

# POVERTY WATCH

SPAIN  
2020

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**European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)** es una Plataforma Europea de Entidades Sociales que trabajan y luchan contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en los países miembros de la Unión Europea. La EAPN busca permitir que aquellas personas que sufren la pobreza y la exclusión social puedan ejercer sus derechos y deberes, así como romper con su aislamiento y situación, y tiene como objetivo principal situar ambas cuestiones en el centro de los debates políticos de la Unión Europea.

En España, la Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en el Estado Español (EAPN-ES) es una organización horizontal, plural e independiente que trabaja para trasladar este objetivo a la realidad española y por incidir en las políticas públicas, tanto a nivel europeo como estatal, autonómico y local. Actualmente está compuesta por 19 redes autonómicas y 18 entidades de ámbito estatal, todas ellas de carácter no lucrativo y con un componente común: la lucha contra la pobreza y la exclusión social. En total, EAPN-ES engloba a más de ocho mil entidades sociales en todo el Estado.

Entre nuestros objetivos, al igual que entre los objetivos de EAPN en Europa, se encuentra el de implantar un método de trabajo en Red para trabajar de manera conjunta y aunar esfuerzos para la consecución de mayores y mejores resultados en la lucha por la erradicación en España de la pobreza y la exclusión social.

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## 1. Introduction

EAPN is a network dedicated to the fight against poverty. Our aim is to work together to achieve a reduction of poverty, through an effective integrated antipoverty strategy based on participation, at national and EU level. Monitoring trends on poverty is part of this process, holding governments to account, and raising awareness to the general public.

The proposal of the National Poverty Watch Reports is to give priority to members' own assessment of what is happening to poverty in their country, drawing on the lived experience/voice of people experiencing poverty.

This Report Objectives are:

- a. To monitor key trends and policy on poverty and social exclusion in Spain.
- b. To raise awareness about priority issues and impact/reality for people experiencing poverty
- c. To propose concrete recommendations backed by experience and evidence.

This Report is directed to:

- a. National and EU decision-makers
- b. National stakeholders
- c. Activists
- d. General public

### 1.1. What do we mean by poverty?

In Spain, the different manifestations of poverty and social exclusion are a shortage of income, lack of decent housing, material deprivation, more difficult educational and healthcare paths due to hardships, poverty of families living in disadvantaged environments, and limited or truncated access to basic services.

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*The Poverty Watch 2020 describes the key characteristics of poverty and social exclusion in Spain, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and presents recommendations for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion.*

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On March 3rd, 2010, the European Union presented the Commission Communication entitled "Europe 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", with common headline targets for economic and social development. To meet these targets, Member States made specific commitments and generated reform programs to achieve them. Within these commitments, for the period 2009-2020, the Spanish government adopted the objective of "reducing between 1,400,000 and 1,500,000 the number of people at risk of

*poverty and social exclusion, according to an aggregate indicator that includes people who live below the poverty line (relative poverty); people who suffer severe material deprivation, and people who live in homes with low or no employment intensity. The reduction of child poverty would be carried out in a proportion similar to the reduction of poverty in general".<sup>1</sup>*

EUROSTAT set up the AROPE (*At Risk of Poverty and / or Exclusion*) indicator, including and combining the three abovementioned sub-indicators, as well as a standardized methodology for its annual calculation in each of the EU countries.

Since 2011, the European Network for the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion (EAPN-ES) analyses the AROPE evolution in Spain and the degree of compliance with the Spanish commitments in our annual Report "The State of Poverty".<sup>2</sup> Its objective is to present a vision -as complete as possible- of the incidence and intensity of poverty and social exclusion, at the national and regional levels, and to evaluate the degree of progress towards our social inclusion target, specified in the European 2020 Strategy.

## **2. What is happening to poverty? What are the groups most affected?**

In February 2020, the European Commission published the Country Report, which warned that Spain was still in a danger zone. After six years of growth, the country failed to overcome the macroeconomic, employment and social problems that characterized the period of the crisis. Persistent unemployment and precarious employment, chronically high at risk of poverty and exclusion rates (particularly children, immigrants and single parents), and insufficient efforts done by the governments, were some of the facts highlighted.

The Country Report summarized the situation related to poverty:

*"The proportion of people at risk of poverty and / or social exclusion continues to decrease, but remains high, especially for children. Labour market challenges and the low impact on poverty of social transfers result in one of the highest risks of poverty or social exclusion for children in the EU. The weakness of family benefits and income guarantee schemes limits the poverty reduction effect of social transfers. Regional minimum income schemes are estimated to only reach 20% of their potential beneficiaries nationwide, with strong regional disparities. Even though fertility rates are much below the population replacement level, family benefits in Spain remain the lowest in the EU. They reach only half of the children at risk of poverty or exclusion as a strict means test for child benefits results in low coverage, and tax allowances are of limited benefit for lower income families."*

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<sup>1</sup> Programa Nacional de Reformas de España 2011. Madrid: Ministerio de sanidad, servicios sociales e igualdad. <https://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/inclusionSocialEspana/programasNacionales/docs/pnrEspana>

<sup>2</sup> Juan Carlos Llano (2019). **IX Informe sobre el Estado de la Pobreza. Seguimiento del indicador de riesgo de pobreza y exclusión social en España.** EAPN-España. Madrid: EAPN-España. Available at: <https://www.eapn.es/estadodepobreza/>

In this part of the Report we will go through the key data related to the Survey of Living Conditions published in 2020 analysing the changes that are exposed by the most recent data.

### 2.1. Key data on poverty from EU Survey of Living Conditions (SILC)

In July 2020, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) published the latest Survey of Living Conditions, corresponding to the income data for 2018 and the rest of variables for 2019.

The Survey is strongly marked by two important issues.

In the first place, **this is the ending year for the EU 2020 Strategy**. The statistical data show not only that Spain failed to meet the social goals committed, but that the said data is even more negative than at the beginning of the period covered by the EU 2020 strategy.

Secondly, although the data show a notable improvement compared to the previous year, which would be confirming a positive trend that began in 2014, **the COVID-19 crisis has turned them into "the light of a star that no longer exists"** and forces us to consider them as a downward reference of the real situation.

### 2.2. Europe 2020 indicators: at risk of poverty, material deprivation, low intensity of work, analysing trends and gap on achievement on the targets.

Despite the improvement in most of the indicators, the Survey confirms an increase in poverty and exclusion in some of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. Among them, the increase in child poverty stands out. This rate had been reduced by 1.5 percentage points in 2019 and has increased again with the 2020 data, reaching 27.4% of children. This figure is 35% higher than the poverty rate of the adult population, between 18 and 64 years old.

There is also an increase in the inequality rate: the richest 20% of the population has a net income about six times higher than that of the poorest 20% (reaching a level of inequality even more intense than that corresponding to 2008). The Survey also certifies an increase in the AROPE rate in certain groups, as is the case of single-parent households.

The official statistics show that severe material deprivation resumed its reduction process and, at present, reaches 4.7% of the population, which represents just over 2.2 million people. Despite the appreciable reduction experienced, this indicator is still very high, reaching some 560,000 more people than in 2008.

## 2.3. Key EU SILC indicators

### 2.3.1. At risk of Poverty and/or Exclusion (AROPE)

In 2019, a total of 11,875,000 people, which represents 25.3% of the Spanish population, are at risk of poverty and / or social exclusion. The figure shows a small decrease of 0.8. percentage points compared to last year and supposes maintaining the downward trend for the fifth consecutive year. In absolute terms, it implies that some 300,000 people were no longer at risk of poverty or social exclusion this past year.

Despite this reduction, **the indicator still remains 1.5 percentage points above the control year specified for the EU 2020 Strategy (2008)**. In absolute terms, if in 2008 there were about 10.8 million people in AROPE, in 2019 there are 11.8 million, which means that, instead of reducing the AROPE rate by 1.4 million people, it increased in 1 million more people. The conclusion is clear: Spain has failed to fulfil the commitments for the 2020 Strategy. The last decade can be considered as “lost” in terms of poverty reduction, as we warned in the *Poverty Watch 2018*.<sup>3</sup>

**Women are more affected by poverty and social exclusion. With respect to specific groups, younger persons and children, foreigners, single parents, those unemployed and with low-education attainment have higher rates than their respective average.**

#### 2.3.1.1. Composition of the AROPE rate

The data -once again- show a feminization of poverty and social exclusion, with higher rates of AROPE and of each of its components. In other words, the economic recovery occurred more among men than among women.

**At Risk of Poverty is the main indicator of the AROPE indicator, with a 20.7% of the population affected.** In the second place, the indicator of “low work intensity” reaches 10.8% of the population. Thirdly, 4.7% of the population suffers from “severe material deprivation”.

