and adolescent perspective in the definition of strategic priorities.

The interaction with this body was structured in two milestones. Firstly, an initial session to present the working document, aimed at setting out the objectives and scope of the process and proposing the participation of Council members. Secondly, a technical working group session, aimed at analysing the strategic axes and the formulation of proposals for improvement and priorities by its members.

The contributions derived from this process were systematised and incorporated as a relevant input in the delimitation of the priority areas for action. In addition, in a third meeting with Council members, the final results of their contributions were presented in the final version of the SDS, ensuring the coherence of the Strategy with the principles of intergenerational equity, citizen participation and a rights-based approach.

THE REVIEW PROCESS WITH MINISTRIES (JUNE - NOVEMBER 2025)

A central pillar of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy review process has been close coordination with all ministerial departments. Following the presentation of the work at the Extended Working Group of the Delegate Commission for the 2030 Agenda, held on 4 June 2025, the Directorate General for the 2030 Agenda activated a formal technical consultation addressed to ministries, through a structured questionnaire designed for the review of targets, indicators and strategic actions.

The process started with a two-week response period; however, due to the volume and complexity of the contributions received, this period was progressively extended, keeping the process open until October 2025 in order to ensure full and rigorous participation.

The responses submitted included the validation and technical reformulation of targets under direct responsibility, comments on inter-ministerial targets, proposals for new quantifiable targets with official indicators, as well as the updating of ongoing public policy measures and instruments. This exercise made it possible to systematically incorporate the specialised knowledge of each department, ensuring a strategic architecture coherent with governmental priorities and with the international obligations assumed by Spain in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Once the consolidated draft of the revised Strategy had been produced, the document was resubmitted to all ministries for final review during the second half of November 2025, with the possibility of incorporating final comments prior to its submission for final approval. This double technical validation reinforced the consistency of the document and the institutional consensus, ensuring that the resulting Strategy reflected the Spanish Government's joint action on the 2030 Agenda.

THE REVIEW PROCESS WITH THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES (JULY - NOVEMBER 2025)

Within the framework of the shared governance of the 2030 Agenda, on 22 July 2025, the Sectoral Commission for the 2030 Agenda was held as a body for cooperation between the National Government and the Autonomous Communities. At this session, the SDS revision process was presented and it was agreed that a technical questionnaire would be sent out to systematise regional inputs. The constitution of the SDS Review Working Group was also approved, thus reinforcing territorial coordination in this process.

The official questionnaire, structured in three blocks, was sent to the Autonomous Communities: (I) monitoring of actions committed to in the SDS 2021; (II) new actions planned after the adoption of the Strategy, aimed at achieving the SDGs; and (III) progress on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD).

The Autonomous Communities completed and returned the questionnaire between August and September 2025. They provided detailed information on the degree of implementation of their measures, their monitoring indicators, the main results obtained, and the new actions planned for the future. This exercise made it possible to identify common trends, heterogeneous progress between territories and spaces for strengthening multilevel coordination on PCSD.

In this context, the first meeting of the SDS Review Working Group took place on 16 September 2025 in a virtual format through the COOPERA platform. This session focused on clarifying technical doubts about the questionnaire, presenting the first analyses of the material received and advancing in the definition of the work plan for the elaboration of the diagnosis and the strategic update. It also reported on the progress of the National Government's internal work during the summer period and established a permanent technical assistance channel for the Autonomous Communities.

This process has enabled the consolidation of a coordinated and participatory exercise to review the SDS, strengthening inter-administrative cooperation mechanisms, generating updated territorial evidence and advancing towards the implementation of the integrated system of policy coherence foreseen in the new strategic cycle 2025-2030.

THE REVIEW PROCESS WITH LES (JULY-NOVEMBER 2025)

In a complementary manner, the revision of the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy actively integrated local entities, recognising the fundamental role they play in the localisation of the 2030 Agenda and in the direct implementation of transformative public policies. This process was developed in coordination with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), which acted as an institutional channel to guarantee a broad, territorially balanced and representative participation of Spanish municipalities.

The process started with a focus group organised by the FEMP between 7 and 11 July 2025, in which representative local entities of different profiles and sizes participated. This space identified the main municipal strategic priorities, the progress made since the adoption of the SDS in 2021 and the future challenges to contribute to the four new Country Challenges. Priorities included territorial cohesion, energy and climate transition at local level, accessibility and the fight against poverty, sustainable mobility, affordable housing, inclusive digitalisation and participatory governance.

