

Spain.
Biennial progress report
on the implementation of the
European Child Guarantee



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On 14 June 2021, the Council of the European Union adopted Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 establishing the European Child Guarantee (ECG) [in Spanish Garantía Infantil Europea GIE]. One year later, on 5 July 2022, the Council of Ministers of the Spanish Government approved the **National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee 2022-2030** (National ECG Plan) [in Spanish "PAEGIE", Plan de Acción Estatal para la implementación de la Garantía Infantil Europea 2022 – 2030], the key programming instrument of ECG in Spain The National ECG Plan contains the objectives, targets and actions that Spain undertakes to deliver to implement the ECG recommendations by 2030.

The main objective of the National ECG Plan is to promote the implementation of measures by public administrations, in close cooperation with civil society and other actors, to ensure that all children and adolescents have guaranteed access to basic, inclusive and quality services in the fields of early childhood education and early childhood care (ECPI), education, including extracurricular activities, health care, healthy nutrition and adequate housing. These measures are intended to guarantee the equal enjoyment of the rights of children and adolescents, to prevent and combat child poverty and social exclusion, to ensure equal opportunities, to prevent discrimination, to promote the active participation of children and adolescents in vulnerable situations in the policies that affect them, and in short, to break the cycle of inequalities. The National ECG Plan will contribute to the generation of an environment where all children and adolescents have the basic conditions, means and services that allow them to exercise their rights, enjoy well-being and fully develop as people in an equitable environment.

One of the distinctive features of Spain is the high complexity in the distribution of powers between the national, regional, and local administrations. An important part of the services included in the National ECG Plan is administered by the autonomous regional governments, consequently, this first progress report details the initiatives to combat child poverty carried out in Spain by the General State Administration (AGE) and the Autonomous Communities and Cities with a Statute of Autonomy (ACs), from the approval of the National ECG Plan until December 2023, following the governance mechanism established in the National ECG Plan itself.

In preparing this report, the Directorate-General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (DGDIA), under the Ministry of Youth and Children and responsible for the coordination and supervision of the GIE at the national level, consulted the ministries of the AGE, the Autonomous Communities, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) and the public bodies that are implementing measures within the scope of their powers for the development of the National ECG Plan. Each entity provided essential information, reflecting the actions carried out both with each administration's own funds and with funds from the General National Budget (PGE) and European Union (EU) funding.

The foundations of the system have been established in this first biennial report. In the next report, it is expected to present the information with a substantial increase in qualitative and

quantitative terms, in addition to having a web application that is currently in the development phase and soon to be implemented.



The prevention and reduction of child and adolescent poverty in Spain is a priority objective of the Government of Spain, which has demonstrated its firm commitment to the rights of children, especially those children and adolescents who live in poverty and social exclusion or who are in particularly disadvantaged groups such as children with disabilities, of migrant origin, Roma children, or children with parents in an irregular residence status and children who are in the protection system.

The implementation in Spain of the ECG is coordinated via the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee 2022-2030 (National ECG Plan) [in Spanish "PAEGIE", Plan de Acción Estatal para la implementación de la Garantía Infantil Europea 2022 – 2030 (PAEGIE)] approved by the Council of Ministers of the Government of Spain in July 2022. The National ECG Plan seeks, first of all, to improve and guarantee access to rights and quality and inclusive services for all children and adolescents, within a framework of reducing child poverty. Secondly, this Plan incorporates the spatial and territorial dimension of child poverty, vulnerability, and barriers to access to services. Thirdly, the National ECG Plan promotes social participation, child participation and coordination and effectiveness in the actions of public administration agencies and the social action of third sector entities.

The National ECG Plan is framed in a children's rights perspective and for this it is aligned with international treaties, regulations and agreements –the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), its General Comments, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and European ones– the European Social Charter, the European Parliament Resolution on Reducing Inequalities, especially with regard to child poverty (2015), the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Pillar of Social Rights, which has its own plan, the latter, the poverty reduction commitment that Spain has signed up to in its action plan.

Over the last few years, major progress has been made in the legislative development aimed at guaranteeing, promoting, and defending the rights of children and adolescents, including the enactment of Organic Law 8/2021, of 4 June, on the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence (LOPIVI) which has been a historic step forward in the protection of children and adolescents. Legislation that addresses the phenomenon comprehensively, acting against all types of violence in all its phases, with a clear preventive and pedagogical approach and that guarantees good treatment of victims throughout the process.

The LOPIVI creates new bodies that play a fundamental role in the implementation of the ECG:

<u>Sectoral Conference on Children and Teenagers [Conferencia Sectorial de Infancia y Adolescencia]</u>, a cooperation body between the General State Administration (AGE), the autonomous communities and cities and the local government, through the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) for the implementation of policies for

the protection and development of children and adolescents in the area of protection and development of the rights of children and adolescents.

- State Council for the Participation of Children and Teenagers [Consejo Estatal de Participación de la Infancia y de la Adolescencia] (CEPIA), It is a permanent and stable body for the consultation, representation, and participation of children, attached to the Ministry of Youth and Children. CEPIA guarantees a space for the expression of ideas, proposals for measures and demands of children to public institutions.
- The <u>Monitoring Commission of Organic Law 8/2021</u>, of 4 June, on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence, the formal body for coordinating the implementation of this Law, through Ministerial Order PCM/126/2023, of 10 February 2023.
- The <u>Commission on violence against children and adolescents (COVINNA)</u>, which supports and provides guidance on planning measures with a healthcare impact. It was created at the plenary session of the Interterritorial Council of the National Health System in April 2022 and in 2023 approved the Common Protocol for Health Action against Violence against Children and Adolescents. It likewise issues annual activity reports.

<u>2023-2030.State Strategy for the Rights of Children and Adolescents</u>, was also published in May 2023, a key instrument to advance in the full guarantee of the rights of children in Spain, which is aligned with the National ECG Plan and which includes in its strategic areas of action the strategic priorities and priority groups of the National ECG Plan.

Finally, in relation to regulatory advances, it is worth highlighting the approval of the draft Family Act by the Council of Ministers on 27 February 2024, a regulation designed to recognise the diversity of family structures in the country, improve the social protection of families and facilitate work/life balance. This project establishes a legal framework for administrations to implement family support policies and expand rights in the face of the current difficulties in forming a family, not only in economic terms but also in terms of work/life balance.

It should be noted that Spain has a framework of instruments, together with the National ECG Plan, to coordinate the objectives in terms of combating poverty and guaranteeing rights for particularly vulnerable groups:

- National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2019-2023.
- 2023-2030. State Strategy for the Rights of Children and Adolescents
- 2021-2030 National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation
- Spanish Disability Strategy (2022- 2030).
- National strategy for a new model of care in the community. A De-institutionalisation Process 2024-2030.

One of the most notable changes in the institutional context is the creation of the Ministry of Youth and Children within the ministerial structure of the government formed in November 2023. The main task of this ministry is the promotion and comprehensive defence of the rights of children, adolescents, and young people, within the scope of the powers constitutionally vested in the State, as well as the promotion of collaboration with the other ministerial departments whose activities have an impact on this part of the population. Within this Ministry is the Directorate-General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (DGDIA), under the Secretary of State for Youth and Children, the body responsible for the coordination and supervision of the GIE at the state level. The DGDIA has its own budget, allocated in the General State Budget (PGE), currently extended, and a team of specialised professionals.

With regard to the National ECG Plan in Spain, the DGDIA is responsible for the following:

- Coordinating the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Plan at national level, and defining the guidelines for action at Autonomous-Community and local level.
- Facilitating and promoting cooperation between the different bodies involved in the Plan: ministries and management departments of the General State Administration, Autonomous Communities, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias- FEMP), local bodies, third-sector bodies and children's and teenagers' associations.
- Promoting the participation and engagement of children and teenagers throughout the ECG cycle in Spain.
- Disseminating the Plan at national and European level.
- Undertaking outreach and awareness-raising activities.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Maintaining coordination and communication with the European Commission and participating in international working groups.

The coordination of the GIE in Spain carries out its functions by taking on the challenge posed by the complex distribution of powers between government agencies at the state, regional and local level. For this reason, the National ECG Plan, envisages a multi-level governance mechanism to ensure that the measures laid down at regional level are delivered in a coherent way. This governance system has three levels:

- Political level: inter-ministerial and sectoral conferences.
- Operational level: the General State Administration, Autonomous Communities and Local Bodies
- Consultation level: mechanisms for the participation of civil society, children, and teenagers.

In December 2023, the governance system incorporated the restructuring of the new ministerial departments, especially the aforementioned creation of the Ministry of Youth and Children and the creation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda.

The anti-poverty goals of the Government of Spain are aligned with the European Pillar of Social Rights and are reflected both in the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights (PAPEDS) and in the National ECG Plan itself. PAPEDS aims to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by at least 15 million people by 2030, of which at least 5 million must be children. The National ECG Plan aims to reduce child poverty and social exclusion, fulfilling the national objective of reducing the number of children and adolescents at risk of poverty or social exclusion committed to the European Commission within the framework of the PAPEDS, in addition to reducing chronification and the child poverty gap. To measure this objective, the child AROPE rate is used, taking as a baseline the data point of 30.3% from the 2019 Living Conditions Survey (ECV). The final goal for 2030 aims to reduce the AROPE rate for children by 8.6 percentage points, reaching 21.7%, which would be equivalent to taking at least 730,000 children and adolescents out of the risk of poverty and exclusion.

To achieve this objective, progress has continued in the social protection network for households and children, which began in 2020 with the creation of the social shield, a set of measures with which the Government of Spain responded to the crisis caused by COVID-19 and which have now taken on a structural nature. An example is the Minimum Vital Income (IMV), a social welfare benefit aimed at preventing the risk of poverty and social exclusion in vulnerable households without sufficient economic resources to cover their basic needs. The IMV was approved in May 2020 with a total allocated budget of 3 billion euros. In December 2021, with the final approval of the law by the Congress of Deputies, the Child Aid Supplement (CAPI) was created, a variable economic benefit according to the age of the children in charge of the household, which acts as a reinforcement of the IMV to extend special protection to children in poverty and which in January 2024 reached 660,418 children. In December 2021, with the final approval of the law by the Congress of Deputies, the Child Aid Supplement (CAPI) was created, a variable economic benefit according to the age of the children supported by the household, which acts as a reinforcement of the IMV to extend special protection to children in poverty, which in January 2024 stood at 660,418 children. The latest available data for August 2024 shows that coverage has increased to 803,593 children.

Other measures adopted to strengthen household incomes include the continuous increase in the Minimum Interprofessional Wage, the increase in the Multi-Purpose Public Indicator of Income (IPREM) –the benchmark index in Spain for the granting of aid, grants and unemployment benefit– which has increased by 12% since 2020, the extension of the maternity deduction, the improvement of the contributory unemployment benefit and the extension of the current reduction for income from work, which means a reduction in personal income tax for the 50% of workers with the lowest incomes.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the implementation of the new European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) system to combat material deprivation: the Basic Programme. This programme transforms the

traditional distribution of food into a model that works with wallet cards and is aimed at families in extreme conditions of vulnerability with children or adolescents in their care, thus meeting the objective of reducing child poverty.

It is estimated that some 70,000 families will receive these cards with which they will be able to make monthly purchases of food and basic necessities.

There has been a historic increase in budget items on issues as important to children as education, the development of the Minimum Vital Income (IMV), the expansion of education from 0 to 3 years old, the promotion of the care economy, the reinforcement of inclusion policies and the promotion of healthy habits from childhood.