Table 1. Components of the AROPE indicator, by sex

AROPE components	Total	Men	Women
At Risk of Poverty (income in the year prior to the interview)	20.7%	20.2%	21.1%
Severe Material Deprivation	4.7%	4.6%	4.8%
Living in homes with low work intensity (from 0 to 59 years old)	10.8%	10%	11.7%
<b>AROPE</b>	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>24.6%</b>	<b>26%</b>

Source: INE, *Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eapn.es/publicaciones/368/poverty-watch-2018>

Those suffering from the three factors -relative poverty, severe material deprivation and lived in homes with low intensity- accounted for 1.4% of the Spanish population (656,180 individuals).

### 2.3.1.2. Household composition

The worse situation of single parent households should be highlighted again, as in the previous years. Although there has been a small reduction of the rate this year, the percentage of single parent households who are AROPE (an adult and dependent children) reaches 46.8%, a figure that is higher than that registered in 2008.

Table 2. AROPE by household composition

	2008	2019	2019-2008 in pp
<b>Total</b>	23.8	25.3	1.5
<b>One person</b>	33.8	26.1	-7.7
<b>2 adults without dependent children</b>	22.3	20.3	-2
<b>Other households without dependent children</b>	14	21.9	7.9
<b>1 adult with 1 or more dependent children (single parents)</b>	45	46.8	1.8
<b>2 adults with 1 or more dependent children</b>	24.2	25.2	1
<b>Other households with dependent children</b>	29.6	33.4	3.8
<b>Not included or provided</b>	0	36.5	36.5

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

**Having children is "a risk factor" of being in a situation of poverty and social exclusion.** This risk is much higher, if it is an adult person who is exclusively in charge of the household. Currently, there are 18,535,900 households and single parents already represent 10.1% of the total. 81.9% are headed by women, while 18.1% by men. This proportion has been stable over the last decade. The number of single-parent households has increased as the number of breakups, separations and divorces has increased, on the one hand, but also due to the increase in life expectancy, particularly for women, which leads to high percentages of widowhood among those with older age. On the other hand, the number of women who face motherhood alone has also grown, not only due to traditional causes (related to unplanned pregnancy, which is faced alone), but also by choice (through planned pregnancy, surrogacy and / or adoption), regardless of the existence of a conjugal bond with the parent. 68.2% of single-parent households are made up of two members (adult person and child) and 27.2% are made up of three people.



### 2.3.1.3. Age groups

Young people, with 31.7% in AROPE, and children, with 30.1%, are the most affected groups by age. The elderly persons have the lowest rate, with 15.7%.

Table 3. AROPE by age groups

Age groups	AROPE
Below 16	30.1
16-29	31.7
30-44	24.7
45-64	26.2
65 +	15.7

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

There are outstanding differences by sex. In the case of young people, the AROPE rate for men is 29.7%, and it goes up to 33.8% in the case of women. A similar situation happens within children: 28.2% of boys and 32.1% of girls. Therefore, the AROPE figures show the impact of gender inequality on poverty and exclusion.

Table 4. AROPE by age groups, by sex

Age groups	Men	Women	Difference W-M in pp
Below 16	28.2	32.1	3.9
16-29	29.7	33.8	4.1
30-44	24.4	25.2	0.8
45-64	25.3	27.0	1.7
65 +	15.7	15.8	0.1

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020.

### 2.3.1.4. Nationality

In Spain, foreigners, both EU and non-EU, have a high probability of being at risk of poverty and exclusion. The historical trend is confirmed in 2020, with an AROPE rate for the non-EU population that more than doubles that of the Spanish (54.2% and 24.4% respectively). The AROPE rate of the European population is also 29.8 percentage points higher than that of the Spanish.

Table 5. AROPE by nationality

Nationality	AROPE rate
Total	24.4
Española	21.7
Extranjera (Unión Europea)	46.2
Extranjera (Resto del mundo)	54.2

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020.

#### 2.3.1.5. Education

In Spain it is striking that having a secondary education level does not protect individuals from being poverty and/or excluded. As shown in the table, both primary and secondary (compulsory) education have the highest AROPE rates, with 31.6% and 31.7%. Having university studies only reduces the AROPE rate with respect to the average by 10.7 percentage points, that is, it does not work correctly as a barrier against poverty either.

Table 6. AROPE by educational attainment

	2019
Total	24.4
Primary education or lower	31.6
Secondary education first stage	31.7
Secondary education second stage	23.7
Higher education	13.7
Not included or provided	30.2

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020.

#### 2.3.1.6. Occupation

56.9% of the unemployed and 37% of the inactive are in AROPE. It is important to note that **15.3% of the people who work are at risk of poverty and social exclusion.**

Table 7. AROPE by occupation status

	2019
Total	24.4
Occupied	15.3
Unemployed	56.9
Retired	14
Other inactive	37

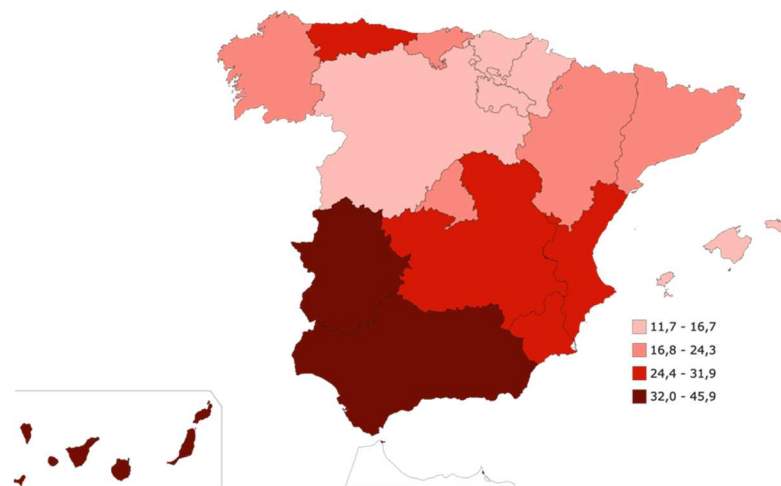
Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020.

### 2.3.1.7. AROPE Regional situation

The highest AROPE rates are located in both Autonomous Cities, Ceuta (45.9%) and Melilla (38.5%). The most affected Autonomous Communities are Extremadura, Andalusia (37.7% each) and the Canary Islands (35%).

In 2020, with respect to 2019, the AROPE rate was reduced in all the communities except for Galicia (an increase of 1.3 percentage points), Madrid (remained the same), and the Basque Country (an increase of 2.3 percentage points).

Graph 1. AROPE by Autonomous Communities



**The regional distribution of AROPE shows the enormous existing disparities, between the Northern regions with poverty levels similar to the European average and the Southern regions which quadruple that average.**

### 2.3.2. At Risk of Poverty

**20.7% of the Spanish population, that is, about 9.7 million people, are at Risk of Poverty.** The figure represents a small reduction of eight tenths with respect to the 2019 data, which translates into some 315,000 people who are no longer poor. In addition, the rate is still far from the records prior to the crisis: there are currently some 670,000 more people at risk of poverty and a difference of 0.9 percentage points with respect to the values of 2008.

Women have higher Poverty rates in every group age, except for the elderly. The most striking difference is 4 percentage points among the 16-29 group.

Table 8. At Risk of Poverty, by age groups

Age groups	Total	Men	Women	Difference W-M in pp
Total	20.7	20.2	21.1	0.9
Below16	27.1	26.0	28.2	2.2
16-29	26.5	24.6	28.6	4.0
30-44	18.8	18.1	19.5	1.4
45-64	19.7	19.5	19.8	0.3
65 +	14.5	14.5	14.4	-0.1

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

**Child poverty, that is, that registered among boys and girls under 18 years of age, which had fallen by 1.5 points in 2019, increased up to 27.4% of children and adolescents, a figure that is about 7 points, that is, 35%, higher than the rate of the rest of the adult population (from 18 to 64 years old).**

### 2.3.3. Material Deprivation

Severe Material Deprivation includes those people who live in households that cannot cope with four or more concepts, items or consumption elements, out of a total of nine considered basic in the European territory. Severe material deprivation is an indicator of severe vulnerability and each of its variables is essential for participation in European society.

Between 2008 and 2014, Severe Material Deprivation registered an almost uninterrupted and highly intense growth, which led to a doubling of its amount. As of 2014, this indicator began a cycle of decline, at a rate of six or seven tenths per year until 2019. In 2019, Severe Material Deprivation fell, **reaching 4.7% of the population residing in Spain, which it supposes something more than 2.2 million people.** Despite this trend, it reaches about 560,000 more people than in 2008.

Severe Material deprivation affects mostly single parent households.

Table 9. Severe Material Deprivation, by household type

Household	
One person households	5,9
2 adults without dependent children	3,2
Other households without dependent children	4,2
1 adult with 1 or more dependent children (single parents)	9,5
2 adults with 1 or more dependent children	4,3
Other households with dependent children	5,4

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

Material deprivation is higher in women regarding most of the variables.