Subsequently, based on the conclusions of the focus group, a structured questionnaire was sent to local authorities on 25 July 2025, requesting information on the measures already implemented in the framework of the SDS 2021 and new proposals for the revised Strategy. This instrument made it possible to collect actions linked to sustainable urban planning, local social protection, essential public services, citizen participation, youth and children's policies, local climate action, protection of the natural environment, green mobility and digitalisation of the territory, among other strategic areas.

The period for receiving contributions remained open until 19 September 2025, the deadline being reminded by institutional communication in the previous week. During this time, the participating municipalities and county councils submitted their contributions, which were subsequently systematised and analysed.

The contributions received showed a high level of commitment at the local level to the priorities of the 2030 Agenda. In particular, actions aimed at strengthening social services and inclusion programmes; supporting vulnerable families and groups; promoting healthy eating initiatives for children and the fight against food poverty; developing energy efficiency plans and support for households in situations of energy vulnerability; and advancing in administrative digitalisation, reducing the digital divide and improving connectivity in rural areas.

These contributions were integrated into the revised Strategy, reinforcing its territorial approach, its equity orientation and its capacity for effective multi-level implementation. In this way, the active participation of the FEMP and local entities has been key to ensure the localisation of the SDS 2030, its alignment with the capacities and competences of the local level and the strengthening of policy coherence, multilevel governance and the territorial approach to sustainable development in Spain.

MIXED COMMISSION FOR THE COORDINATION AND MONITORING OF THE SPANISH STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

As part of the institutional and parliamentary monitoring of the Strategy review process, on 2 December 2025 the Director General for the 2030 Agenda appeared before the Joint Commission for the Coordination and Monitoring of the Spanish Strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, held in the Congress of Deputies. In this session, the progress of the technical work, the motivations that have guided the revision of the Strategy and the timetable foreseen until its approval were presented.

The hearing reinforced the transparency of the process, aligned expectations with the different parliamentary groups and gathered comments that contributed to consolidate a more robust and consensual approach for the new strategic cycle 2025-2030.

B. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

The monitoring of the Strategy is a key element to ensure its correct implementation and to evaluate the degree of progress of the goals and measures established. This section defines the general framework for such monitoring and ensures that it is carried out in an orderly, systematic and aligned manner for each Country Challenge and topic area. Its main purpose is to establish a mechanism that will:

- Monitor progress through pre-defined indicators.
- Identify deviations and propose timely adjustments.
- Evaluate results, both quantitative and qualitative, at key points in the period.

The scope of monitoring covers all the indicators included in the Strategy, taking into account their periodicity and the availability of data. This approach ensures transparency, traceability and continuous improvement in the implementation of the Strategy.

It also incorporates a monitoring and evaluation schedule that includes:

- A first results report in February 2026.
- Regular monitoring, which will make it possible to analyse progress and qualitative aspects.
- A final evaluation in 2030, coinciding with the closure of the strategic period.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

Monitoring will be carried out to ensure the traceability and coherence of the goals and measures defined in the Strategy. It will be based on principles of transparency, ensuring that all information is properly documented and accessible, on the clear definition of the periodicity of revision of each indicator and on the adaptability of the system to incorporate adjustments arising from changes in the Strategy or in the availability of data. For this purpose, the indicators associated with the targets will be used as sources of information, as well as the qualitative and quantitative information gathered through the contributions of the ministries, autonomous communities and local entities, together with the evidence obtained during the implementation process itself.

The monitoring procedure will include periodic review of indicators according to their update frequency, consolidation of data in progress reports, combined quantitative and qualitative analysis at key milestones of the strategic period and the necessary feedback for the adoption of strategic adjustments. A timetable will also be drawn up, providing for an initial report in February 2026, regular follow-ups until 2030 (including the analysis of qualitative aspects), and a final evaluation in 2030, ensuring a structured monitoring process that is aligned with the strategic objectives.

Complementarily and on a voluntary basis, in the framework of the Voluntary National Reviews that Spain submits to the United Nations to assess progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a progress report may be prepared that summarises the progress made in the implementation of the review of the Strategy.

This report will incorporate both quantitative indicators and qualitative elements and will be conceived as a comprehensive review of the degree of compliance with the revised Strategy, following national and international standards that make it possible to compare the results with good practices and with the commitments undertaken.