In the National ECG Plan, Spain committed to reducing the percentage of children and adolescents affected by poverty or social exclusion from 30.3% in 2019 to 21.7% in 2030. The indicator used to determine this objective is the AROPE rate, which measures the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the child population with respect to the total population. This indicator follows the criteria of the Europe 2020 strategy and includes all people aged 0-17 who are in at least one of these three situations:

- 1. At risk of poverty (60% median of income per unit of consumption).
- 2. In severe material deprivation, that is, they live in households with deprivation in at least four items from a list of nine¹.
- 3. In households without employment or with low employment intensity.

In 2021, the Subgroup of Indicators of the Social Protection Committee (EU) and Eurostat made adjustments to the definition of two of the components of the AROPE tax to align it with the new objectives of the Europe 2030 Objective. The AROPE rate (Europe 2030 objective) is now defined as a population that is in at least one of these three situations:

- 1. Risk of poverty: unchanged from 2020.
- 2. Severe material and social deprivation: social deprivation is added and built with 13 components, of which seven are defined at the household level and six are personal. Those people who suffer from at least seven of the 13 limitations that make up the list are counted².

- · They cannot afford to go on holiday for at least one week each year.
- · They cannot afford to eat meat, fish or chicken at least every second day.
- They cannot afford to maintain their house at an adequate temperature.
- · They are unable to face unexpected costs.
- They have payment arrears for the costs of their main dwelling (mortgage or rent, gas bills, communal charges, etc.) or for payments made in instalments over the last 12 months.
- · They cannot afford a car.
- · They cannot afford a telephone.
- · They cannot afford a colour television.
- · They cannot afford a washing machine.
- ² Items included in the Severe Material Lack indicator at the household level:
 - · They cannot afford to go on holiday for at least one week each year.
 - · They cannot afford to eat meat, fish or chicken at least every second day.
 - They cannot afford to maintain their house at an adequate temperature.
 - · They are unable to face unexpected costs.
 - They have payment arrears for the costs of their main dwelling (mortgage or rent, gas bills, communal charges, etc.) or for payments made in instalments over the last 12 months.
 - · They cannot afford a car.
 - · Cannot replace damaged or old furniture

At the individual person level:

· Cannot afford to replace damaged clothes with new ones.

¹ Items included in the Severe Material Lack indicator:

3. Low employment intensity (new definition of the Europe 2030 target)3.

In this report, the AROPE 2030 rate will be used as an indicator, despite the fact that in the National ECG Plan the reference indicator was the AROPE 2020 rate. This adjustment has been considered necessary to adapt the monitoring mechanisms of the National ECG Plan to the new objectives of the Europe 2030 strategy. As a result, the target of objective 1.1 has been adapted. Reduce child poverty and social exclusion to the new indicator. Originally, the National ECG Plan proposed a decrease in the child AROPE rate of 8.6 percentage points, from 30.3% in 2019 to 21.7% in 2030. When applying the AROPE 2030 rate, the baseline in 2019 is adjusted to 31%. Maintaining the same percentage of reduction, the new target for 2030 means a reduction of 7.9 percentage points, so that the target for 2030 is equivalent to 22.4% of the child population.

Spain continues to show indicators of poverty and social exclusion in children that are substantially higher than the European average:

In 2021⁴, the AROPE 2030 child rate reached 33.4% of the child population, which represents 2,750,041 children. In 2023, this indicator rises to 34.5%, which is equivalent to 2,768,316 children.

In 2023, all the indicators that make up the AROPE 2030 rate worsened. The at-risk-of-poverty rate went from 27.8% in 2022 to 28.9% in 2023. Low employment intensity rose slightly from 6.5% in 2022 to 6.9% in 2023. The indicator that shows the worst performance is that of severe material and social deprivation, which increased by two points, from 10.3% in 2022 to 12.3% in 2023. This deterioration reflects the effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has led to a sharp rise in energy and food prices, driving up inflation and the cost of living across the EU (see Annex I).

The component with the greatest weight in the AROPE 2030 rate is the risk of poverty, which is measured by estimating the number of children living below an income threshold, calculated each year from the distribution of household income in the previous year. Following the criteria recommended by Eurostat, this threshold is set at 60% of the median income per unit of consumption.

Spain has had high rates of child poverty, which are strikingly high in the European context, reaching 30.5% of the total child population in 2014 and affecting 28.9% in 2023 (see Annex II),

- · Cannot afford to have two pairs of shoes in good condition.
- · Cannot afford to get together with friends/family for a meal or a drink at least once a month.
- · Cannot afford to regularly participate in leisure activities.
- · Cannot afford to spend a small amount of money on themselves.
- · Cannot afford an internet connection.

³ It counts people living in households in which their working-age members (people aged 18 to 64, excluding students aged 18 to 24, retired or retired, and inactive people aged 60 to 64 whose main source of household income is pensions) carried out less than 20% of their total work potential during the reference year.

⁴ Income reference year 2020.

equivalent to 2,320,975 children. Regarding the intensity of poverty, it is observed that severe poverty –children living in households whose income does not exceed 40% of the median income— in 2023 stood at 13.7% of the child population, representing 1,099,203 children, one point less than in 2021, in which the rate of risk of severe poverty was 14.9%, affecting 1,229,087, which may indicate that the measures implemented since 2020, although they have not managed to contain the risk of moderate poverty, have reduced the incidence of the most severe poverty in children.

The interpretation of poverty rates over the years presents some difficulties, however; especially in those periods of change in the economic cycle, which alter the distribution of household income, such as the one that EU countries have experienced since the COVID-19 crisis. Observed changes in poverty rates may be more due to fluctuations in income thresholds and may not adequately reflect changes in household status. The option that Eurostat offers to observe the evolution of the standard of living of households in periods of significant changes is to use thresholds anchored at a specific moment in time, which remains constant, adjusting only for inflation.

If we look at this indicator, the poverty rate is attenuated and the variations between years are decreasing; however, they remain exceptionally high in the European context. The poverty rate is 24.6%, only three tenths above the figure in 2022 and almost three points lower than the 2019 figure, the year in which the threshold is anchored (see Annex III).

Within the child population at risk of poverty and exclusion, there are some groups that have substantially higher poverty rates and that, therefore, will require specific measures. By age, the group with the highest incidence of risk of poverty and social exclusion in 2023 is 12 to 17 years old, with a moderate risk of poverty rate of 32.3%, followed by 0 to 5 years old, with a poverty rate of 27.8% and 6 to 11 years old with poverty rates of 26.2% (see Annex IV).

With regard to the evolution of the number of children and adolescents included within the groups considered as priorities in the National ECG Plan, it is only possible to update the data on children and adolescents in the foster care system, which in 2022 have been 18,177, of which 907 children have a disability.

3. Roll-Out of services

In order to comply with both the National ECG Plan and all the instruments that coordinate the objectives of the Government of Spain in the fight against poverty, a series of measures have been promoted that seek to reduce poverty in children and adolescents, strengthen the social protection of children and adolescents and universalise social rights through access to and enjoyment of quality, accessible and inclusive essential services. The National ECG Plan includes a total of 88 measures, most of them within the scope of authority of the Autonomous Communities. Due to the difficulty of reporting the implementation of all these measures in each of the Autonomous Communities, it has been decided to describe the measures implemented at the state level and present the main trends and advances at the regional level.

The information reflected in this section has been obtained from the Mapping of actions and resources for the Fight against Child Poverty of the Ministry of Youth and Children, which includes information from strategic documents at the regional level, actions taken within the scope of authority of the Autonomous Communities and Cities with a Statute of Autonomy through the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism (RRM) embodied at the national level in the Plan for Recovery, Transformation and Resilience (RTRP), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and information provided by the Autonomous Communities through a questionnaire. For this biennial report, information has also been incorporated from files sent to ministries linked to the implementation of the National ECG Plan, the exploitation of data from the Living Conditions Survey 2023, PISA 2022 and the exploitation of digital resources and online databases of Ministries.

The information is organised in accordance with the basic rights or services provided for by the GIE: (1) early childhood education and care and early care, 2) education and extracurricular activities at school, 3) healthy food on each school day, 4) sanitation, 5) healthy nutrition and 6) adequate housing. Finally, and as section 7, protection measures are proposed.

At the beginning of each subsection, diagnostic data are presented, followed by a description of some National ECG Plan measures implemented at the national level and a summary of the measures that are being implemented at the regional level.

3.1. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, CARE

3.1.1. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- The net participation rate in ECPI, education and early childhood care for children aged 0 to 2 years in Spain is 48.2%, exceeding the Barcelona targets for 2030, which stand at 45%.
- By Autonomous Community, Andalusia (56.3%), Castilla y León (50.9%), the Valencian Community (45.2%), Galicia (60.6%), the Community of Madrid (56.4%), the Basque

Country (60.8%), La Rioja (56.4%) are above the Barcelona 2030 target for early childhood education.

Below them are Aragon (39.8%), the Principality of Asturias (29.2%), the Balearic Islands (38.7%), the Canary Islands (30.3%), Cantabria (37.7%), Castilla La Mancha (39%), Catalonia (43.7%), Extremadura (43.1%), the Region of Murcia (31.5%), the Autonomous Community of Navarre (40.8%), Ceuta (23.7%), and Melilla (37.6%)⁵.

Although the data at the state level is positive, regional differences indicate that it is necessary to maintain the effort to expand publicly-owned places to ensure effective, free access for children to this educational stage. The supply of publicly-owned places is inadequate to meet the demand of families that grows every year, especially in large cities, where the number of families requesting places in public pre-schools exceeds the available supply, and in rural and peripheral areas, where there is a shortage of public resources.

The Government of Spain has distributed funds to the Autonomous Communities for the creation of more than 65,000 new places in the first cycle of early childhood education (0-3 years old), as part of the territorial cooperation programme included in the RTRP, which channels more than 670 million euros funded by the European Union (Next Generation funds - RTRP). In the progressive roll-out, priority is being given to the access of students in areas with a higher incidence of risk of poverty or social exclusion and the extension to rural areas.

Measures implemented at national level

Measure 15. Extend coverage of pre-school education by increasing the number of state-funded places, prioritising the access of children at social exclusion and extending coverage to rural areas.

- Name: Programme to promote schooling in the first cycle of pre-primary education with new state-owned places.
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data:
 - 27,679 publicly-owned first-cycle early childhood education places created in 2023. (Data updated as of 31 December 2023 by the Ministry of Education).
 - 2.8 billion euros of spending on early childhood education in 2021.

Measure 16. Make pre-school education from 0 to 3 years free for children from families with incomes below the poverty threshold.

⁵ Source: Non-university education statistics. Sub-directorate General for Statistics and Studies of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport. Advance data course 2023-2024 https://estadisticas.educacion.gob.es/EducaJaxiPx/Datos.htm?path=/no-universitaria/alumnado/matriculado/series/gen-escolar/l0/&file=escolar_05.px

- Name: Programme for the free provision of accessible, inclusive, and high-quality places in the first cycle of Early Childhood Education for students from families with incomes below the at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion threshold (AROPE).
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2026-2029
- Relevant data: Through the ESF+ Programme for Education and Training, Employment and Social Economy, the ÉPHESUS programme is being developed, which will contribute to increasing the free availability of accessible, inclusive and high-quality places in the first cycle of Early Childhood Education for students from families with incomes below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. This is currently at the preparation phase.