Table 10. Material Deprivation Variables, by sex, in percentages of the population

You cannot afford...							You have had delays in paying expenses related to the main home (mortgage or rent, gas bills, community ...) in the last 12 months
	To go on vacation at least one week a year	To have a meal of meat, poultry or fish at least every other day	To keep your home at an adequate temperature	To cope with unforeseen expenses	To have a car	To have a personal computer	
<b>Total</b>	33.4	3.8	7.6	33.9	4.7	5.6	7.8
<b>Men</b>	32.4	3.7	7.4	32.5	4.4	5.6	7.8
<b>Women</b>	34.5	3.8	7.7	35.3	5	5.5	7.8

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

Having children is a source of risk of suffering from Material Deprivation, particularly in the case of single parents and other households with children.

Table 11. Material deprivation variables, by household type

You cannot afford							You have had delays in paying expenses related to the main home (mortgage or rent, gas bills, community ...) in the last 12 months
	To go on vacation at least one week a year	To have a meal of meat, poultry or fish at least every other day	To keep your home at an adequate temperature	To cope with unforeseen expenses	To have a car	To have a personal computer	
<b>One person</b>	37.0	4.2	10.1	38.8	5.6	4.3	6.4
<b>2 adults without dependent children</b>	29.8	3.6	6.6	28.1	4.4	3.6	3.9
<b>Other households without dependent children</b>	36.6	3.0	6.7	33.1	4.0	4.6	7.2
<b>1 adult with 1 or more dependent children</b>	48.0	6.4	9.2	52.8	12.9	9.4	16.4
<b>2 adults with 1 or more dependent children</b>	27.4	2.8	6.1	30.3	3.4	5.9	7.8
<b>Other households with dependent children</b>	43.5	5.1	10.1	44.8	5.4	7.5	12.8

Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

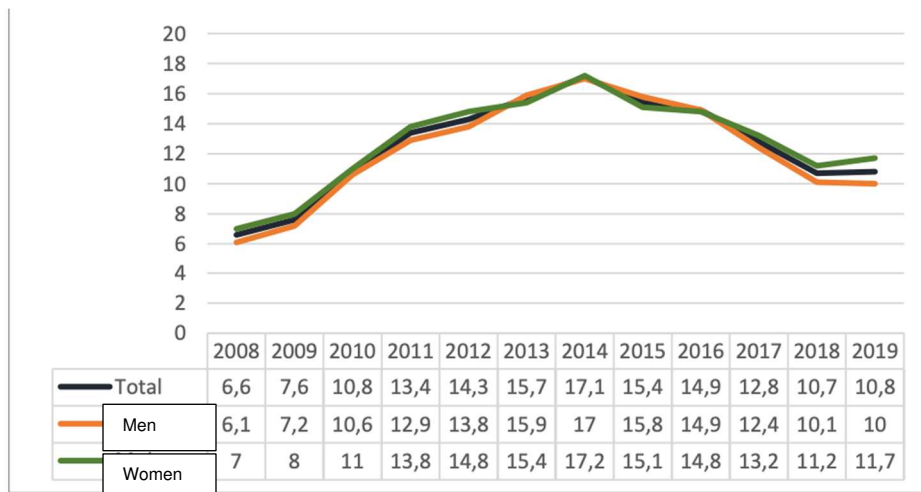
### 2.3.4. Low Work Intensity

The Low Work Intensity per Household sub-indicator comprises those people under 60 years of age who live in households with low employment intensity, that is, in which their members of working age did less than 20% of their total work potential during the reference year.

In 2019, **10.8% of people under 60 years of age live in households with Low Work Intensity**, a figure that is practically identical to that of the previous year and which means ending the process of reducing the rate that had been registered in the last four years. In absolute terms, there are a little more than 3.7 million people living in low work intensity, a figure that, due to population variation, represents about 80,000 more people than the previous year and almost 1.4 million more than those registered in 2008 (2.36 million).

On the other hand, this increase has mainly affected women, whose rate is 1.7 percentage points higher than that of men.

Graph 2. People living in households with Low Intensity of Employment

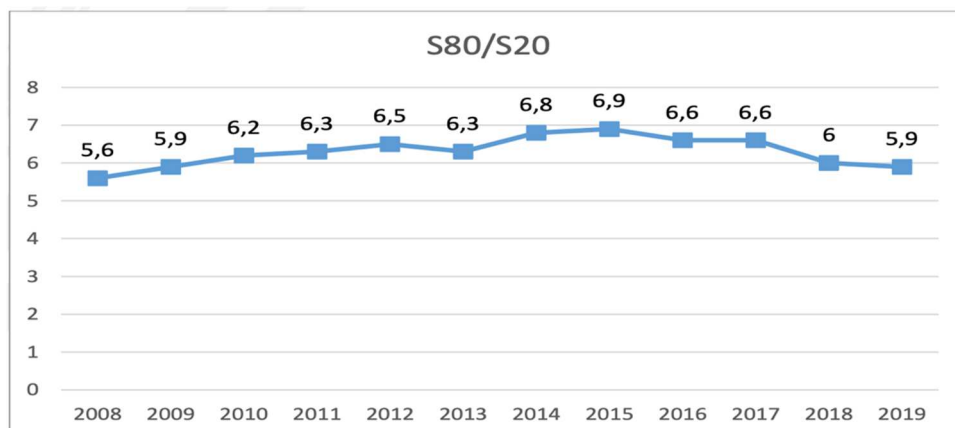


Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

### 2.3.5. Inequality

The economic situation was slowly improving for those with low-income. The average income per person reached € 11,680 € 268 (2%) more compared to 2019 and € 943 (8.8%) more, compared to 2008. **This increase did not produce an substantial reduction in inequality** as register by the S80 / S20 indicator, which measures the proportion of total income received by the 20% of the population with the highest income compared to that received by the 20% with the lowest income. The higher the value of the indicator, the greater the inequality between the extreme groups of the population in which it is measured. **This year's data shows that the richest 20% of the population has a net income about six times that of the poorest 20%. The graph shows that inequality is even more intense than it was in 2008.**

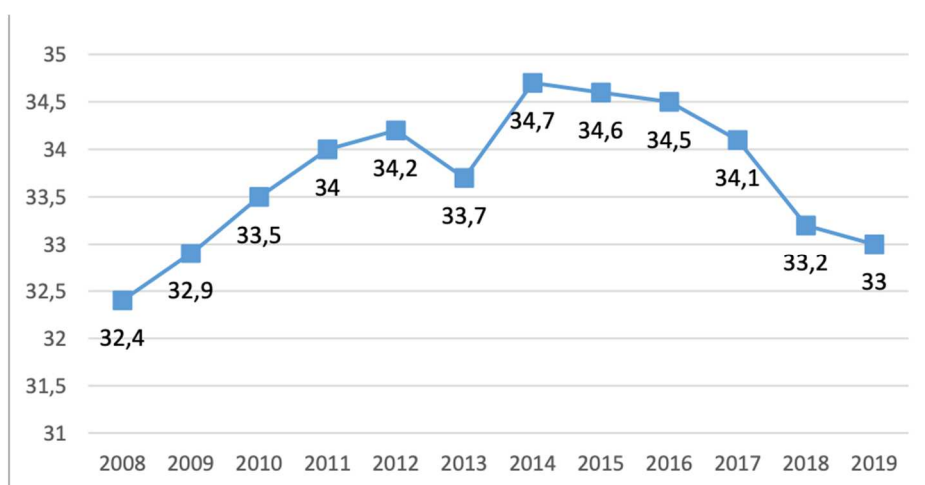
Graph 3. S80/S20 Indicator - Spain



Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

The **Gini coefficient** measures the extent to which the distribution of income within a country deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A **coefficient** of 0 expresses perfect equality where everyone has the same income, while a **coefficient** of 100 expresses full inequality where only one person has all the income. The Gini index decreased very little this year and reached a value of 33, a figure that is also higher than the measurement in 2008.