FREQUENCY OF INDICATORS

The frequency with which indicators are reviewed is a key factor in ensuring effective monitoring of the Strategy and facilitating informed decision-making. This frequency is determined based on the nature of each indicator, the availability of data, and its relevance and impact on the defined targets.

GENERAL TIMETABLE

MILESTONE	ACTIVITY	DATE
Start of monitoring	First report of results	February 2026
Regular monitoring	Updating according to frequency	2026-2029
Final adjustments	Review and adjustment of targets	2030
Final evaluation	Closing report and conclusions	2031

INDICATOR FRAMEWORK FOR MONITORING THE SDS REVIEW:

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 1: A STRONG AND UNIVERSAL WELFARE STATE TO END POVERTY AND INEQUALITY.

1. ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

- AROPE rate. Annual update.
- Child at risk of poverty or social exclusion (base year 2015). Annual update.
- Number of households accessing IMV-CAPI financial aid. Monthly update.
- Rate of children in severe material and social deprivation (base year 2021). Annual update.
- Percentage of the Roma population living at risk of poverty (EU average base year 2021). Update on reports with no defined frequency.
- Index of non-contributory pensions by type of benefit, by type of disability. Monthly update.

2. TAX SYSTEM EFFICIENCY

- Multi-year evolution of tax bases in relation to domestic demand. Annual update.
- GINI index (base year 2015). Annual update.
- Average net annual income of the 40% of households with the lowest income in 2021 (base year 2021) Annual update.
- Spain's compliance with the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (OECD) in the exchange of information on request (EOIR) in future reviews (2026/2027).

3. CHILD NUTRITION

- Percentage of compliance in schools with school canteens (Graph 16.3). Annual update. Latest available year 2023.
- Childhood obesity and overweight rate by age group. Triennial update.

4. HOUSING

- Percentage of social rented housing as a percentage of the total stock of primary dwellings in Spain. Public investment in housing (public expenditure as % GDP). Annual update.

- Number of plans approved by local authorities with designated areas of high demand and their impact on the evolution of rents and prices according to the State Reference System for Housing Rental Prices on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda's website, SERPAVI. Update with no defined frequency.
- Percentage of tourist dwellings out of total accommodation as of August 2023. Six-monthly update.
- Number of judicial evictions involving financial matters. Quarterly update.

5. SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Number of social security affiliates in the dependency sector (CODE 87+88+97) (base year 2015). Monthly update.
- Percentage of single rooms for elderly, disabled and homeless people. Discretionary update.
- Beneficiaries with effective benefits for persons with a degree resolution entitled to benefits. Monthly update.
- Universal child allowance. Discretionary update.
- Paternity and maternity leave. Updated according to BOE.

6. EDUCATION

- Rate of early school leavers. Annual update.
- Public Expenditure on Education in relation to GDP. Annual update, latest available data 2023.
- Number of participants in training and employment programmes for the unemployed. Annual update.

7. HEALTH

- Number of registered psychologists per 100,000 people and ratio of psychiatrists in the public mental health network. Annual update.
- Suicide mortality rate by suicide by Autonomous Community by period (base year 2018). Annual update, latest year available 2023.
- Average number of months to issue the decision on the recognition of the degree of disability. Updated according to BOE.
- % of abortion at ≥ 23 weeks performed in publicly owned facilities. Annual update.

8. DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, CITIZENS' FREEDOMS AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Rule of Law Index. Annual update.
- Percentage of GNI allocated to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Update with no specified frequency.
- Spain's contributions to:
 - United Nations System, for all financial instruments. Annual update.
 - Peacebuilding Fund. Annual update.
 - Percentage of new Spanish Development Cooperation interventions that incorporate positive effects on gender equality and women's empowerment. Annual update.

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 2: AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM THAT GENERATES WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.

1. MEASURES AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY

- Percentage of ENPE objectives achieved, as recorded in the partial monitoring reports and at the end of the term of each ENPE strategy. Update on reports with no defined frequency.

2. EMPLOYMENT

- Employment rate of people with disabilities. Annual update, latest available data 2023.
- Number of recruitments of persons with disabilities in the public and private sector. Annual update, latest available data 2023.
- Number of young people enrolled in Youth Guarantee programmes who access training. Monthly update.
- Number of people over 45 participating in training and retraining programmes. Discretionary update.
- Students enrolled in dual-mode vocational training programmes. Annual update.
- Statistics on Collective Labour Agreements from the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. Annual update, latest available data 2023.
- Social economy entities registered with the Social Security. Monthly update.
- Annual budget allocation for Programme 241N "Development of the Social Economy and Corporate Social Responsibility" (Volume IX, Programmes 241N, 28WF). Annual update.