Measure 20. Regulate minimum requirements of pre-school education by Royal Decree.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport
- Period: 2022.
- Description: Royal Decree 95/2022 of 1 February 2022, laying down the arrangements and minimum content requirements for pre-school education

Measures implemented at the Autonomous-Community level

- Increase in places and expansion of the educational offering: most of the Autonomous Communities are expanding places in early childhood education through the construction of new schools, the expansion of existing infrastructures and the creation of new educational units.
- Early childhood care in rural areas: Galicia has the Casas Nido ("nest houses") programme, a model tailored to rural areas where, due to their lack of population, traditional models of early childhood care services are not viable. The nest houses offer comprehensive and individualised support to a maximum of 5 children between the ages of 3 months and 3 years. Castilla La Mancha is increasing the number of places in early childhood education (0 to 3) to promote access as a priority to students in rural areas, at risk of depopulation and with a higher incidence of risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Scholarships and grants: financial aid, aimed at families with fewer resources, to cover costs related to early childhood education, such as transport, school supplies and school fees. This type of measure has been implemented in Autonomous Communities such as the Valencian Community, the Balearic Islands, and the Community of Madrid, with free first cycle early childhood education for children from families with incomes below the poverty line and an increase in funding and coverage of dining grants in Castilla La Mancha and the Canary Islands. Galicia in 2022 made educational care free for all children in all nursery schools: public, private and with social initiative.

3.1.2. EARLY CARE

- In 2023, nearly 130,000 children received early care in Spain⁶.
- This figure accounts for approximately 5% of the population aged 0 to 6 years in Spain, well below the 10% of children aged 0 to 6 years who are estimated to need early care.

Measures implemented at national level

Measure 22. Implement legislation at national and Autonomous-Community level on early childhood intervention as a subjective right.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2024.
- Description: The Spanish government sent a bill for a family act to the Parliament, as a matter of urgency, in February 2024. It includes measures to support families, including those relating to the right to early care. It provides that government agencies and authorities shall guarantee the subjective right of children and their families to have universal access to free and quality care for early childhood development, which guarantees continuity of care throughout life. For minors with disabilities or other vulnerable situations, it will ensure early care and provide the necessary educational support. It is currently going through an extended amendment phase.

Measure 23. Reach an agreement in the Regional Councils for Social Services and Health (Consejos Territoriales de Servicios Sociales y de Sanidad) on what services should be included in the public provision of early intervention services, and on the quality of those services, as a minimum and fair basis for the whole country.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2023.
- Description: On 19 June 2023, the Regional Council of Social Services and the System for Autonomy and Dependency Care, in an extraordinary joint meeting with the Inter-Regional Council of the National Health System, approved the Agreement establishing the roadmap for the improvement of early care in Spain on a common framework of universality, public responsibility, equity, gratuity and quality. This document has been prepared by the Early Care Technical Working Group, coordinated by the Ministries of Health, Youth and Children, Social Rights, Education and Vocational Training and the Royal Board on Disability, and which includes all the Autonomous Communities, the National Institute of Health Management INGESA, the civil society of children and disabilities, as well as organisations of Early Care professionals.

The Early Care Technical Working Group has continued to work on quality standards for early care, on determining the optimal times between detection, evaluation, and intervention and on the development of a map of early care resources in Spain. In parallel,

⁶ National Federation of Early Intervention Professionals, 2024

a computer application (MAPAT project) is being developed: this is a map of early care centres with referenced geolocation and information fields.

Measures developed at Autonomous-Community

The regulations that regulate early care in the various regions can be classified into three groups⁷: those Autonomous Communities that regulate it through a specific law, as is the case of Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha and the Region of Murcia; those that do so through a decree, such as in Castilla y León, Catalonia, Galicia, Madrid, Navarre, La Rioja and the Basque Country; and those that integrate it within the scope of Social Services, such as in the Valencian Community, Extremadura, the Balearic Islands and the Principality of Asturias. Although there are great similarities in the various sets of regulations, the way in which they are implemented is quite different and gives rise to models of early care with notable differences that generate major inequalities in terms of the services they offer and the definition of those who can access them. This has a negative impact on the equal opportunities of children in need of early care depending on where they live and highlights the importance of ongoing efforts to harmonise the early care system.

Some of the advances made in recent years in the field of early care in the Autonomous Communities are described below:

- Progress in regulations: the Regional Government of Murcia enacted specific law, Law 9/2022, of 29 November, which regulates the comprehensive intervention of early care. With this law, the Region of Murcia launches a Public Network of early care (universal and free).
- Investment in Infrastructure and Specialised Resources: the Autonomous Communities have channelled significant resources for the creation and improvement of early care centres and specialised units, as well as for training multidisciplinary teams. Among them are Cantabria, which has a free, universal, and public programme for early detection and therapeutic intervention for children with functional diversity. The maximum waiting time for evaluation is 15 days and 5 days for the start of the intervention. Catalonia has developed and promoted a network of child development and early care centres, distributed throughout the region, providing specialised services to children with specific needs. Extremadura has an Agreement between the Extremadura Service for the Promotion of Autonomy and Care for Dependency (SEPAD) and the Extremadura Health Service (SES) for the improvement of early care in the Autonomous Community.
- Expansion of target groups: In the Balearic Islands, early care is considered a
 subjective right and there is a child development and early care service. In 2023, it
 deployed a new Personal Autonomy Promotion service for children between 6 and 11
 years of age with a recognised degree of dependency to give continuity to the service

⁷ Full inclusion Spain (2024) Report on the situation of Early Care

- provided in the first years of life. Extremadura has a Functional Training Service aimed at users over 6 years of age with a degree of disability equal to or greater than 33%.
- Extension of coverage to particularly vulnerable groups: Autonomous communities such as Aragon have launched a new Early Care and Disability Prevention Service through Mobile Teams in the rural context. It is expected to increase coverage from the current 3.21% to 5% in 2029. Castilla y León has implemented mobile teams at the outpatient or home level to carry out the "Early Care Programme in the Rural Area" that is implemented through agreements with collaborating non-profit entities.
- Financial aid. Some Autonomous Communities, such as La Rioja, grant financial aid to children aged 0 to 6 who are on the waiting list of the public early care system to guarantee universal access and achieve 100% coverage. In the Community of Madrid, these grants are given to children from 0 to 3 years old.
- Integration of Services and Inter-sectoral Coordination: Andalusia has implemented an early care model that integrates health, education, and social services.
- Positive parenting: several Autonomous Communities have developed programmes to promote positive parenting, including Aragon, the Community of Madrid, the Balearic Islands, and the Principality of Asturias. (https://observatoriodelainfanciadeasturias.es/programa-guia-para-el-desarrollo-de-competencias-emocionales-educativas-y-parentales-castrillon-2024/)

3.2. EDUCATION AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

- The early school drop-out rate (AET) in Spain maintains its downward trend, falling to 13.73% (ECV, 2023), although it remains strikingly high in the European context.
- This percentage also shows an important social gradient. The AET rate for the population living in poverty is 20.8 per cent, while for the population not living in poverty it is 9.5 per cent.
- The proportion of students who have almost never used a computer for schoolwork outside of school has decreased significantly (from 26.5% in 2018 to 7.8% in 2022, PISA), and the daily use of computers outside school has increased significantly (from 6.2% in 2018 to 25.5% in 2022), probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of students who have never used digital resources for school purposes has also decreased from 34% to 3.6%.
- 74% of people under the age of 16 regularly engage in leisure activities, such as playing sports or playing an instrument. 7% do not do so because they cannot afford it (ECV, 2021).
- The vast majority of children and adolescents in Spain have a suitable place to study or do their homework (92%), although 2% of households still cannot afford it (ECV, 2021).

Measures developed at state level

Measure 26. Increase public expenditure on education by at least 5% of GDP by 2030.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport
- Period: 2022
- Description: 4.71% of public spending on education over GDP 2023

Measure 27. Strengthen and develop the Regional Cooperation Programme for Educational Guidance, Progress and Enrichment (Programa de Cooperación Territorial de Orientación, Avance y Enriquecimiento educativo - PROA+ Programme) in schools of particular educational complexity, as well as other additional resources and activities for these schools.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2023.
- Relevant data:
 - Number of students or educational establishments that are beneficiaries of PROA+ as of 2023: 3,600 schools and colleges, 1,000,000 students.
 - Spending on PROA+: In 2023: 120 million Euros.
- Description: The PROA+ programme aims to offer support and guidance to students in situations of educational vulnerability and reduce school dropout rates and early school leaving. The investment is part of Component 21 of the RTRP: Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including pre-school education (0- 3 years). The PROA+ programme provides resources to schools with special educational complexity, including those located in rural areas or with a significant number of students in a situation of educational vulnerability, so that they can tailor the school's educational project to the needs of the students.
- Total funding for the period 2021-2024: 360 million euros, of which 320 million come from the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism and 40 million from the General State Budget.

Measure 28. Set up units to provide personal and family support and guidance (UAO) to vulnerable pupils as part of educational or psycho-educational services in school areas and districts.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data:
 - Number of units to provide personal and family support and guidance created by 2023: 1,139
 - Expenditure on PROA+ in 2023: €55 million (Amount distributed to the Personal Support and Guidance Units)

- Description: The Regional Cooperation Programme of Personal and Family Support and Guidance Units accompanies the educational trajectories of the most vulnerable students in an area or sector to prevent dropouts and promote their learning and school success. It is implemented from primary education to the end of compulsory and post-compulsory secondary education in schools supported by public funds. These units complement the actions of PROA+ or other programmes that exist in the area specifically aimed at promoting the academic success of students in situations of educational vulnerability.
- The European Union funds the programme Next Generation EU within Component 21:
 Modernisation and digitalisation of the RTRP education system.

Measure 30. Reduce the indirect costs of compulsory education, with universal and incremental measures, to guarantee access to text books and learning materials.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2023.
- Key data: in 2023, a total of 58,559,610.00 euros was distributed to the Autonomous Communities for the implementation of the programme.
- Description: The <u>purpose of this programme</u> is to establish the necessary cooperation mechanisms between the Ministry and the Autonomous Communities to grant funding for textbooks and teaching materials to offset socio-economic disadvantages and support equity in education and equal rights and opportunities.

Measure 37. Reform the vocational training system, increasing the number of places, increasing the flexibility of training pathways and redesigning basic grade vocational training.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2018-2024
- Description: The Government of Spain has carried out a major transformation of the Vocational Education and Training system that began in 2018 and ended in 2024.8. From the 2024-2025 academic year, all Vocational Education and Training will be dual in the first year of the Intermediate and Higher-Level training cycles, as well as in the Vocational Education and Training master's degrees that include internships. Students will be trained at the school or college and in the company from the first year of training. In

⁸ The regulations governing the reform of the Vocational Education and Training system are based on the following statutes:

[·] Organic Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training.

Royal Decree 498/2024, of 21 May, amending certain royal decrees establishing basic Vocational Education and Training qualifications and setting their minimum educational content.

Royal Decree 499/2024, of 21 May, amending certain royal decrees establishing intermediate level Vocational Education
and Training qualifications and setting their minimum educational content.

[•] Royal Decree 500/2024, of 21 May, amending certain royal decrees establishing higher level Vocational Education and Training qualifications and setting their minimum educational content.

Royal Decree 497/2024, of 21 May, amending certain royal decrees establishing, within the sphere of Vocational Education and Training, specialisation courses at intermediate and higher level and setting their minimum educational content.

addition, the programme to resize the Vocational Education and Training offer has been launched, a measure included in the Strategic Plan to promote Vocational Education and Training that aims to increase the Vocational Education and Training provision by more than 300,000 new places. More than 230,000 new places have already been funded.

Measure 39. Establish a wide-ranging educational leisure programme for digital skills training, aimed at vulnerable children (Children's Digital Skills Programme) (Programa Competencias Digitales Para la Infancia)-(CODI).