Graph 4. Gini Index - Spain



Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

**The improvement of the economy has not been sufficient to reduce inequality to pre-crisis levels of 2008.**

**Disposable income inequalities declined but remained among the highest in the EU.** In 2018, the income share of the 20% richest households was 6.0 times higher than that of the 20% poorest, down from 6.6 in 2017. This is the lowest S80/S20 ratio since 2010, but it remains well above the EU average (5.2). While job creation helped improve the income of

the poorest, the income share of the poorest 40% of the population, at 19.1% in 2018, remained below its pre-crisis levels and the EU average (21.0%).<sup>4</sup>

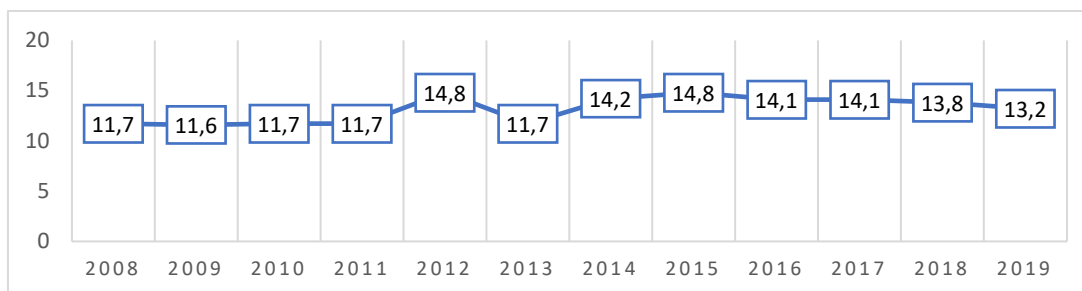
## 2.4. In-Work Poverty

Before the breakout of COVID-19, Spain's employment rate remained largely below the EU average. Given significant labour market segmentation, stagnant incomes and the limited redistributive capacity of social transfers, income inequality is high, though decreasing, as explained before.

There is a widespread use of temporary contracts, which do not carry unemployment benefits, and therefore generate instability and lack of income. Involuntary part-time work, particularly among women who use them to reconcile with their often solely assumed family responsibilities, and the incidence of bogus self-employment among platform workers are other areas of concern regarding in-work poverty.

In-Work Poverty was 11.7% in 2008, peaked up to 14.8% between 2012 and 2015, **and is currently placed at 13.2% of the occupied population.** Precarious working conditions affect young people to a greater extent. Among those under 30 years of age, this percentage climbed to 16.3%. The rise in the rates of working poor while the economy was expanding coexists with the increase in forms of underemployment.

Graph 5. In-work Poverty, 2008-2019, in percentages



Source: INE, Encuesta de condiciones de vida, 2020

Job creation continues to support a reduction in the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, but in-work poverty is still disproportionately high. There are four possible explanatory variables: **1) Internal devaluation and the limited effect of the minimum wage in reducing in-work poverty; 2) The “dumping effect” of the informal work at the shadow economy; 3) The persistent youth unemployment and 4) Gender inequality at the labour market, mainstreamed into the three previous variables.**

### 2.4.1.1. Internal Devaluation: The limited effect of the Minimum Wage in reducing in-work poverty

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, Country Report Spain, 2020.



Internal devaluation is an economic and social policy option whose aim is to restore the international competitiveness of a country mainly by reducing its labour costs – either wages or the indirect costs of employers. Sometimes internal devaluation is considered as alternative to 'standard' external devaluation when nominal exchange rates are fixed, as in the Eurozone, although social implications and speed of economic recovery can significantly differ between the two options. The scientific basis and efficacy of this policy is very controversial. The theory seems to be grounded on several myths, the main of which refers to the need to create harsh conditions for employees and unemployed in order to increase the productivity of the workforce.<sup>5</sup>

In Spain, labour market institutions guarantee adequate social dialogue, and the 2019 and 2020 increases of minimum wage are examples. However, **there is still a long road for the minimum wage to reach the purchasing power of 2008.**

**Spanish workers have lost an average of 7% of purchasing power in the last 25 years,** a period in which there have been gains, but also sharp declines: with the economic crisis, **wages have lost 20% compared to inflation.** A study carried out by the consultancy firm CEINSA reflects that salaries tend to react with at least one-year delay to changes in the economic cycle.

The most serious wage reduction originated in layoffs in staff or cuts in working hours through employment regulation files, but there was also a wage freeze for stable staff. With the 2011 and 2012 labour reforms, the wage cuts ceased to be an exceptional event, but became a generalized pattern. Other indirect ways were to apply “entry wages” in new hires that were much lower than those that the company had been paying previously, to eliminate supplements or to reduce the amounts paid as variable compensation. Between 2009 and 2014 there was a sustained pressure towards the reduction of real wages. In the years prior to the crisis (1994-2008), the evolution of wages showed a high correlation with the CPI and GDP, and wages grew with an average gain of more than 9% compared to inflation. Since 2008, the CPI has ceased to be, at least temporarily, the basic reference for determining increases, with the result that at the peak of the crisis, wages fell even when inflation rose.<sup>6</sup>

An additional problem is that the rise in the Minimum Wage only affects those employees who are not covered by a sectoral collective agreement, that is around 2 million workers, both permanent and temporary, for any activity in agriculture, industry and services, regardless of the sex or age of the workers. According to the government, with the latest increase in the Minimum Wage there will be "a reduction in the gender wage gap, since it affects 56.74% of women compared to 43.26% of men".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Uxó, Jorge; Paúl, Jesus and Febrero, Eladio (2009), **Internal devaluation in the European periphery. The story of a failure.** UCLM, at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270896333\\_Internal\\_devaluation\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_periphery\\_the\\_story\\_of\\_a\\_failure](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270896333_Internal_devaluation_in_the_European_periphery_the_story_of_a_failure)

<sup>6</sup> Heraldo de Aragon, March 19th 2020, at <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/economia/2020/03/10/informe-poder-adquisitivo-ceinsa-1363089.html>

<sup>7</sup> “Subida del SMI en 2020”, at <https://a3.wolterskluwer.es/blog/subida-del-salario-minimo-interprofesional-2020> The government is probably based on this official report, **Mujeres en el mercado de trabajo, mujeres pensionistas y mujeres migrantes en el siglo XXI,** available at [http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/destacados/HOME/documentos/Informe\\_mujeres\\_febrero\\_2019.pdf](http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/destacados/HOME/documentos/Informe_mujeres_febrero_2019.pdf)

**“The gender pay gap is reduced in the Community of Madrid by one point due to the rise in the minimum wage”**

In the Community of Madrid, in 2018, the average salary of men was 29,573 euros and that of women 21,906 euros. This figure represents a reduction of 0.73% in the gender gap compared to 2017, a gender-equality advance with a hidden trap, according to the Trade Union UGT: It is only explained by the increase in the Minimum Wage.

*“It is not so much because the salary situation of women has been corrected, it is because we are at the lowest of the salary tables”,* indicates Ana Sánchez de Coba, secretary of Equality of the Union, on the reduction of the gender pay gap. In other words, since there are more women than men in the salary brackets with lower incomes, the increase in the Minimum Wage benefits them to a greater extent.

The number of women with wages below 1.5 times the MW is higher than that of men, specifically 106,278, while with salaries above that amount the difference in favour of men shoots up, 235,508 more than women, according to the data collected by the union. These contributions have an impact on subsequent benefits, such as unemployment benefits.

In fact, when women are out of work they earn, on average, about 400 euros less in unemployment benefit than men, a gap of 10.70%. *“Women would have to work nine more years to have a pension similar to that of men, it is devastating,”* explains the Secretary of Equality of UGT.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Minimum Wage<sup>9</sup> is applicable in most of the regions and cases, there are some exceptions. 1) Care and domestic workers perceive a different amount, established at 7,43 euro/hour. 2) The Royal Decree Law does not specify how the calculation of the Minimum Wage for piece-rate workers should be made (that is, per unit of work performed), and if the minimum rate corresponds to a cost per hour, and in that case, what hours of work are taken into account, or at a monthly rate. 3) The regional exceptions are the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, who can establish the interprofessional Minimum Wage “as an indicator or reference of the level of income to determine the amount of certain benefits or to access said aid, benefits or public services”. 4) There is a fourth situation of exception, that is when the Minimum Wage is included in a collective agreement, also as a “reference” and not as “compensation”. This increase in the minimum wage is intended to give effect to “the right to a fair and sufficient remuneration that provides a decent standard of living”, in line with that established by the European Committee of Social Rights, which has interpreted that threshold to be 60% of the average wage of workers.

The percentage that represents the Minimum Wage with respect to the regional **average wage** is highly variable: there are 9 Communities where the Minimum Wage exceeds this threshold, compared to others that do not reach it.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the Minimum Wage already

<sup>8</sup> Julia Cadenas, “La brecha salarial se reduce en Madrid en un punto por la subida del salario mínimo”, **El País**, February 18th 2020, at [https://elpais.com/ccaa/2020/02/18/madrid/1582033407\\_413048.html](https://elpais.com/ccaa/2020/02/18/madrid/1582033407_413048.html)

<sup>9</sup> Minimum Wage per day: 31,66 euros. Per month (14 payments): 950 euros.

<sup>10</sup> Pablo Cerezal, El salario mínimo ya supera el 60% del sueldo medio en nueve comunidades, **Expansión**, January 27th, 2020, at <https://www.expansion.com/economia/2020/01/26/5e2dbe1fe5fdeab3608b456e.html>

represents 67.6% of the average wage in Extremadura, followed by the Canary Islands (65.9%) and Castilla-La Mancha (63.2%), while Murcia, Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía, Galicia, Castilla y León and Balearic Islands would be near the threshold set by the Government.<sup>11</sup> The fact that these 9 regions are now above the 60% level of the average salary could be concerning, since they all account for more than half of employment in Spain as a whole. Therefore, although the rest of the Autonomous Communities would not notice the impact of the rise in the MW, a good part of the labour market would be impacted.