3. DECARBONISATION OF THE ECONOMY

- Percentage reduction in GHG emissions compared to 1990. Annual update.
- Percentage of renewable energy in final energy consumption. Annual update. Latest available data 2023.
- Percentage improvement in energy efficiency compared to current levels. Annual update.
- Percentage reduction in energy dependence compared to current levels. Annual update.
- Residential energy intensity. Annual update.
- Total power (MW) registered in the Administrative Register of Self-consumption of Electricity. Annual update.

4. INNOVATION AND VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES.

- Internal R&D expenditure relative to GDP at market prices. Annual update. Latest available data 2023.
- High-tech indicators. Annual update.

5. PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION MODEL: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HORIZON

- National Consumption of Materials. Annual update
- Total waste generation rate of total waste compared to 2010 (Eurostat). Annual update. Latest available data 2022.
- Percentage of preparation for re-use and recycling of municipal waste. Annual update, latest available data 2023.
- Index of food waste generation per capita; FAO Supply Chain Food Loss Index. Annual update.

6. DIGITISATION AND ADVANCED SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES

- Percentage of households and businesses with FTTP access, percentage of households and businesses with 5G access. Annual update.
- Percentage of SMEs with a basic level of digital intensity (DII) according to DESI. Annual update.
- Percentage of SMEs that sell online. Annual update.

7. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

- Passengers on public transport for everyday mobility. Passenger Transport Statistics. Annual update.
- Number of electric vehicles registered and in use. Annual update. Latest available data 2023.

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 3: A SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MODEL TO IMPROVE SOCIAL COHESION AND ADDRESS THE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY.

1. TERRITORIAL AND SOCIAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

- Number of Local Entities that have drawn up their Local Urban Agendas. Update with no defined frequency.
- Number of non-university students trained in civil protection emergency response. This is an indicator that needs to be implemented.
- Creation of the State Agency for Civil Protection and Emergencies and approval of its Statutes, Establishment of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Creation of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- IME (average concentration measured at the stations constituting the IME Network). Annual update.
- Percentage of water quality monitoring points complying with nitrate and pesticide regulations. Annual update.
- Percentage of land and marine area protected. Annual update.
- Percentage of forest area subject to Management Instruments. Annual update.
- Red List Index (base year 2021). Annual update.
- Percentage of habitats in poor condition restored. Update on reports with no defined frequency.
- Number of animals collected in animal protection centres (base year 2023). Annual update.

3. TERRITORIAL INTEGRATION, COHESION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

- Rate of demographic change in rural municipalities at risk. Annual update.

4. REVITALISATION OF THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Expenditure of international tourists by Autonomous Community of main destination. Monthly update.
- Statistics on organic production in Spain. Annual update.

COUNTRY CHALLENGE 4: FREE, EQUAL AND COMMUNITY LIVES.

1. GENDER EQUALITY

- Gender Equality Index (EIGE) in Spain. Annual update.
 - 60%: Wage gap by sector and type of contract. Annual update.
 - 20%: Part-time employees. Annual update.
 - 20%: Female activity rate. Annual update.
- Monitoring of the Action Plan for the improvement of the employability of the Roma population 2025-2028.
- Unemployment rate of women with disabilities. Annual update.
- Percentage of women enrolled in undergraduate and doctoral degrees in each of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields. Biennial update.
- Percentage of patents with at least one female inventor. Annual update.

2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- Percentage of women victims of intimate partner violence in the last 12 months. Annual update.

3. DISCRIMINATION

- Proportion of people with disabilities who attain higher education (base year 2021) Annual update. Latest available data 2020.
- Percentage of accessible public spaces (base year 2020). Annual update. Latest available data 2020.
- Under-reporting rate in the area of hate crime and hate speech, expressed as the percentage of crimes or incidents of discrimination that are not reported to the authorities. Annual update.

4. MIGRANTS

- Number of documented regularised persons OPI. Annual update.
- Percentage of immigration procedures that are fully digitised and unified, with significantly reduced resolution times. Update on reports with no defined frequency.
- Percentage of persons seeking international protection who are attended to in reception resources of the international protection reception system. Update on reports with no defined frequency.