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Youth and Children
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data: Resources allocated to implementing the CODI programme:
- Description: The CODI programme is part of Component 19 of the RTRP. It aims to guarantee digital inclusion through training in digital competencies. It takes place during non-school hours and periods, integrated into extracurricular activities or during the summer period and prioritises children and adolescents who are in a situation of poverty or social exclusion or other situations of vulnerability included in the National ECG Plan. The CODI programme offers training in digital competencies to 950,000 children and adolescents through two schemes: basic digital competencies to children between 10 and 13 years old; and advanced digital competencies for adolescents between 14 and 17. For the monitoring of the project and pedagogical support of the implementers, a training portal was created that provides service throughout the region. In December 2022, €50 million was distributed to the Autonomous Communities to train 217,391 children and adolescents with the CODI programme. In December 2023, €97 million was distributed to Third Sector entities to train children and adolescents in digital competencies with the CODI programme.

Measure 40. Provide portable devices and connectivity to reduce the digital access divide affecting vulnerable pupils with regard to in-person, remote and hybrid learning.

- Name: Regional Cooperation Programme for the Digitalisation of the PCT Education Ecosystem #EcoDigEdu
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data: The budgetary commitment for this action is €839,947,000. It is currently underway.
- Description: As part of the implementation of Component 19.l2 that refers to the digital transformation of education, the provision of portable devices and connectivity is included to reduce the digital divide that affects students from vulnerable groups at least 300,000 students in state-funded schools. In addition, it includes the installation and maintenance of interactive digital systems in educational establishments -240,240 classrooms in state-funded schools.

Measure 41. Implement the programme to improve the digital skills of teachers, in order to develop the digital skills of pupils.

Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport.

Period: 2023

Relevant data:

• Number of teachers trained: 700,727.

• Number of teachers accredited: 438,158.

• Expenditure: €175,387,605.73

- Description: The "Improvement Plan for Educational Digital Competence #CompDigEdu" is a measure referring to Investment 2 "Digital Transformation of Education", which is part of Component 19 of the RTRP Mechanism, called the National Digital Competence Plan, whose general objectives are to guarantee the acquisition of digital competences by teachers and students at all levels of the education system.

This programme contributes to the fulfilment of milestones 289; approval of the programme aimed at equipping a minimum of 240,000 classrooms, training 700,000 teachers and preparing or revising the digital strategy for at least 22,000 state or state-funded schools, and equipping state or state-funded schools with 300,000 connected digital devices, laptops or tablets, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, and to milestone 290; carrying out actions for the digital transformation of education through the certification of the digital competences of at least 80% of 700,000 teachers and the development and review of the Digital School Plans of at least 22,000 schools.

Measure 42. Install and update interactive digital systems in all classrooms of state schools and state-funded but privately run schools with socio-economically vulnerable pupils.

- Name: Regional Cooperation Programme for the Digitalisation of the PCT Education Ecosystem #EcoDigEdu
- Educational Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport
- Period: 2021-2025
- Relevant data: Budgeted amount: €821,000,000
- Description: The Regional Cooperation Programme (PCT) for the Digitalisation of the #EcoDigEdu Educational Ecosystem and the actions it includes are part of the Plan for Digitalisation and Digital Competences of the Education System (#DigEdu). Its objective is to forge ahead with and improve the digitalisation of education, implement mechanisms and processes necessary to generalise and facilitate access to appropriate digital media for carrying out educational activity for teachers and students in schools.

Measure 43. Implement the social Internet access subscription for children belonging to certain groups with special social or financial needs.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism
- Period: 2021-2023
- Relevant data: The UNICO-Social Bonus programme has a total endowment of €24,750,000 for the entire period, with which 103,125 vouchers have been funded.
- Description: The Programme for the Universalisation of Digital Infrastructures for Cohesion (UNICO) is to extend the coverage of broadband access networks at 100 Mbps, to reach 100% of the Spanish population by 2025. It is part of component 15 of the RTRP, investment C15. I3 "Digital bonds for SMEs and vulnerable groups", which provides for the financing of investments and expenses derived from the broadband connection of vulnerable groups. The UNICO programme serves as a framework for several calls, including the UNICO-Social Bonus programme, a voucher that allows one to contract or improve a fixed broadband connection, with a minimum speed of 30 Mbps, for people or families identified as vulnerable. It prioritises children and adolescents who are in a situation of poverty or social exclusion or other situations of vulnerability included in the National ECG Plan. It is managed by each Autonomous Community.

Measure 53. Promote free sports, leisure, educational and cultural activities for vulnerable children and teenagers through vouchers, discounts, membership fee exemptions or open activities.

- Name: The VECA Programme (School Holidays, Continue Learning)
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2022.
- Relevant data: 67 projects, with a total of 56,968 families served and 90,614 children's beneficiaries.
- Description: The VECA programme is a specific programme to guarantee the basic right to food, leisure and culture of children and adolescents during the school holidays and the balancing of family life and work, aimed mainly at the care of children and adolescents in disadvantaged or vulnerable families. The VECA programme serves as a financing instrument so that the Autonomous Communities can provide resources for educational leisure programmes in order to guarantee the participation of children and adolescents in situations of greater vulnerability.

Measures developed at the Autonomous-Community level

The Autonomous Communities carry out various actions aligned with the objectives of the National ECG Plan that seek to reduce educational inequality, facilitate access to extracurricular activities and educational leisure or free time for all children, end the digital divide and provide suitable care for those children in situations of special vulnerability. These measures seek to ensure that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, have access to quality

education and resources that promote their integral development. Below are some of the actions implemented at the regional level in this area.

- Scholarships and study grants for students in situations of socio-educational vulnerability. Catalonia offers scholarships for students in post-compulsory education applying academic criteria and means testing. Castilla La Mancha has scholarships for the transport of students enrolled in non-compulsory secondary education for students in vulnerable situations and who reside in rural or isolated areas. Andalusia has the Beca 6000 programme for students from low-income families who finish compulsory education to support the continuation of studies and prevent school dropout. The scholarship complements the general scholarship of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Education and Training and Sports with up to €6,000 per year, depending on income and household size. Navarre also offers a scholarship that complements that of the aforementioned Ministry, without a specific amount, which provides funding for various items such as tuition, residence, transport, and canteen. In addition, it includes special aid for families with serious financial needs.
- Introduce community programmes to promote positive parenting by providing support and guidance for families throughout their children's development. Several Autonomous Communities such as the Regional Government of Extremadura or the Balearic Islands develop positive parenting and family skills programmes, which aim to provide support, training, and socio-community integration activities for guardians, foster carers or parents with minors in their care at different developmental stages.
- Educational support and reinforcement programmes during extracurricular hours: the Autonomous Communities implement the PROA+ programme, described above. In addition, many Autonomous Communities have deployed programmes aimed at increasing educational equity in extracurricular hours. For example, the I+I Programme of the Community of Madrid, which carries out educational reinforcement actions aimed at vulnerable students, including Roma, with the aim of reducing the rate of early school leaving from education and inequalities in children's access to extracurricular activities of educational leisure and sport. Another example is the Spaces for Work/Life Balance and Support for minors at risk of poverty or exclusion of the Regional Government of Extremadura, endowed with €60,000 from the Regional Government, which increases and improves the offering of educational, cultural, leisure and recreational activities, in the local community and designed with a gender perspective, guaranteeing their accessibility and aimed at children and adolescents assigned to reception centres.
- Increase and improvement of the offering of educational, cultural, leisure and recreational activities: the Autonomous Communities implement the VECA programme, of the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda, described above. In addition, initiatives such as those of Catalonia stand out, which offers grants to federations and movements of leisure education entities to reduce or eliminate the cost of these activities.

Catalonia also has the Temps per Cures [Time for Healing] programme, which guarantees care services outside school hours. It is aimed at children and adolescents from 0 to 16 years old. To benefit those families and women in situations of poverty and social exclusion, services can be completely free, and universal access will be promoted. In Andalusia, state schools that teach the second cycle of infant education, primary education and secondary education will be able to keep their facilities open until 6:00 p.m. in order to provide support and reinforcement activities, aimed at students who have learning difficulties, and offer extracurricular activities. The Balearic Islands financially supports leisure activities and babysitting services, which make it possible to balance family life and work for the most vulnerable families in the municipality and calls for grants for the organisation of education activities in children's and young people's free time carried out by local entities and associations of student families to facilitate the work/life balance during the school holidays. The Community of Madrid carries out the "Educational leisure programme to improve the social and personal skills as well as the digital competences of children and adolescents.

- Summer educational and leisure activities. Since the 2021/2022 school year, Andalusia has implemented measures aimed at students in state-run schools or state-funded schools who need educational reinforcement in areas/subjects of an instrumental nature or the development of competences and skills, as well as the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits through recreational-sports activities. Catalonia offers a line of scholarships L'estiu és teu! [Summer is yours!] which allows children and adolescents at risk of social exclusion to have the opportunity to participate in educational leisure camps.
- Develop programmes and initiatives aimed at educational continuity and success for Roma children. Many Autonomous Communities offer educational support programmes for Roma students, including Andalusia, Galicia, Murcia, Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla - La Mancha, among others. The Kumpania Programme, run by the Valencian Community Autonomous Regional Government, is a socio-educational service specialising in Roma children, adolescents and young people and their family environment, to intervene in structural, situational, and cultural factors that affect them. The initiative contributes to increasing schooling in primary education and compulsory secondary education (ESO); to graduate from ESO and to promote the continuation and access to post-compulsory education. In 2021, the service was expanded from 12 to 28 programmes. The funding of the programme in 2022 was €8.8 million, of which €4.7 million came from EU funds. Another experience is the "Social intervention programme with Roma children and young people in Extremadura", a socio-educational care resource aimed at Roma children and young people between the ages of 0 and 16 with socio-educational needs related to early schooling, absenteeism, dropping out and school early leaving. It aims to prevent and combat dropping out and leaving school early among Roma children and young people, working specifically with them and their families.

- Develop programmes and initiatives aimed at educational continuity and success for groups of especially vulnerable children. All the Autonomous Communities have programmes and measures aimed at students with specific educational support needs, for example, Castile-La Mancha and Catalonia, which offer aid for students with specific educational support needs with the aim of guaranteeing the equality of all people in exercising the right to education. The Canary Islands also developed support measures aimed at students with specific educational support needs for the 2022-2023 academic year with a budget of €2,600,000, the "Estela Programme" to facilitate the educational transition of students between the stages of Pre-School, Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education, in order to prevent absenteeism and early school leaving, improve their academic performance and reduce inequality of opportunities, as well as the "Service for access to education for students with diverse vulnerabilities", whose aim is to guarantee the right of all students to education. Within an inclusive school model, educational care services are offered to these students through the Canary Islands Online Education Centre (hereinafter Canary Islands CEL) or home educational care, to guarantee the right and access to education for students with chronic illnesses (€1,246,000).
- Measures for adolescent young offenders: in the Region of Murcia all detention centres for young offenders have an extension of secondary schools that guarantee full access to education for boys and girls.
- Measures for displaced children from Ukraine: Catalonia has launched the "Time for Care Ukraine" programme that includes childcare services for displaced children, from 0 to 16 years old, and training in leisure monitors and the work placement of Ukrainian women.

3.3. HEALTHY MEAL EACH SCHOOL DAY

- 2,098,203 children and adolescents who use school canteens, from pre-school to post-compulsory secondary education.⁹
- In families with higher incomes, daily attendance at the canteen is 50% and in families with lower incomes, the figure is 36%.¹⁰
- 6.9% of children and adolescents could not afford a meal of meat, poultry, fish, or their vegetarian equivalents at least every other day (ECV. (2023)

Measures implemented at national level

Measure 61. Improve implementation of the school fruit, vegetable, and milk scheme.

⁹ In Catalonia, information is not available on the canteen service for schools that teach Early Childhood Education (exclusively). Facts and figures of education in Spain. Statistics and indicators: Version 2024 Academic year 2021- 2022. G.S. for Statistics and Studies of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Education and Training and Sport.

¹⁰ Educo (2022) El comedor escolar en España: la visión de las familias (The school canteen in Spain: the vision of families).