#### 2.4.1.2. The “dumping effect” of the informal work at the shadow economy

**The irruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the confinement and lockout measures on the economy forced the shadow economy to (partially) come out to light.**

In 2016, Friedrich G. Schneider estimated that the shadow economy in Spain represented 24.5% of the 2015 GDP. Other studies of the same nature, using a similar methodology, lowered it to slightly less than 18 % in 2016.<sup>12</sup> All the estimations placed it well above the 12% average for the OECD.

Most experts consider that between two million and four million people would be working informally, in one way or another in the underground channels of the economy.<sup>13</sup> Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the freezing of the productive activity, they would find themselves in an extreme situation.<sup>14</sup>

The crisis has left these millions of workers without income. Those whose incomes depend on sporadic jobs or receive a part of their income in the shadow are scattered throughout almost all productive sectors, mainly services and agriculture. That is particularly prevalent in the case of the most precarious workers, although in recent years the shadow economy - due to outsourcing or labour deregulation of the formal market- increasingly gets to qualified professionals who are part of a chain of activity outside the formal economy.

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<sup>11</sup> However, it must be borne in mind that these figures are calculated **on the total average wage**, including part-time workers, since the National Institute of Statistics does not break down the data for the Autonomous Communities between both categories, so the data endings could be somewhat lower.

<sup>12</sup> Fernandez Leiceaga, Joaquín; Lago Peñas, Santiago; Martínez-Vazquez, Jorge and Vaquero-García, Alberto (2018), **Economía sumergida y fraude fiscal en España: ¿qué sabemos? Una panorámica de la literatura**, FUNCAS. At [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325870461\\_Economia\\_sumergida\\_y\\_fraude\\_fiscal\\_en\\_Espana\\_que\\_sabemos\\_Una\\_panoramica\\_de\\_la\\_literatura](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325870461_Economia_sumergida_y_fraude_fiscal_en_Espana_que_sabemos_Una_panoramica_de_la_literatura)

<sup>13</sup> Shadow economy. Estimates of unregulated, undeclared production as a percentage of recorded GDP, using the multiple-indicators-multiple-causes approach. **Informal work**. Any form of unregulated, unregistered, or undeclared work, as a dependent worker, unpaid family member, or an own-account or self-employed worker. **Informal dependent employment**. Undeclared, dependent, salaried employment, proxied with three measures: employees in firms of 10 or fewer or five or fewer workers; employees not contributing to social insurance; employees without a written employment contract in their main job. **Informal self-employment**. Own-account, independent work as a sole trader or employer, distinguished from “formal self-employment” and “professional self-employment” by (a) nonprofessional occupation, or (b) employment by five or fewer workers. Truman Packard, Johannes Koettl, and Claudio E. Montenegro (2012) **In From the Shadow. Integrating Europe’s Informal Labor**. World Bank, DIRECTIONS IN DEVELOPMENT, Human Development 70602, page 9, at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/458701468035954123/pdf/706020PUB0EPI0067902B09780821395493.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> El Confidencial, April 5, 2020, at [https://www.elconfidencial.com/economia/2020-04-05/economia-sumergida-coronavirus-pandemia-negro-hosteleria\\_2534287/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/economia/2020-04-05/economia-sumergida-coronavirus-pandemia-negro-hosteleria_2534287/)

There is abundant evidence that the phenomenon of employment outside the legal channels is very relevant, **since it plays a role as a competitive force in the formal labour market and is a factor that drives down wages.**

**As most of the informal jobs are performed by undocumented migrants, low-income workers are agitated by xenophobic political parties in order to direct their anger towards them, while protests should be directed to those Spanish employers who make huge profits through their exploitation. In turn, these employers allege that “the market is very competitive” and that “their prices should be kept low”, justifying their need to hire informally as a survival strategy of their economic sector.**

**"We do the work that nobody wants to do, and they don't want to see us, not even on the streets"**

At the beginning of the nineties, a radical change took place in the Murcian countryside and the native workers were replaced by immigrant labour, especially Moroccan, who arrived first, and then Ecuadorian, although there are also day laborers from sub-Saharan Africa or Europe from the East. Currently, the Region of Murcia, with a 14% foreign population, employs agricultural workers almost the year around. This makes many immigrants prefer to live in the Region compared to other agricultural areas of the country, where the agriculture is more seasonal.

In Murcia there is a reserve of cheap labour installed: employers have many people to turn to and can offer lower salary conditions. Agriculture is fundamental in the economy of the Region: it accounts for 20% of GDP compared to 2.7% for the country as a whole. This may explain a certain degree of tolerance to the shadow economy and the informal work.

The days of field workers are usually between 13 and 15 hours a day, including transport, since in many cases the day laborers have to travel to destinations such as Albacete, Alicante or Granada, out of the Autonomous Community. In addition, work is mostly piecework, that is, it is paid by the number of pieces collected and not by hours - a worker can collect up to 2,000 lettuces a day, while the piece is paid at 0.046 euro cents in 2019-.

These testimonies are explanatory of the situation described above:

- *"Entrepreneurs want to enrich themselves quickly and by the sweat of many without stopping, so that nothing is missing for the orders that come from abroad,"* says Mustapha Ziani, leader of the Alafa Union.
- *"We have 80% of the contracts that are made in the field through a Temporary Employment Company and the piecework has returned. The precariousness of the field has deepened, which was already high,"* says sociologist Andrés Pedreño.
- *"We are a reality that they want to cover up. In fact, the Spaniards are never going to put up with the abuses of the Murcia's countryside business culture. But all the time you hear on the street that the Moors come to steal or that they come to live on government aid. In Murcia you don't even see a Moroccan working as a cashier at the Mercadona (supermarket) or as a bus driver, as it happens in France".* Mustafá Sadir denounces.

- “When you are illegal it is even possible not to charge. A lot happens with temporary work agencies in fruit picking jobs, such as apricots or peaches, which work for a week or ten days at most. There they tend to use a lot of illegal labour and as they change farms it is very difficult for the labour inspectorate to catch them”, says Mustafa Sadir, trade union delegate of Comisiones Obreras in Torre Pacheco.<sup>15</sup>

#### 2.4.1.3. Youth unemployment, the highest among the EU-27

The British economist Guy Standing defines the “precariat” as those workers who are not capable of looking beyond their day to day, with jobs or occupations that allow them just to survive. One of the faces in which this precariat is embodied are young people, who concentrate unemployment rates above the average, wages below the average and a temporary employment rate above the average.

According to Eurostat, Spain has the highest youth unemployment of the EU 27. Compared to an EU-27 average of 17% for those under 25, Spain peaks to the highest point, with 41.7%. The situation is even worse for young women.

Table 12. Unemployment by sex, Under 25 years old – July 2020

	Both sexes	Males	Females
EU-27	17.0	16.8	17.2
Spain	41.7	41.4	42.0

Eurostat, <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

The most qualified young people are having some access to jobs, although in a very small number. In general, the job growth experienced by the Spanish economy since 2014 is not benefiting youth employment.

<sup>15</sup> Elisa Reche, “Jornaleros inmigrantes en Murcia: Hacemos el trabajo que nadie quiere hacer y no nos quieren ver, ni siquiera en las calles”, May 18 2019, **El diario**, at [https://www.eldiario.es/murcia/sociedad/jornaleros-murcia-hacemos-trabajo-siquiera\\_1\\_1545991.html](https://www.eldiario.es/murcia/sociedad/jornaleros-murcia-hacemos-trabajo-siquiera_1_1545991.html)

Table 13. Occupied by sex and age group. Percentages with respect to the total for each sex

AGE groups	Both sexes	Men	Women
16-19	0.5	0.6	0.3
20-24	3.7	3.8	3.6
25-29	8.1	7.7	8.5
30-34	10.2	10	10.4
35-39	12.7	12.7	12.8
40-44	15.9	15.7	16
45-49	15.5	15.6	15.3
50-54	14	14.1	13.8
55-59	11.6	11.7	11.4
60-64	6.7	6.8	6.6
65-69	1	1	0.9
70 and more	0.3	0.3	0.2

INE, Encuesta de Población Activa, 2<sup>o</sup> term 2020

On the other hand, the working conditions of young employees have deteriorated substantially with an increasing proportion of temporary hires and a decrease in wages. Young people are the main employees in "atypical jobs", platform workers, Internet-based, etc. Finally, on this issue too, great regional disparities are found in terms of the recent reduction in youth unemployment and the slight creation of youth employment since 2014. Policies to improve young people's integration into the labour market are making very slow progress. In Spain, the Youth Guarantee is not working as expected, particularly for young people with difficulties or/and in poverty and social exclusion.<sup>16</sup>

**“Young people in precarious conditions: Languages, career and master's degree for little more than the minimum wage”**

Paula, at 28 years old, not a year ago signed her first contract with a certain job stability. This young woman born in Lleida, Catalunya, is a researcher specialized in evolutionary genetics. She already has a degree and a master's degree and a second master's degree on the way. She has just signed a four-year predoctoral contract at the University of Barcelona (UB) and earns 1,000 euros per month, 50 above the Minimum Wage. *"In Barcelona this is just enough to barely survive and little else,"* she says.