5. CULTURE

- Expenditure settled on culture by the General State Administration. Annual update.
- Expenditure settled on culture by local councils according to the size of the municipality. Annual update.
- Gender gap in cultural employment. Annual update.
- Contribution of cultural GVA to the Spanish economy as a whole. Annual update.

POLICY COHERENCE SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (PCSD)

For the monitoring of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), as these are not quantitative targets, a compliance system will be established using a binary ranking methodology (Yes/No).

1. REGULATORY COHERENCE

- Continue to promote policy coherence in the Regulatory Impact Analysis Reports (MAIN) and in the Annual Policy Plan (PAN), in order to ensure traceability between these policy planning instruments and the Sustainable Development Strategy.

2. BUDGET ALIGNMENT

- Maintain budget alignment on all SDGs.

3. COORDINATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES

- Develop specific guidelines for strategic plans in order to coordinate the implementation of the public policy evaluability system across ministerial departments.

4. INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

- Establish a set of indicators and their monitoring to measure the intergenerational impact of sectoral policies.

5. SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

- Elaboration of a Social Public Procurement Plan.

6. TRAINING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

- Systematise the incorporation of sustainability in the design and implementation of public policies.

7. EXTERNAL COHERENCE

- Explore options for moving towards information systems in External Coherence.
- Integrate the external perspective into the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies in our country.
- Conduct policy coherence analysis of sustainable development cooperation policies within the High Council for Sustainable Development Cooperation and Global Solidarity.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY

- Generalise multi-level accountability through increased participation of municipalities in Local Voluntary Reviews.
- Deepen the integration of the local perspective on sustainable development in its international implementation.
- Integrate continuous improvement in the field of policy coherence for sustainable development.

REGULAR MONITORING

The planned mid-term evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progress of the Strategy, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This monitoring will identify achievements, areas for improvement and possible adjustments needed to ensure that the objectives are met by the 2030 horizon.

- **Objectives of the evaluation:**
 1. Measure the degree of progress against the defined indicators.
 2. Assess the coherence between implemented actions and strategic goals.
 3. Incorporate a qualitative analysis that considers contextual factors, unintended impacts and good practices.
- **Methodology (quantitative and qualitative):**
 1. Review of indicators: the data accumulated since 2026 will be analysed, considering the established periodicity.
 2. Qualitative analysis: this will include interviews, workshops or narrative reports to complement the quantitative information.
 3. Results report: a document summarising the findings, recommendations and proposed adjustments will be produced.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, the intermediate monitoring in 2028 will include a qualitative review of the degree of implementation of the measures planned by the General State Administration, the Autonomous Communities and the Local Entities. Each measure will be assessed with a simple rating reflecting its level of compliance:

1. Done.
2. Partially done.
3. Not done.

This analysis will make it possible to assess not only the numerical results, but also the real effectiveness of the actions implemented, ensuring coherence with the commitments made in the Strategy.

FINAL EVALUATION (2031)

The final evaluation will be carried out after the closure of the strategic period ending in 2030 and will aim to determine the degree of compliance with the Strategy Review as a whole. This phase will consolidate the results obtained, identify lessons learned and establish recommendations for future planning.

In addition to the global analysis of indicators, the final evaluation will include a full qualitative review of the measures adopted by the General State Administration, the Autonomous Communities and the Local Entities. The classification "Done / Partially done / Not done" will be applied to determine the level of implementation of each measure. This approach will provide a holistic view of compliance, looking at both quantitative progress and actual implementation of planned actions.

- **Objectives of the evaluation:**
 1. Measure the level of achievement of strategic goals.
 2. Analyse the evolution of indicators over the whole period.
 3. Evaluate the overall impact of the Strategy, including quantitative and qualitative aspects.
- **Methodology (quantitative and qualitative):**
 1. Complete revision of indicators: data accumulated since 2026 will be collected and analysed, considering the defined periodicity.
 2. Comparative analysis: the results will be compared with the initial objectives and the adjustments made in the mid-term evaluation.
 3. Final report: a document including conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for the next strategy will be produced.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Monitoring results will be disseminated in a transparent and accessible manner, thus strengthening the accountability of the Strategy Review.

The main dissemination actions will be

1. Publication on the institutional website: Full reports and executive summaries are available to the public.
2. Periodic and final reports: Downloadable documents including indicators, qualitative analysis and conclusions.
3. Presentation at conferences and in newsletters: Communication spaces to disseminate progress and results to key actors and the general public.
4. Information material: Infographics and visual summaries to facilitate understanding of the results.



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