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport and the Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition, assigned to the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2023.
- Relevant data:
 - In the 2022-2023 academic year, 1,985,686 boys and girls participated in the School Programme.
 - The total amount of aid for the 2022-2023 school year was €14,677,249 (of which €14,401,220 was EU funds, and the rest of the funds were provided by the Autonomous Communities).
- Description: The EU School Programme for the Consumption of Fruit, Vegetables and Milk finances the distribution of these products, as well as accompanying educational measures and costs of advertising, monitoring, and evaluation of the programme. In addition, during these years the draft Royal Decree establishing rules for the implementation of articles 40 and 41 of Law 17/2011, of 5 July, on Food Safety and Nutrition, for the promotion of healthy and sustainable food in educational centres, has been promoted.

Measures implemented at the Autonomous-Community level

- Specific programmes for vulnerable students: The Autonomous Communities have implemented specific programmes that guarantee that students at risk of poverty or exclusion receive free or subsidised meals in school canteens. Although the Basque Country is the only Autonomous Community in Spain that offers school canteens to all students in poverty¹¹, many Autonomous Communities have focused their efforts on ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, have free and effective access to a healthy meal per school day. For example, Catalonia offers individual grants for school canteens that gives children in poverty free access to a healthy meal a day at school. The regional government of the Valencian Community has focused on ensuring equitable access to school canteens, particularly for students from vulnerable families. Extremadura implements food support programmes for primary and secondary school students, especially those at risk of early school leaving. Madrid has increased funding for canteen grants in early childhood education.
- Promotion of Healthy Habits and Nutritional Education. The Autonomous Communities
 have also promoted educational programmes within schools that stress the importance
 of healthy eating. The Community of Navarre has published support material as a
 measure to accompany the "Fruit and vegetable distribution programme" aimed at

¹¹ Ferrer Blanco A. y Sanz Mali, J. (2022) Garantizar comedor escolar sano y gratuito a toda la infancia en riesgo de pobreza [Guarantee free and healthy school meals for all children at risk of poverty]. Save The Children Spain.

- students in the second cycle of infant education and in areas of greater obesity, also aimed at students in the 1st and 2nd year of primary education.
- Integration of School Meals in Public Health Policies. Some Autonomous Communities have aligned their school feeding programmes with national or European strategies to combat childhood obesity and other food-related conditions. For example, Andalusia has implemented a Strategy for the promotion of a healthy life that includes access to suitable food within schools. It has aligned its school canteen programme with public health strategies to combat childhood obesity, encouraging menus low in sugars and saturated fats. The Healthy School Dining Rooms project is part of a plan of Initiatives for Healthy Eating in the Basque Country, which includes actions in different fields to improve the health of the population through improvements in their diet.

3.4. HEALTH

- The latest available data shows that 6.7% of families with children under 16 years of age could not access dental care despite needing it.
- One in three households in this situation points to financial reasons as the main cause.
- In Spain, children's oral health has an unequal provision from region to region, which translates into inequalities in children's oral health levels.

Measures implemented at national level

Measure 54. Extend the list of common National Health System services with regard to the dental health of children and young people.

- Name: The Government of Spain's oral health plan
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Health
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data:
 - In 2022, the oral health plan with a budget allocation of 44 million euros was approved
 - In 2023, a transfer of 68 million euros was made to the Autonomous Communities to improve prevention, expand the beneficiary groups, the personnel who care for them and the equipment.
- Description: the Plan aims to standardise oral care services in the national territory, guaranteeing equity in access regardless of place of residence and increasing common services. Among the groups that receive special attention is the child and adolescent population.

Measure 57. Strengthen and expand mental health services for children and teenagers, increasing the staff of psychologists and psychiatrists working with children and young people, as part of the Mental Health Strategy Action Plan.

- Name: Mental Health Action Plan 2022-2024
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Health [Ministerio de Sanidad]
- Period: 2023
- Relevant data: The plan is co-funded by the Autonomous Communities and the Ministry of Health and has a budget of 100 million euros, which comes out of the General State Budget.
- Description: The Ministry of Health has implemented the "Mental Health Strategy and the Mental Health Action Plan 2022-2024" which includes measures such as the creation of the 024 helpline to offer professional care and support for suicidal behaviour, the creation of the specialty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and actions to prioritise the implementation of addiction prevention programmes.
- A key development is the creation of a "Mental Health Commission" in December 2023, a governing body of the Ministry of Health that is responsible for developing and coordinating the strategic lines in mental health of the Government of Spain and promoting a State Mental Health Pact.

Measures implemented at the Autonomous Community level

- Oral health. Initiatives such as the incorporation of dental hygienists in primary and community care, which Catalonia has implemented since 2022, stand out. The service is intended for children up to 14 years of age, children and adolescents in care, children, and adolescents in educational or therapeutic centres dependent on the department responsible for criminal law enforcement and justice for young offenders. One of the most outstanding programmes in Spain is that of Navarre: The Children's Dental Care Programme (PADI), which aims to improve the oral health of the child population. The PADI guarantees free preventive and basic care actions to the population residing in Navarre from 6 to 15 years of age, improving equity in access to common levels of dental care.
- Mental health. There is a major EU project: "Promotion of emotional well-being, prevention and care for mental health problems in children and adolescents of the Andalusian protection system", funded by the EU and implemented by UNICEF ECARO. The aim is to improve the provision of mental health and emotional well-being services for children and adolescents and will be carried out in Andalusia, Cyprus, Italy, and Slovenia from 2024 to 2026. Also noteworthy is Catalonia's initiative to incorporate family therapies in the care of the serious risk of children and adolescents to resolve dysfunctional family dysfunctions, deal with life crises and strengthen relationships to prevent situations of helplessness. Finally, Navarre has increased the staffing of child and adolescent psychologists and psychiatrists, as part of the Action Plan of the Mental Health Strategy.
- Health promotion. Aragon has launched the Health Promotion Programme, designed specifically for schools. It aims to provide teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge to promote a healthy and safe environment in the school environment. The

Community of Madrid also implements community programmes to promote positive parenting and to disseminate information about healthy lifestyles. In 2023, Murcia launched the ARCO Project educational-therapeutic accompaniment in the child and adolescent population with mental disorders, aimed at children up to 16 years of age attended in the mental health network who present other situations such as school absenteeism and/or social maladjustment.

- Pharmacological co-payments. Some Autonomous Communities such as Navarre have established bonuses or social aid for health treatments and medicines for households with vulnerable children and adolescents.
- Improvement of the state of health and quality of life of the Roma population. Cantabria has deployed a set of actions aimed at prevention and the promotion of the health of the Roma population of Cantabria. Funding in 2022 was €235 thousand, of which more than €16 thousand came from social entities.

3.5. HEALTHY NUTRITION

- Between 2019 and 2023, there has been a 4.5 percentage point decrease in excess weight among schoolchildren in Spain 3.1 points less in overweight and 1.4 points in obesity according to data from the ALADINO 2023 Study¹² on diet, physical activity, child development and obesity in Spain, as part of the Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative of the Office for the European Region of the World Health Organisation.
- These data indicate a major social gradient. 23.6% of children in disadvantaged households are obese, more than twice as many as those who live in high-income neighbourhoods. 46.7% of children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are overweight (combining the figures of children who are obese with those who are overweight) at a great distance from the figure of 29.2% of those who live in high-income neighbourhoods.
- In the dimension of healthy nutrition, the ALADINO study warns that the percentage of schoolchildren who eat breakfast daily is 17 percentage points lower in the case of families with lower incomes (61%) compared with those with high incomes (78%). Among children in disadvantaged households, there is a lower daily consumption of fruit and vegetables and a higher consumption of sugary soft drinks more than 3 days a week.
- The higher prevalence of excess weight among children from disadvantaged backgrounds has remained stable in recent editions of the Aladino study, which warns of the danger of chronification of excess weight among low-income children.

¹² Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (2023) ALADINO 2023 Study on Diet, Physical Activity, Child Development and Obesity, https://www.aesan.gob.es/AECOSAN/docs/documentos/nutricion/ALADINO_AESAN.pdf

Measures implemented at national level

Although it was not a measure included in the National ECG Plan, it is necessary to highlight the approval of the <u>National Strategic Plan for the Reduction of Childhood Obesity (2022 - 2030)</u> in June 2022, which sets a goal for 2030 to reduce excess weight in childhood by 25%, reducing, in addition, the associated social gap by 40%.

Measure 62. Set up healthy eating access programmes for vulnerable families.

- Name: Basic Material Assistance Programme (BASIC Programme) of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).
- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2024.
- Relevant data: The budget allocated in 2024 is in the amount of €95,463,403.33.
- Description: This programme aims to implement specific objective m) of the European Pillar of Social Rights through the provision of wallet cards to families with dependent children with incomes of less than 40% of the national income. The cards are topped up with a different monthly amount depending on the number of family members: the minimum is €130 per month for families of two; and the maximum is €220/month for families of five or more members; the money must be used to purchase food and/or products considered to be of basic material assistance.

Measure 64. Carry out awareness-raising and outreach measures on healthy lifestyles (e.g. food and nutrition, physical activity, well-being, and sleep) for families with children and teenagers.

- Name: Health-Promoting Schools.
- Responsible Ministries: The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports is promoting the model of Health-Promoting Schools, as a place to comprehensively address health and promote a healthy and safe physical and socio-emotional environment. It is implemented through intersectoral work and with the Autonomous Communities and includes, among others, the publication of the Guide to Health-Promoting Schools, online training, and the promotion of a Network of Health-Promoting Schools.

Measures developed at Autonomous-Community

• With regard to childhood obesity, Catalonia is developing the pilot project initiative 'Prevention and Care for Childhood Obesity' in the neighbourhood of La Mina. It aims to improve the lifestyles of children and reduce the prevalence of overweight through a comprehensive approach to health, promote the autonomy and responsibility of students in the management of their own health (personal, relational, environmental, and social dimensions) with a focus on health promotion. Catalonia has also implemented FITjove, a programme to promote physical exercise in adolescence, which uses physical activity

- to prevent drug use among adolescents in at-risk areas. FITjove is aimed at students from schools in problematic neighbourhoods in several municipalities.
- In 2022, the Region of Murcia implemented a project aimed at treating childhood obesity based on the 'Kids in Motion' Programme, conducted at the Vall D'Hebron hospital. A group of health professionals were trained with a team of experts in aspects such as diet, physical activity, sedentary lifestyle, bullying, self-esteem, food labels and body image. The project served 50 children between the ages of 9 and 11 and their families who acquired, through games, experiences and peer learning, healthy and sustainable lifestyle habits in the long term.
- Castilla La Mancha has the 'Regional Family Classrooms Programme' that develops preventive workshops in which healthy eating in childhood is addressed, emphasising strategies and skills to promote and instil healthy family diet management habits. As part of the "Regional Family Classrooms Programme", they have the "Learning Together, Growing in Family Programme" through which they work on the promotion and training, based on the Positive Parenting Paradigm, of healthy habits and nutritional education.
 - Also in the "Regional Programme of Day Centres for Child and Family Care of Castile-La Mancha" work is done to promote healthy and nutritional habits.

3.6. ADEQUATE HOUSING

- 1.5% of children and adolescents under 18 years of age do not have a fixed room in which they sleep in their own bed.
 - In 46.9% of cases it is due to the fact that the household cannot afford it.
- The number of children and adolescents under the age of 18 whose households cannot afford heating at a suitable temperature during the winter months has increased in recent years. In 2021 12.9% were in this situation, in 2022 it was 16% and in 2023, 20%.
- The number of children and adolescents under 18 years of age whose households benefited from a social allowance to meet the costs of electricity, heating, gas, etc., has increased. In 2021, households accounted for 13.7% of those under 18 years of age, in 2022 the percentage increased to 16.7% and in 2023 to 17.6%.
- In relation to the financial burden due to housing expenditure, 11.1% of children and adolescents under 18 years of age live in families that spend more than 40% of their income on this.