Using bioinformatic tools Paula is investigating the genome of some spiders from the Canary Islands. *"They are interesting to study specialization and adaptation processes,"* she explains. From the last year of her degree until her current contract, this young woman has combined her studies with 'mini-jobs' as an administrative clerk, a clerk in a fast food chain or as a pub's bar-tender. *"I spent almost two years waiting for the funds for my doctoral*

<sup>16</sup> EAPN (2018), “El acceso de la Juventud en exclusión a los Programas de Empleo Juvenil”, at <https://www.eapn.es/empleoJuvenil/estudio.php>



*project to be approved. If I had known that I would have to wait in hold for so long, with that uncertainty, I would not have accepted it. In this profession they take advantage of our vocation," she says.<sup>17</sup>*

#### 2.4.1.4. Gender Inequality at the labour market

Spanish legislation reflects efforts to promote gender equality. Spain is ranked among the most advanced countries in terms of equal legal rights for men and women. Measures adopted at the beginning of 2019 promote equal rights in the workplace. All employers are required to keep mandatory records of the average wages of men and women, while companies with more than 50 employees (against 250 before) have to negotiate equality plans with workers' representatives. Parental leave of 16 weeks for each parent will replace the maternity and paternity leaves by 2021. In the meantime, the parent other than biological mothers are entitled to eight weeks' leave in 2019 (it was five in 2018) and 12 weeks in 2020, to reach 16 in 2021.

However, there are major gender inequalities that produce higher poverty and exclusion levels. The economic crisis and austerity policies have affected women the most. There has been a reduction in social spending that manifested itself in a lower supply of goods and services aimed at families. At present, the levels of 2008 have not been recovered yet. Families and, within them, women have compensated with their reproductive work for this drop in social costs, particularly in the area of care, including dependent people. Cuts in care services have led to their privatization and / or a return to traditional gender roles, by transferring responsibility from society to households, that is, to women. **The new situation with the COVID-19 is reinforcing this process, leading more women into economic inactivity, unemployment, involuntary part-time and precarious jobs, due to reconciliation with their increased family responsibilities and/or to discrimination at the labour market.**

#### **“COVID-19 and the precariousness of female employment: testimony of a worker when she has not received her salary for two months due to the State of alarm”**

*“My name is Mariah Oliver and I teach after-school English at a public school in the Sierra de Madrid. On March 9th, the closure of all educational centres in the Community of Madrid was announced, and on the 10th my company communicated that this suspension affected us and that, therefore, we would not have classes until March 26th, in principle.*

*My mother is a cook in a privately-owned nursery school, and -at the same day- she was notified of the closure. On the morning of the 11th, she received a communication via WhatsApp saying that the company had requested a temporary employment regulation file (ERTE).*

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel Ubieto, “Jóvenes en precario: Idiomas, carrera y máster por poco más del salario mínimo”, **El Periódico**, October 24 2019, at <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/economia/20191024/reportaje-experiencias-jovenes-trabajo-precario-7699733>

*I tried to reassure my mother, who receives the scrapped minimum wage, but it is difficult, many questions and no answers. When can you request the benefit? Will the Social Security collapse these days when thousands like her are out of work?*

*In the afternoon of the same day 11th I received an email with the same information. Our company is also preparing an ERTE, they will notify us when there is news and we can go for our papers. Neither of them has even received a phone call.*

*If the ERTEs are not approved, will the companies pay or appeal the decision? If approved, when will they be that? When can we start requesting benefits? **Is there anyone aware, someone who cares, that there are people who cannot spend two months waiting to collect our salary?***

*In my case, it is a complementary salary to my main job, but in my mother's (and in that of so many others) it is her only source of income. **Finally, yesterday we reflected together on how, again, this is a crisis that women are enduring more than anyone. Because, let's face it, we are the vast majority in the affected sectors: cooking, cleaning, early childhood education, complementary activities, extracurricular activities, care ....***<sup>18</sup>

**A set of inequalities is related to the labour market.** The constant increase in unemployment during the economic crisis justified a greater social "tolerance" towards discrimination based on gender, age and ethnicity or origin. There are employers (and even employers' leaders) who consider that women are less desirable as workers due to pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, maternity, incompatibility of schedules (due to taking care of the elderly, babies or disabled people), or simply because of the fact of being a woman of reproductive age.<sup>19</sup>

Statistics on the labour market indicate that women have a higher rate of inactivity and unemployment, an employment gap, as well as a pay gap, a higher rate of temporary employment and involuntary part-time, among other aspects. The **gender wage gap** is made up of more elements than a salary difference between co-workers of different sexes, such as salary supplements, which are applied on a discretionary basis. If it were only about that difference, it could be classified as direct wage discrimination prosecuted by law. But the reality is more complex, and that gap is formed by factors that mean that at the end of the year, all female workers in the country are earning 14.9% less per gross hour than male workers, according to Eurostat.<sup>20</sup> In 2017, the average annual earnings of working women were € 20,131.41 and that of working men: € 25,924.43. The gender pay gap in the average annual earnings is € 5,793.02 per year (22.35%). A series of factors make the existence of the gender pay gap possible and chronic, among which it is worth highlighting the higher

<sup>18</sup> "Dos meses sin cobrar el sueldo", March 13th 2020, <https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2020-03-13/dos-meses-sin-cobrar-el-sueldo.html>

<sup>19</sup> Malgesini, Graciela and Oviedo, María José (2019), **Género y Desigualdad. Empoderamiento y defensa de los derechos de la mujer en España.** Madrid, EAPN Spain, At [https://eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/documentos/1587468121\\_estudio-gnero-y-derechos\\_empoderamiento-y-defensa.pdf](https://eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/documentos/1587468121_estudio-gnero-y-derechos_empoderamiento-y-defensa.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo Ministerio de Trabajo, Migraciones y Seguridad Social (2019), **Mujeres en el mercado de trabajo, Mujeres pensionistas y mujeres migrantes en el siglo XXI**, pp.29-30, at [http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/destacados/HOME/documentos/Informe\\_mujeres\\_febrero\\_2019.pdf](http://www.mitramiss.gob.es/es/destacados/HOME/documentos/Informe_mujeres_febrero_2019.pdf).



incidence of bias among women, the greater female presence in sectors with lower salaries or the disruption of women's professional careers due to care responsibilities at home. Between 20 and 60 years of age, the gender pay gap increases, going from 12.50% in the age group of 20 to 24 years, to 26.91% for the age group of 55 to 59 years.<sup>21</sup>

Self-employed women reach 1,037,800 and only represent **33.43% of all self-employed workers**. The entrepreneurship rate of women is 11.68% and that of men is 19.43%, that is, there is a gender gap in the entrepreneurship rate of 7.75 points. The “entrepreneurship gap” has barely narrowed over the last fifteen years. The proportion of self-employed women in Spain is now slightly higher than in the European Union average. However, the proportion of women who are self-employed varies according to the type of professional situation, their presence being less relevant among employers and the majority being among those classified as “helping the family business”.<sup>22</sup>

Only 43% of women with single-parent households are unemployed, while 17% have some type of occupation, but without a contract. These households experience the highest relative at-risk-of-poverty rates by household type, 46.8% in 2019. More than half of these households cannot go on vacation at least one week a year and do not have the capacity to afford expenses contingencies of 650 euros. 7.4% cannot incorporate protein into their diet every other day. 18% have had delays in paying the expenses related to the main home and 16.4% cannot keep their house at an adequate temperature (energy poverty). 16.5% cannot afford a car and 11.5% do not have a computer. 74.9% reach the end of the month with some degree of difficulty and one out of every two single-parent households is at risk of poverty and exclusion (AROPE), almost double the value for all households in Spain (26.1 %). They have less stability in the regime and housing conditions and reside in a higher proportion in degraded or conflictive environments (only 62.9% indicated they have no problem, compared to 71.3% of all households). For all these factors, the average satisfaction with the economic situation of single-parent households is lower than for the total. Satisfaction with the time available to do what you like is also less. 6.5% consider that their level of social exclusion is high-very high.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. The impact of COVID 19

#### 3.1. The healthcare system before the pandemic

Spain performs better than the EU average in providing access to healthcare. However, disparities in access and quality persist across the country.<sup>24</sup> Since the transfers of Health

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<sup>21</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo... (2019), Loc. Cit., pp. 29.30.