Housing is a constitutional right that Spain has sought to strengthen with the Law 12/2023, of 24 May, on the Right to Housing, whose main objective is to ensure decent housing for all citizens. The law does not propose specific measures to address the right to suitable housing for children and adolescents, but they are prioritised as a group meriting special attention, such as in situations of economic vulnerability or the calculation of rent that is carried out in eviction proceedings.

Measures developed at state level

Measure 65. Promote fostering through advertising campaigns, support for foster families, developing the specialist, full-time role of fostering, and simplifying procedures.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2023.
- Relevant data: In 2023, there were 18,177 children in foster care, 907 of whom were children with disabilities.
- Description: The campaigns are carried out at the autonomous regional level. The
 Ministry, through the PRTR funds has funded 8 pilot projects, of which 2 are specific to
 increase foster care. During the execution of these projects, 2 advertising campaigns
 were funded, as well as a short film called 24/7 and a travelling exhibition.
- The Directorate-General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (previously part the Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda) has contracted assistance to carry out a study that analyses the situation of foster care in all regions, identifying conceptual frameworks, resistances, and possible opportunities. The study aims to be a basis for generating a flexible system between government agencies to improve the recruitment of foster families. The budget for technical assistance is €69,950.

Measure 66. Transform children's homes and update care system intervention models to fully repair the damage caused to children in the care system and move towards an individual-centred care model that guarantees the rights and promotes the independence of the children and teenagers in care.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Period: 2024 2030.
- Key data/indicators: the National Strategy is recent (2024), so data are not yet available.
- Description: As of 2022, 8 innovative projects to reduce the institutionalisation of children were funded with a budget of 30 million euros. The learnings from these projects have been shared on a joint platform "Plataforma Vida" with the aim of turning experiences into public policies, especially at the regional and local level.

In 2022 a migration contingency management model was approved that allows the protection system to be strengthened to care for unaccompanied migrant children and to develop response plans that allow children to be relocated to other regions of the country. To date, some 1,097 transfers of minors have been approved with an annual budget of 35 million euros per year (2022, 2023 and 2024).

In June 2024, the first "National strategy for a new model of care in the community" was approved, which will be the roadmap for government agencies to improve the protection system, especially for those children in residential centres.

Measure 67. Improve information systems and strengthen the interoperability of primary care social services and the public bodies dealing with child protection, in order to ensure better follow-up of at-risk children, including impact and longitudinal indicators.

- Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda.
- Description: In accordance with the provisions of Article 44 of Organic Law 8/2021, of 4 June, on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence (LOPIVI), primary care social services must establish a system for monitoring and recording cases of violence against children and adolescents, including the notifications and communications received. The confirmed cases and the measures put in place in relation to the intervention of these social services. Statistical information on cases of violence against children and adolescents from primary care social services, together with information from the public child protection entity, shall be added to the Unified Register of Child Abuse referred to in Article 22 ter of Organic Law 1/1996. of 15 January, which is renamed the Unified Register of Social Services on Violence against Children (hereinafter RUSSVI).

The RUSSVI (still under development) will record all situations of violence or suspicion of violence against children and adolescents that come to the attention of the Children's Social Services - both SSAP (Primary Care Social Services) and EPPI (Public Child Protection Entity) - whether they occur within or outside the family environment. All reports of violence will be recorded, regardless of whether some of them are dismissed after the initial evaluation of SSAPs or PPEs. When the notifications are confirmed and constitute grounds for a declaration of risk or lack of protection, the recording of each case, its evaluation and the proposed intervention measures will be completed.

Measures developed at the Autonomous-Community level

- Funding to promote foster care: in 2023, Extremadura announced grants for foster care for the 2024 financial year for an amount of €2,700,000.00. This measure is intended for foster families, on a universal basis, who attend to the needs related to the exercise of guardianship and grants for fostering. The ultimate target group will be children and adolescents in foster care. It has also developed the Collaborating Families Programme. The target group is children and adolescents who reside in a reception centre, and for whom families are sought as an alternative to this residential care during vacations or public holidays. Castile-La Mancha has developed a training project in therapeutic parenting aimed at providing residential care, foster care and post-adoption professionals with tools that allow them to cope with the specific challenges involved in raising children and adolescents with experiences of traumatic stress.
- Measures of the child and adolescent protection system: residential care measures
 for children and adolescents who cannot remain in their homes. Programmes such as
 those in the Community of Madrid and the Principality of Asturias are carried out, in which
 families are sought for foster care as an alternative to residential care during the school
 year, weekends, vacations or public holidays, depending on the project. Along the same

lines, the Role Models Framework Programme is being implemented in Castile-La Mancha, which in its line of "Family outings" is aimed at children and adolescents who, being under a residential care measure, do not have weekend outings or holidays with their families of origin on a permanent basis and, in general, lack adult role models with whom to relate outside the foster home. It offers the possibility of living with a family during school breaks, as well as maintaining a relationship of communication and mentoring at other times, based on community support through volunteering. Castile-La Mancha is also running the training project "Beyond protection: Therapeutic parenting in the Child Care Service" aimed at providing residential care, foster care and post-adoption professionals with tools that allow them to face the specific challenges involved in raising children and adolescents with experiences of traumatic stress. Cantabria has met the target by 2025 of not having any child under 6 years of age in the protection system in a residential facility.

In the Region of Murcia, the "Experimental Continu-Action Programme for the care of young people who have been released from guardianship" has been developed as this is a sector of the vulnerable population at risk of exclusion as homeless people.

- Housing solution for vulnerable families: housing with affordable rents for families with unfit housing (slums) or difficulties in paying rent. Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, and the Region of Murcia have promoted measures of this type.
- Rent allowances and aid for other basic needs: there are several Autonomous
 Communities that give cash transfers to families in vulnerable situations with children and
 adolescents in their care to be used for rent or other basic needs.

3.7. PROTECTION OF ALL FAMILIES, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THOSE IN A SITUATION OF SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY

In terms of Social Security benefits aimed at protecting the family, the policy of promoting work-life balance, and the guarantee of a minimum subsistence to protect against the risk of poverty and social exclusion, Royal Decree-Law 6/2019, of 1 March, on urgent measures to guarantee equal treatment and opportunities between women and men in employment and occupation, consolidated maternity and paternity benefits and leave in the benefit for birth and care of minors.

Since 1 January 2021, the benefit for the birth and care of a child, in the event of childbirth and in the case of adoption, foster care or guardianship for the purpose of adoption of children under 6 years of age, has a duration of 16 weeks for each parent. In cases of premature birth and those cases in which the newborn must remain hospitalised after the birth, for a period of more than seven days, the benefit may be extended by as many days as the newborn is hospitalised, with a maximum of thirteen additional weeks.

In recent years, a series of initiatives have been deployed that are not framed in the services of the GIE, but are in axes 1 and 3 of the National ECG Plan:

- Strategic axis 1. The fight against poverty and strengthening social protection for children
 and adolescents, which seeks to reduce poverty and social exclusion of children,
 increase the capacity to reduce severe child poverty, increase the coverage and efficiency
 of aid, prevent the exclusion of any child or adolescent from social protection against
 poverty and increase investment in families and children.
- and Cross-cutting axis 3. Promotion of Regional equity, protective, inclusive, egalitarian
 and participatory environments, which includes measures aimed at priority groups such
 as foreign children, especially those without family role models or with parents in an
 irregular official situation, Roma children, children in the protection system, asylum
 seekers or international protection, people under temporary protection from Ukraine and
 refugees and victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation.

Within this framework, there have been some particularly outstanding experiences, such as the pilot programmes run by the <u>Inclusion Policy Laboratory</u> carried out by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, which have made it possible to promote initiatives to fight poverty in several dimensions such as education, digitalisation, employment, social support and health. 32 pilot projects have been carried out for the deployment of inclusion pathways linked to the Minimum Living Income (IMV, in its initials in Spanish), financed with the RTRP, in alliance with Autonomous Communities, local entities and third sector entities. Some of these projects that have been aimed at children and adolescents are:

- 1. Regional Government of Galicia [Xunta de Galicia]: aimed at families with dependent children, beneficiaries of the IMV or the Galician Social Inclusion Income in urban areas of Galicia. 10,533 minors have participated.
- 2. Regional Government of Andalusia [Junta de Andalucía]: aimed at families with dependent children, in a situation of vulnerability or social exclusion and/or with a case file in the community social services, recipients of the IMV or the Minimum Income for Social Integration, and in which the students have a significant degree of school absenteeism. 3,739 minors have participated in the project.
- 3. Government of Navarre-Education [Gobierno de Navarra-Educación]: aimed at students in the Years 5 and 6 of Primary and Years 1 and 2 of ESO (from 10 to 14 years old) from vulnerable backgrounds. A total of 1,344 students have participated.
- 4. Seville City Council: aimed at students from 6 to 16 years old, absent or at risk of absenteeism and their families in the areas of social transformation of the municipality of Seville. 637 children and adolescents took part in the project.
- 5. *Madrid City Council:* aimed at families in situations of social vulnerability with 8-year-old children. In total, 2,470 minors have participated.
- 6. Roma Foundation [Fundación Secretariado Gitano]: aimed at Roma and non-Roma students, studying compulsory educational stages, as well as their families. 538 students participated.
- 7. Save the Children: aimed at families with dependent children, beneficiaries of the IMV and/or Minimum Income, or in a situation of economic vulnerability. A total of 1,741

- people under 18 years of age participated (of whom 1,213 were children up to 12 years of age and 528 were adolescents).
- 8. Bofill Foundation [Fundació Bofill]: aimed at students from 4th Primary to 3rd year of ESO from vulnerable environments in the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Andalusia, Ceuta, and Melilla. A total of 9,059 students were involved in the projects.
- 9. La Caixa Foundation [Fundación La Caixa], Early Childhood Support Project for families in vulnerable situations: aimed at families in vulnerable situations with children aged 0 to 3 years in 9 Autonomous Communities: Andalusia (Malaga and Seville), Aragon (Zaragoza), Canary Islands (Santa Cruz de Tenerife-San Cristobal de la Laguna and Las Palmas), Castile and Leon (Valladolid), Catalonia (Barcelona, Badalona and Sabadell), Valencia: (Valencia), Basque Country (Bilbao), Community of Madrid (Madrid and Leganés) and Region of Murcia (Beniaján and Lorca).
- 10. Esplai Foundation [Fundació Esplai]: aimed at students in Year 2 of Spanish Baccalaureate or Higher-Level Training Cycle in highly problematic schools, or with low percentages of access to university.
- 11. Ayuda en Acción: aimed at young people in environments of risk and social exclusion enrolled in state-run Vocational Education and Training centres. 5,727 students participated.
- 12. Other projects, not specifically aimed at children, were aimed at adults with dependent children, so they have also had an impact on children in vulnerable situations.
- 13. Regional Government of Castile-La Mancha [Junta de Castilla La Mancha]: aimed at women at risk or social exclusion, between 18 and 55 years of age with dependent children, and from households with unemployed people and recipients of the IMV, the Minimum Solidarity Income or are in social exclusion, and under the care of social services. 2,533 minors benefited indirectly. They also run more than twenty projects to support vulnerable families in topics such as guidance in the upbringing of minors with the support of volunteer families in protection and in leaving home processes (Role Models Programme), psycho educational support for child development in vulnerable families, mentoring in foster care, development of parental skills, support for post-adoption.
- 14. Regional Government of Extremadura [Junta de Extremadura]: aimed at women between 18 and 45 years of age, in receipt of the Guaranteed Extremadura Income and/or IMV and with dependent children, in urban and rural areas of Extremadura. A total of 851 women participated, the total number of children in their care is unknown.

Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and 2030 Agenda as part of the investments of component 22 of the RTRP's "Shock Plan for the Care Economy and Reinforcement of Inclusion Policies", it funded a total of 20 pilot projects in 2022 aimed at creating a new model of care and services integrated in the community, centred on the person. This initiative seeks to respond to the challenges related to the deinstitutionalisation of various population groups, such as people with disabilities, homelessness, children and adolescents, young people, and the elderly. Seven

of these projects focused on reducing the institutionalisation of children and adolescents, with a budget of 30 million euros. The projects and learnings have been shared on the platform "Plataforma VIDAS" with the aim of turning these experiences into public policies, especially at the regional and local level. The projects were as follows:

- 1. Child protection on the move. Save The Children Spain. The project addresses the special needs of migrant children without family role models. It seeks to systematise solutions in two moments of the most vulnerability: arrival at the coast and the identification of special needs at that time (trafficking, disability, protection needs, etc.) and street or traffic situations through a day centre. It has been implemented in Andalusia, the Canary Islands and Catalonia.
- 2. Childhood protection at the local level. UNICEF Spain. Its aim is to strengthen local entities in the prevention, detection, and intervention of risk situations in the face of violence against children from a children's rights approach. It has been implemented in Castile-La Mancha, Community of Madrid, Comunitat Valenciana.
- 3. Employment Awareness. Raices Foundation (Fundación Raíces) and Inuit Foundation (Inuit Fundación). Intervention and evaluation project to prevent the social exclusion of young people between 16 and 25 years of age without family protection in Spain and in a situation of vulnerability, with the aim of facilitating their social and labour integration. The project includes innovative elements, such as comprehensive support before reaching the age of majority, the participation of companies as agents of social change, the inclusion of families in the process, and personalised mentoring for each young person. It has been deployed in Andalusia, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Ceuta, Community of Madrid, Valencia, Galicia, La Rioja, Navarre, the Basque Country, and the Principality of Asturias.
- 4. PIPII Programme: Pere Tarrés Foundation (Fundación Pere Tarrés) and the State Coordinator of Salesian Social Platforms (Coordinadora Estatal de Plataformas Sociales Salesianas). The project aims to systematise the variables that contribute to reducing the possibilities of institutionalisation, as well as to generate and disseminate innovative pedagogical proposals that help to prevent it. It is implemented in Andalusia, Aragon, Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, Community of Madrid, Valencia, Galicia, Balearic Islands, La Rioja, Region of Murcia.
- 5. Pathways of Successful Emancipation. Federation of Entities with Assisted Projects and Apartments (Federación de Entidades con Proyectos y Pisos Asistidos) The objective is to create and consolidate a national and European reference model for the deinstitutionalisation and support of young people out of care, between 18 and 25 years of age. The project has two aspects: a preventive one to counter institutionalisation and make a safe transition to adult life. It has been developed in Andalusia, Aragon, the Canary Islands, Castile-La Mancha, Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, the Valencian Community, the Balearic Islands, and the Principality of Asturias.
- 6. Acoges+. Aldeas Infantiles SOS. An innovative foster care project, which seeks families for children and adolescents under the care of government agencies to offer them the

alternative of care from a family that provides them with a safe and stable home while they need it. It has been deployed in Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, Community of Madrid, Galicia.

7. SPECIALIST FOSTERING NETWORK [REDES AFE]. Agintzari, Resilis. Specialised foster care is aimed at children and adolescents under the guardianship or in the care of government agencies, with special needs or circumstances. It allows them to live in a family environment that contributes to repairing emotional damage, working on the difficulties of their previous history. Through the specialised help of the host family itself and the structured intervention carried out by the technical team, it is possible to develop an environment of help and reparation of the difficulties that arise, it has been developed in Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, Navarre, and the Basque Country.

It should also be noted that, both at the state and regional levels, progress has been made to improve the **financial protection of households with children and adolescents in their care**. At the national level with the increase in the amounts and improvement of the coverage of the Minimum Living Income and its Child Aid Supplement (CAPI). The IMV, regulated by <u>Law 19/2021</u>, of 20 December, establishes a monthly amount for each minor member of the cohabitation unit depending on age. The income and wealth thresholds to receive the CAPI are higher than those of the basic IMV, so its coverage is greater and reaches households with minors who, although they are not eligible to receive the basic IMV, do have low income and means. The amounts of both the IMV and the CAPI have been increased by 15% to counter the rise in inflation.

In addition, in 2023 the incentive for the use of the IMV came into force, regulated in <u>Royal Decree 789/2022</u>, which regulates the compatibility of the Minimum Living Income with income from work or self-employed economic activity.

Another core element of support for Children and Adolescents from the AGE is the implementation of programmes aimed at families and children, carried out by social entities of the third sector, funded by the tax allocation of Personal Income Tax.

Since 2019, the annual amounts for children's programmes presented by Social Entities, which are derived from the 0.7% call for grants, are as follows. The following biennial report will report on the amount funded in the 2023 and 2024 call:

2019	2020	2021	2022
€2,094,158.18	€1,768,160.84	€4,879,045.16	€4,376,321.59

The Autonomous Communities have also made efforts to improve the financial protection of children and adolescents, establishing complementary financial aid to the IMV, as in the case of Andalusia, Aragon, and the Region of Murcia, which in 2021 set up aid aimed at families with children born in multiple births or from multiple adoptions.

In addition, measures have been promoted for the protection of children in target groups, such as the Region of Murcia, which has introduced measures for the care of young offender adolescents, Aragon has developed a strategy for unaccompanied children and adolescent migrants. Catalonia has developed a programme of childcare services for children aged 0 to 16 displaced by the war in Ukraine.

Finally, it should be noted that all the Autonomous Communities are promoting initiatives for the deinstitutionalisation of children towards other models of care that guarantee safe and friendly spaces, they are promoting actions to increase and improve spaces for child participation, such as the Creation of the Observatory of Children and Adolescents of the Community of Madrid, and all of them are implementing measures to improve the protection and care of children and adolescents who are victims of violence. Along these lines, the implementation of the Barnahus model in Spain is especially significant, with ten centres in Catalonia in full operation and 13 Barnahus in the process of implementation, at a very advanced stage of initiation in Navarra, Community of Madrid, Comunitat Valenciana, Basque Country, Andalusia, and Cantabria

4. Indicators, objectives and monitoring

A set of indicators is envisaged in order to monitor the progress of the implementation of the National ECG Plan in Spain. These indicators, listed below, will be updated as far as possible in order to quantitatively show the progress of each target set.

In order to monitor the National ECG Plan, the Directorate-General for the Rights of Children and Adolescents of the Ministry of Youth and Children, in its role as Coordinator of the Child Guarantee, will be responsible for coordinating the monitoring and planning the publication of the biennial reports. The development of the biennial reports is fed by a process of consultation and participation of the various agents involved.

The evaluation of the degree of achievement of the objectives will be carried out through an interim evaluation in 2026 and a final evaluation in 2030, when the National ECG Plan is expected to be completed. The **interim evaluation in 2026** will be carried out by combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies that, based on the goals set, will report on the progress of the key indicators, and establish recommendations to strengthen the definition or implementation of policies in order to achieve them during the following years. The **final evaluation of the National ECG Plan in 2030** will take as a starting point the UNICEF diagnostic study, monitoring indicators, expenditure trends, biennial reports, and inputs from several actors, and will provide a perspective on the results and impact of the implementation of the National ECG Plan. This monitoring and evaluation process will ultimately make it possible to know Spain's progress in guaranteeing all children and adolescents access to basic rights and services and, therefore, in the implementation of the Principle I of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR):

Indicator name	Baseline (2021)	Updated information	Source of data	It is in the Action Plan
Number and proportion of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)	31.1 (2020)	34.5% (2023)	ECV	Yes
Proportion of children AROPE target 2030	AROPE: 31%;	AROPE: 34.5%;	ECV	No
	At risk of poverty: 27,4%; Material deprivation: 10.4%; Low work intensity: 8.1% (2019)	At risk of poverty: 28,9%; Material deprivation: 12.3%; Low work intensity: 6.9% (2023)		
Average proportion of early school leavers in Spain, disaggregated by sex and by parents' educational level	13.3% (young people in the 18-24 age group) (2021)	13.7% (young people in the 18-24 age group) (2023)	Eurostat	Yes
Percentage of households with AROPE and non-AROPE children that cannot afford at least one meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.	9.7% (below the median of 60%) and 2.8% (above the median of 60%) (2021)	14.5% (below the median of 60%) and 4% (above the median of 60%) (2023)	ECV	Yes

Indicator name	Baseline (2021)	Updated information	Source of data	It is in the Action Plan
Proportion of AROPE and non-AROPE children living in a household that cannot keep the home warm enough	8.2 (2019) for children in AROPE in Indicator Working Group interim tables 10.2 (2020) for households with children 20.5 (2020) for households with children at risk of poverty	There are a total of 6,851,230 children under 18 years of age who in 2021 could not keep at an adequate temperature in winter. In 2023, this figure was 6,319,100 minors. At the time of preparing the report, this data was not stated in terms of AROPE.	ECV	Yes



The Child Guarantee Scheme in Spain is funded through several main sources, combining European, national, and regional funds. The various sources of funding are described below:

5.1. EUROPEAN FUNDS

• European Social Fund Plus (ESF+): This fund is essential, as Spain has committed almost 10% to the National ECG Plan. This includes programmes at the regional and national levels, such as the "Programme to Combat Material Deprivation", which focuses on providing food and basic material assistance to vulnerable children.

On the date of publication of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the European Child Guarantee (National ECG Plan), the following amounts of funding from the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) were envisaged:

Financial instrument	Amount funded by the EU	Mandatory co-funding (indicative amount)	Total
ESF+ (ECG at least 5%) (to be negotiated)	527 million	268 million	795 million
ESF+ (Programme to Combat Material Deprivation) (estimated)	169 million	19 million	188 million
Total	696 million	287 million	983 million

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): It complements ESF+ actions in areas such as education, healthcare, and housing, with a focus on improving social infrastructure and regional integration.
- Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR): Although not directly focused
 on the GIE, part of the "Next Generation EU" funds within the RTRP are allocated to
 investments that indirectly support the objectives of the GIE, such as the modernisation
 of the education system and the building of social housing. The different components
 from which Spain receives funding, and which are aligned with the GIE are listed below:

Component	Investment	Quantity
C2 - Implementation of the Spanish Urban Agenda: Urban restoration and regeneration plan.	C02.I01 - Restoration programme for economic and social recovery in residential areas. C02.I02 - Programme for the construction of rented housing in energy-efficient buildings.	EUR 588.24 million and EUR 172 million
C18 - Renewing and extending the capacities of the National Health System.	C18.12 - Actions to boost health prevention and promotion. Creation or restoration of healthy spaces (gyms in urban parks, physical activity routes or circuits, bicycle paths and similar investment projects).	EUR 3.35 million
C19 - National Digital Skills Plan.	C19.I1 - Cross-cutting digital skills (CODI) C19-I2 - Digitalisation and Digital Skills Plan for the Education System (portable devices and connectivity, interactive digital classrooms, and digital skills).	EUR 220 million and EUR 1,010.91 million
C20 - Strategic Plan to boost vocational training	C20. R1 - Updating the catalogue of qualifications in strategic sectors. C20.I2 - Digital Transformation of Vocational Training. C20.I3 - Innovation and internationalisation of vocational training.	EUR 855.7 million
C21 - Modernisation and digitalisation of the education system, including pre-school education (0- 3 years).	C21. R2 Design and implementation of a new curriculum model by key skills, prioritising fundamental learning and regulation of an inclusive academic approach. Programme to boost school enrolment rates in pre-school education with new state-funded places (priority to children aged 1 and 2 years): reform/renewal and equipment for new units; new construction and equipment; and operating costs. C21. I2 Programme for Educational Guidance, Progress and Enrichment (#PROA+) in schools of particular educational complexity. C21. I3- Creation of units to provide personal and family support and guidance to vulnerable pupils as part of educational or psychoeducational services in school areas and districts.	EUR 1,118.1 million
C22 - Emergency Plan for the Care Economy and reinforcement of equality and inclusion policies.	C22.I1 - Support Plan and long-term care: de-institutionalisation, equipment, and technology. C22.I2 - Social Services Modernisation Plan: Technological transformation, innovation, training and strengthening of childcare. C22.I3 - Spain Accessible Country Plan.	EUR 96.12 million
TOTAL		EUR 3,115.51 million

5.2. NATIONAL AND AUTONOMOUS-COMMUNITY FUNDS

- General State Budget and Autonomous Regional Funding: These sources cover the
 funding of specific actions of the Child Guarantee Plan in each of the Autonomous
 Communities. However, the availability and degree of detail in budget allocation varies
 between regions, which complicates drawing comparisons and monitoring progress.
 Despite this, it should be noted that in the last two years no direct funding has been
 allocated through specific budgets.
- Local Funding: Some communities also receive support at the local level to implement measures related to the Child Guarantee.