<sup>22</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo... (2019), Loc. Cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> Malgesini, Graciela (2019), **Estudio sobre las familias monoparentales, perceptoras de rentas mínimas**. Madrid, EAPN Spain, At [https://eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/noticias/1568715221\\_estudio-familias-monoparentales.pdf](https://eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/noticias/1568715221_estudio-familias-monoparentales.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Spain guarantees universal access to healthcare but out-of-pocket payments on dental care are a barrier to access for low-income households. Spaniards report one of the lowest levels of unmet needs for medical care in the EU (0.2% in 2018). By contrast, the share of unmet needs for dental care is relatively high (4.6%, 1.7 percentage points above the EU average), particularly among people in the lowest income quintile (12%, 6 percentage points above the EU average). Direct out-of-pocket spending by households (mainly on dental care and to some extent, on pharmaceuticals) reached

competences to the Autonomous Communities were finalized in 2001, one of the concerns that arose has been to what extent these transfers increased or decreased inequalities between their Health services and, therefore, how it affected the access to quality healthcare by the population. With the last economic crisis, there was a process of cuts that affected all the Autonomous Communities, although to a different extent. The result was a significant deterioration in resources, especially human resources and infrastructures while the privatization process grew in parallel.

Although in the last four years, there has been an overall budget in public expenditure in Healthcare, it has been directed almost exclusively to the growth in pharmaceutical spending (18% between 2014 and 2018) and to privatizations.<sup>25</sup>

Regional governments applied austerity measures in five strands:

1. Cuts in capacities and in facilities devoted to the prevention of diseases (including the prevention of epidemic shocks, the stocking of protective gear and equipment, the training of medical staff, closure of healthcare preventive education and sensitization centres, together with the closure of medical institutions devoted to research and disease prevention);
2. Lowering of labour conditions of the staff, including nurses, assistants and doctors; these conditions are so hard and underpaid (for example, job on demand, one-day contracts, etc.) that many were forced to migrate to other member states, as the UK of the Nordic countries;
3. Low investment in research and development;
4. Mental health and dental care are barely covered by the public health system and are underinvested services.
5. Increase of co-payments and exclusion of non-contributory individuals, as migrants with irregular status. The application of the Royal Decree 16/2012 regarding pharmaceutical co-payments led to the exclusion of many patients. Surveys indicate that 14.76% of people do not withdraw prescribed drugs due to financial reasons, around 1.4 million individuals. Undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers could access emergency healthcare and only in some Autonomous communities they have normalized access.

These situations caused long waiting-lists to access to specialized healthcare and surgical procedures, although the situation is not homogeneous. As the reference hospitals for determined diseases are placed in Madrid or Barcelona, this generates differential access from other Autonomous Communities. In particular, the population living in rural and isolated areas which are far from hospitals have particular problems in getting these services. In general, both the coordination among Autonomous Communities themselves, and between those and the central administration is clearly insufficient and patchy. Consequently, the citizens' opinion has worsened in a very notable way (for example, the percentage of people

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23.6% of total health expenditure in 2017, 7.8 pps above the EU average OECD, 2019, quoted by the European Commission, Country Report 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Federación de Asociaciones para la Defensa de la Sanidad Pública (2019), **Los servicios sanitarios de las CCAA. Informe 2019**. Agosto. At: <http://www.fadsp.org/index.php/sample-sites/113-observatorio-ccaa/2020-informe-2019-los-servicios-sanitarios-de-las-ccaa-xvi-informe>

who indicated that the healthcare system “works well” or “quite well” fell from 73.88% in 2010 to 68.3% in 2018).

According to a governmental study (AIREF)<sup>26</sup>, quoted by the European Commission in their Country Report 2020<sup>27</sup>, the Spanish healthcare system showed key shortfalls, which would be relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020:

- The primary care system performs well but needs further adaptation to cope with the demographic and epidemiological shifts. Population ageing creates new health care needs, as nearly 60% of Spaniards aged 65+ have at least one chronic disease, more than 20% have some limitations in daily activities and almost 40% have reported symptoms of depression.
- There are inefficiencies in the purchase and use of pharmacy-dispensed medicines. Regional variations in spending on pharmacy-dispensed medicines are not explained by healthcare needs.
- The current co-payment model for pharmaceuticals mostly penalises low- income workers and recipients of minimum income benefits relative to pensioners
- Inefficiencies are also linked to the recruitment and working conditions of health workers. The persistent use of temporary contracts contributes to the large turnover of health workers.

**In a context of rapid ageing of the population, growing needs for long-term care are likely to increase in the future.** The number of beneficiaries of the long-term care system rose by 5.8% over 2019. The coverage ratio remains slightly above 80% (December 2019), but large regional disparities persist (from 68% in Catalonia to 99% in Castile and León). People with severe dependency have lower coverage (66%) than those with moderate dependency (88%). Public services lack the resources (47) to meet the demand. As of April 2019, exemption from social security contributions boosted the affiliation of informal carers, 89% of whom are women, to the system (from 6,700 in March 2019 to 55,100 in December). There are shortcomings in the coordination between social and health services and in the quality of the services. Increasing needs for long-term care may add to other fiscal concerns in the long run.

According to the report of the Association of Directors and Managers of Social Services, 17,139 people who have died until June 2020 were pending to receive the benefit or service to which they were entitled. This is 3,243 more people deceased than in the same period of 2019, which represents an increase of 23.3%. To these deaths must be added 7,415 people who have died without even being assessed. In total, there are 24,554 people who have died without having received the assistance recognized by law.

### 3.2. The health impact of COVID-19

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<sup>26</sup> AIREF (2019), *Evaluación del gasto público 2018 proyecto 2 (recetas) Estudio medicamentos dispensados a través de receta médica*, at

<https://www.airef.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Estudio2-SR/2019-07-02-P2-correcto.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> European Commission (2020), Country Report, Spain, February. At [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-spain\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-spain_en.pdf)

**The COVID-19 pandemic is posing an extraordinary public health challenge.** The impact already reaches almost all the countries of the world, and in Spain there are already around 40,000 deaths and a level of stress from the health system that has pushed the collapse of numerous healthcare units in the last weeks of March and first April of this year 2020.

**Late reaction and intervention.** On February 27, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that we had to act aggressively and ask ourselves if "we have enough medical oxygen, ventilators and other vital equipment." *This "will make the difference between one case and 100."* *"If the answer is no, your country has a gap that this virus will exploit. Even developed countries may be surprised,"* he said. In a February 12 report, the WHO already advised countries to prepare to do "large-scale testing." And on March 16, its CEO insisted that "*Test, test, test*" should be done. Therefore, 22 days ago, the WHO publicly pointed out that if massive tests were not carried out, "*the cases could not be isolated, and the chain of infection would not be broken*". If we consider the WHO's warnings, **it is possible to deduct that a preventive action would have avoided the high level of infections and deaths that Spain currently has.** The State of Alarm, which the Council of Ministers approved on March 14, was taken when Spain had 120 deaths, and more drastic confinement and detention measures were introduced than in other European countries. In other countries, similar measures were taken later. For example, in Italy it was done with 366 deaths, in France with 148 and in the United Kingdom with 281. However, the Spanish Government has been widely criticized for ignoring the experiences of countries where the virus has struck before it. They initially treated the virus as an "external threat", rather than considering that their country could be the next domino to fall.

**Lack of common health measures with respect to the population residing in institutions.** In some regions, especially in Madrid and Catalonia, nursing homes accumulate a very high number of deaths. The Prosecutor's Office has opened an investigation in the different territories. These institutions are the powers of the Autonomous Communities. At the state level, the main measure was to order the Army to help disinfect them. On the other hand, the statistics of deceased and infected in centres of Juvenile Offender Centres, Migrant and Asylum Seeker Reception and Detention Centres are unknown. In these cases, the competences belong to the central government, but until very late in the disease spread, no protective measures were taken with this population.