In terms of the challenges identified in funding, it has been identified that there is a significant disparity in how the different Autonomous Communities manage and report their sources of funding, which creates challenges for consolidating and comparing information on progress towards the objectives of the Child Guarantee Plan.

Due to the nature of the distribution of powers in Spain, most of the services to be provided and investments to be made are at the regional level. In this regard, each Autonomous Community is responsible for managing the funding received. Although it is a complex exercise, an information collection exercise has been carried out through a questionnaire that has made it possible to obtain the following graph in which the sources of funding of the actions provided by the Autonomous Communities are broken down.

Source of Funding	Percentage
FSE+	49.13%
ERDF	15.22%
Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan	13.04%
State funding	11.74%
Regional funding	6.09%
Local funding	3.91%
Other (please specify)	0.43%
Do not know/Not aware	0.43%

By services, the largest share of funding through the ESF+ and ERDF is identified in the area of education and health, where funding under the ESF+ covers a higher volume of actions compared with actions under the ERDF.

Area	Actions funded by the FSE+	Actions funded by the ERDF
Early childhood education, care	6	0
Education and (extra-) curricular activities	25	19
Health	27	11
Nutrition	2	0
Housing	0	8
Participatory and inclusive environments	0	19

6. Lessons learned and further development

Throughout this report, the progress and challenges faced in Spain in the implementation of the National ECG Plan have been recorded.

While significant progress has been made in areas such as early childhood education and care, early care, education, out-of-school activities, and health, significant gaps persist that impede full and effective implementation.

Challenges have been identified in intersectoral coordination, the allocation of resources, the collection of information for appropriate monitoring and follow-up and the effective scope of measures for children and adolescents in particularly disadvantaged groups - children with disabilities, children of migrant origin, Roma children, children with parents in an irregular official situation and children who are in the protection system.

Throughout this section, the achievements made, the aspects that have not yet been fulfilled and the gaps that still exist are summarised.

EU funding has been a key factor in the progress made. A significant part of the progress recorded in this first report is framed in the actions funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility within the framework of the Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, which includes a complete agenda of investments and reforms specifying the goals, objectives and indicators for their monitoring and control, and the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 that channel EU Funds (ESF+ or ERDF).

It is important to address the challenge of maintaining high levels of investment to sustain the pace of progress.

Move forward in the coordination between different levels of government essential for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National ECG Plan. The implementation of the National ECG Plan requires high levels of inter-sectoral and inter-regional coordination. Although at the national level there are coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the National ECG Plan – such as the Inter ministerial Commission or the Sectoral Conference on Children and Adolescents – the greatest difficulty in a state where the main powers of the GIE are vested in the Autonomous Communities is in the coordination at the regional and local levels, which do not necessarily have coordination structures similar to those that exist at the national level.

As a result, there are areas of implementation at the regional level linked to the National ECG Plan for which little information has been obtained. The challenge for the future is to improve governance, information, and monitoring mechanisms at the autonomous regional level

Regional inequality is persistent. At the programme planning and implementation level, the development of services and resources aimed at reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of the child population result in a regional map with an unequal distribution in terms of scope.

Although all government authorities and agencies are involved in the implementation of actions related to the fight against child poverty, these are not carried out or reported in a uniform way, which makes it difficult to establish a system of comparative analysis. To improve this situation, it is necessary to promote the development of a broader and more ambitious system to be able to cover the different aspects related to information-gathering.

Monitoring the metrics in target groups. One of the major challenges for monitoring the National ECG Plan has been to gather information on how the measures are reaching the 12 groups of children and adolescents identified as priority groups in the National ECG Plan. To address this situation, common guidelines must be agreed with the Autonomous Communities to obtain the highest possible level of detail on the beneficiary population of the interventions programmed within the framework of the GIE, improve data interoperability and standardise systems for recording beneficiaries of benefits between the national administration and the Autonomous Communities. as well as to finance ad hoc studies to collect accurate information from groups that, due to their smaller population weight, will not be reflected in general records or surveys.

Implementation of measures aimed at target groups. Even in the rights and services guaranteed in the National ECG Plan that are universal in Spain – compulsory education, health – the enjoyment of these is unequal. This situation is aggravated for those children and adolescents who belong to disadvantaged groups – Roma children, migrant children or those who are in the protection system – who face specific difficulties that prevent them from fully enjoying this right. One of the challenges is to fill these gaps and ensure that accessible, inclusive, and quality services also reach these groups.

Improve information systems. One of the National ECG Plan measures where further progress should be made concerns the strengthening of information gathering and data generation systems through registers and surveys with an increased sample size, regional representation and broken down by groups, which will improve the indicators on poverty and social exclusion and children.

Difficulty in monitoring the budgetary effort of the programmed actions. In most of the regional programmatic documents, it is not possible to identify a specific budget allocation or item of expenditure to implement the actions. In the documents that do allocate budget items, it has been observed that the amounts are aggregated into axes or blocks that contain actions of another nature, so it is not easy to identify the direct contribution to the National ECG Plan either. One of the challenges in this respect is to define an information-gathering tool that allows data to be collected in this area of funding, so that it is feasible to assess the degree of progress of the National ECG Plan objectives by differentiating by source of funding and allowing a comparative analysis.

Identification of recipients. Although this has already been commented on in the section on regional strategic alignment, it should be pointed out that many of the interventions propose generic groups or include the child population within broader groups, posing a risk to the direct

identification of the resources allocated and the results achieved in the fight against child poverty. This circumstance, together with the many and varied indicators proposed by the regions for monitoring actions, leads to a difficulty in monitoring the achievements pursued by the National ECG Plan and entails an administrative burden for the integration of different media and databases for the reporting of results.

Identification of measures created on the basis of the National ECG plan. Some of the measures reported by the Autonomous Communities do not report the date of commencement of the actions and it is difficult to determine whether some measures have been introduced in response to the recommendation of the National ECG Plan, if they are ones that already existed previously and has been adjusted to improve or increase its impact according to the objectives of the National ECG Plan or if they have remained unchanged. The reporting system by the Autonomous Communities needs to be improved.

Sources of funding. In general terms, and with regard to regional funding, there is no clear information to identify the extent to which the objectives of the National ECG Plan are being contributed to in each case. On the other hand, it is relatively easy to delimit the interventions programmed under ESF+ or RTRP resources, since these have specific lines linked to the fulfilment of the goals of the Child Guarantee.



Since its approval in July 2022, the State Action Plan for the European Child Guarantee (National ECG Plan) in Spain 2022 – 2030 has been launched at a particularly challenging juncture:

- the social and economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the inflationary crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine;
- the structural challenges that Spain faces in the field of the fight against child poverty with strikingly high rates for decades.

In a scenario such as this, Spain shows substantial progress in the development of the National ECG Plan, although significant challenges persist in achieving its objectives.

These advances include the greater availability of early childhood education services, the consolidation of funding mechanisms and the application of policies for the protection and care of children at risk, as well as the streamlining of early care, the promotion of initiatives to increase equity in education, and programmes aimed at improving healthy lifestyles in children and improving their nutrition.

Significant challenges also remain, particularly in terms of coordination and improved information for efficient monitoring to correct and adjust measures against the proposed targets and data collected. The disparity between Autonomous Communities and the lack of uniformity in data collection systems make it difficult to effectively monitor the policies implemented. It is essential to improve data collection and evaluation mechanisms in order to reflect the impact of actions and to make better planning and future adjustments in intervention strategies.

The success of the policies implemented under the National ECG Plan has been linked to national, EU and regional funding. Long-term financial sustainability needs to be secured to ensure the continuity of projects and the expansion of services to all families, children, and adolescents who need them.

One of the main lessons learned is the importance of intersectoral and multi-level cooperation for the success of programmes aimed at children. But it is necessary to continue to promote greater participation of the Autonomous Communities and local entities in the implementation of policies.



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	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE 2030)	36.7%	34.0%	33.7%	31.9%	30.5%	31.0%	31.6%	33.4%	32.2%	34.5%
At risk of poverty (income the year before the interview)	30.5%	29.6%	29.7%	28.3%	26.8%	27.4%	27.4%	28.9%	27.8%	28.9%
With severe material and social deprivation	14.7%	10.5%	11.6%	10.6%	10.1%	10.4%	10.5%	10.8%	10.3%	12.3%
Living in households with low work intensity (from 0 to 64 years)	14.1%	11.9%	11.5%	9.7%	7.3%	8.1%	7.1%	9.1%	6.5%	6.9%

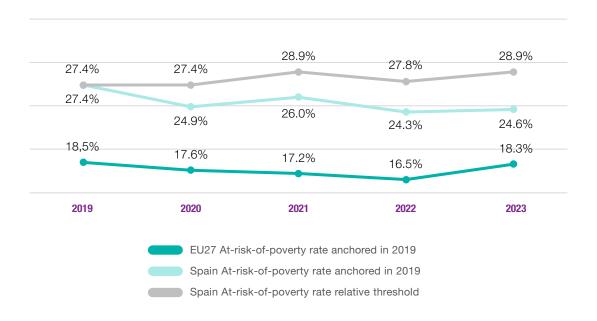


	Año	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EU (27) (since 2020)	Less than 18 years old			21.1%	21.1%	21.0%	20.7%	21.4%	21.4%
Spain	Less than 18 years old	27.3%	29.0%	29.3%	27.5%	27.9%	27.5%	30.5%	29.6%

	Año	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
EU (27) (since 2020)	Less than 18 years old	21.4%	20.0%	19.6%	18.5%	19.2%	19.5%	19.3%	19.4%
Spain	Less than 18 years old	29.7%	28.3%	26.8%	27.4%	27.4%	28.9%	27.8%	28.9%



Comparison of the moderated at-risk-of-poverty rate for under-18s, anchored in 2019. EU 27 and Spain, 2019- 2023.



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
EU27 At-risk-of-poverty rate anchored in 2019	18.5%	17.6%	17.2%	16.5%	18.3%
Spain At-risk-of-poverty rate anchored in 2019	27.4%	24.9%	26.0%	24.3%	24.6%
Spain At-risk-of-poverty rate relative threshold	27.4%	27.4%	28.9%	27.8%	28.9%



Moderate risk of poverty rate, by age group. Spain, 2008-2023.