In September 2020, **COVID-19 infections and deaths among health personnel, a problem that has hit Spain with special virulence, have subsided but -in total- are among the highest.** In May, this corresponded to 10 points more than Italy and placed Spain well above the other European countries and Korea. Many professionals had to wait to undergo a test that could reveal whether they carried the virus or had already passed the infection. They thereby continued to do their "normal life" and their work, which helped to spread the virus. Health care unions took the authorities to court for not protecting them enough.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Spain's Coronavirus Crisis Accelerated as Warnings Went Unheeded, The New York Times, April 7, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/world/europe/spain-coronavirus.html>

**The Spanish higher rate of death and infection among health care workers, including doctors, is attributed to the fact that personal protective equipment has been scarce and there are still deficiencies.** During the first two months of the pandemic, the availability situation of PPE can be classified as "chaotic", with a general shortage of basic elements such as masks and gloves, aggravated by disputes over purchases between the national government and the Autonomous Communities (The Autonomous Communities, both the PP and the PSOE, denounced that the Government, after the decree of a state of alarm, prevented them from acquiring supplies for the sake of centralized action and that days later they changed their minds). In general terms, these measures are the expression of **the lack of foresight regarding the management of the epidemic, whose problems had already been observed (at least) in a neighbouring country: Italy.**

**Housing conditions and stay-at-home of the moderate ill persons favored the negative impact on people living in poor housing.** The Spanish government published an ACTION GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS AND OLDER PERSONS IN CONFINEMENT SITUATION. Alarm status for COVID-19.<sup>29</sup> In this, the entire society is co-responsible for self-care and the care of others. The document emphasizes adherence to treatments and the maintenance of healthy habits, such as eating well, hydrating and maintaining strict hygiene. However, there is a difficulty in carrying out self-care in houses in poor condition, where more than 25% of the population lives. The lockdown has caused families of several members to live together in tiny spaces. The health guidelines, in the weeks of greatest overflow, were for non-seriously ill people to be treated at home. This favoured contagion in overcrowded conditions. This problem is particularly serious in the case of people living in rural settlements or in substandard housing and shacks. These circumstances affect the Roma population the most, 86% of them in poverty.

Among the many effects of the current pandemic, it is worth **highlighting those related to the interruption of basic health services for different reasons** (reallocation of resources, logistics and supply problems, recommendations for postponement of non-urgent services, fear of the population to go to health centres, etc.). Among them, vaccination programs are suffering significant falls and delays. Although health coverage is universal, in Spain this may be attributed to various reasons such as the closure or decrease in the activity of numerous health centres or for fear of the spread of the new coronavirus and the general recommendations for physical distancing and avoidance of health centres. Preliminary reports of vaccination coverage in several Spanish autonomous communities show a significant drop in childhood vaccinations, which is why the need arises to make a call to recover missed vaccinations and ensure compliance with the vaccination schedule. Planning is currently underway to put into practice a plan to reopen the activity and reduce confinement and social distance, being the opportune moment to organize the recovery of those vaccines that have been discontinued.

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<sup>29</sup> Ministerio de Sanidad, GUIA DE ACTUACIÓN PARA PERSONAS CON CONDICIONES DE SALUD CRÓNICAS Y PERSONAS MAYORES EN SITUACIÓN DE CONFINAMIENTO. Estado de alarma por COVID-19. Available at:

<https://www.msbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos/CRONICOS20200403.pdf>

### 3.3. Data

The Spanish government has implemented the strictest lockdown, social distancing and isolation measures for Europe's second hardest-hit nation, after Italy. However, the number of deceased skyrocketed during the months of March and April to an unprecedented level.

Table 14. Deaths by COVID-19 by Autonomous Communities (updated September 2020)

CCAA	Muertes Totales
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.495</b>
La Rioja	393
Ceuta	9
Aragón	1.302
Madrid	8.999
Navarra	553
C. León	2.931
País Vasco	1.749
Melilla	4
Galicia	702
Andalucía	1.662
Canarias	209
Cantabria	231
C. La Mancha	3.065
Baleares	270
Extremadura	544
C. Valenciana	1.541
Asturias	341
Murcia	193
Cataluña	5.797

Source: Ministerio de Sanidad, 2020

According to the Ministry of Health, the number of deaths attributed to COVID-19 is 30,495 (until September 21<sup>st</sup>) which corresponds to the 3.17% of the reported world deceased, 960,695. In Spain, the regional distribution is remarkably heterogeneous, with 150 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in Castilla La-Mancha, 135/100,000 in Madrid, 125/100,000 in La Rioja, 122/100,000 in Castilla y León and 98/100,000 in Aragón among those regions with the highest records. The lowest rates correspond to the Canary Islands, with 9/100,000, Melilla and Ceuta (5/100,000 and 9/100,000 respectively).<sup>30</sup>

#### 3.3.1. Distribution by age and sex

<sup>30</sup> Raúl Sánchez / Ana Ordaz / Victòria Oliveres, "El coronavirus en España: mapas y últimos datos de los rebotes y su evolución", September 18th, 2020, El Diario, at [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/mapa-datos-coronavirus-espana-comunidades-autonomas-septiembre-18\\_1\\_1039633.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/mapa-datos-coronavirus-espana-comunidades-autonomas-septiembre-18_1_1039633.html)



**As of August 24, 2020**, 412,553 confirmed cases of COVID-19 had been reported to the Spanish National Epidemiological Surveillance Network, of which 377,291 had complete information for the variables of sex, age and date of diagnosis.

**Since the beginning of the pandemic, the age group most affected has been between 50 and 59 years old, with 60,314 confirmed cases (16%) throughout the entire period, with 55% of all cases being women.**

**Hospitalized cases, however, are 55% male and 21% are between 70 and 79 years old. The most important difference between men and women is observed in the cases admitted to the ICU with a male-female ratio of 2.2 (69% men).** During the entire period, there have been 27,776 confirmed cases of deaths due to COVID-19, 55.6% were men and 11,279 (40%) were in the age range between 80 and 89 years.

A change in the age distribution of cases has been observed over the last few months. In the January-May period, 18% of the cases were between 50 and 59 years old and 69% were older than 50 years. **In a second period, between June and August, there has been a decrease in the age of the cases, with the age group between 20 and 29 being the most affected with 20% of the total reported cases, followed by the group between 30 and 39 years with 18% of cases.** The age of the patients admitted to hospital and ICU has also decreased if we compare the first period with the second. However, among the deceased, fewer differences are observed between the two periods.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.4. Vulnerable Groups

With regard to families, poverty has been radically exposed, with long lines to get food and overwhelmed food banks. This poverty is evidence of the lack of the social protection system, but also of the enormous weight of the shadow economy and precarious employment, which has made millions of people lose their real family income in a period of days.

There are vulnerable groups, particularly affected by the COVID-19 disease:

- **The elderly, persons with disability/dependent, with chronic illness.** Thousands died from COVID19 at the nursing homes and long-term care residences, thousands got infected and carry severe aftermath. There are some criminal investigations going on to determine the penal responsibilities of these facilities directors.
- **Front-line workers.** They suffer both the highest rate of infections and decease. Their jobs were not well-paid before. In some cases, as cleaning persons and supermarket employees, they were considered low-skilled and had bad labour conditions.
- **Homeless (roofless, living in squatters and settlements).** Homeless people, the ultimate expression of social exclusion, do not have a home to take care of themselves, in the event they caught the disease, nor do they have resources to

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<sup>31</sup> Ministerio de Sanidad, **INFORMACIÓN CIENTÍFICA-TÉCNICA. Enfermedad por coronavirus**, Update, August 28th, 2020, page 16, at: <https://www.mschs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/ITCoronavirus.pdf>

maintain hygiene, such as washing their hands. On the other hand, sleeping in shelters, usually with many other people at risk, implies greater exposure to the disease. The arrangements made by the regional governments, in charge of social policy and therefore assistance to vulnerable groups, was heterogeneous, but inefficient to prevent contagion and the spread of the disease. There is no record of how many homeless persons have been infected, though.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the immediate economic effect of the confinement and lockdown measures taken by the Spanish government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the most vulnerable groups are the following:

- **Single-parent families.** The situation of single-parent families, the majority headed by women, is worrying. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, one of their greatest difficulties was being able to reconcile their work and family life. After the appearance of the virus, the situation has worsened enormously due to the inaction of the public administrations responsible for guaranteeing the rights of children, equal treatment of the different family models and ensuring that gender inequality does not create even more disadvantageous situations.

With COVID-19, reconciliation in single-parent families is even more complicated and measures aimed at prioritizing telework are not always possible for many single-parent families in which a single adult person takes care of their daughters and sons. Many families cannot afford the slightest loss of wages and, nevertheless, they are having to request to leave or reduce their working hours with the consequent economic loss that this entails for a household already severely hit by poverty. According to the latest Survey of Living Conditions, published in 2020, four out of ten single-parent families (41.1%) are at risk of poverty, half of single-parent families (52.8%) do not have the capacity to face unforeseen expenses and 68.8 % cannot make ends meet.

Single-parent families are facing the health, social and economic crisis of the coronavirus without the measures to work and care being taking into account the needs of our family model. As time passes, single-parent families survive as best we can and carry alone with care, work (in the best of cases) and emotional balance. *Save the Children* pointed out how households with children are suffering the most from the effects of the Covid-19 crisis, and among these, that single-parent families will increase their risk of poverty by five points.

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<sup>32</sup> **Non-EU migrants and Roma population continue to face integration challenges.** Non-EU born people face a much higher risk of severe material deprivation (14.8%) than natives (3.9%). They are more exposed to precarious working conditions and to in-work poverty (44.3%, compared to 17.1% for natives). The Roma community also shows high social vulnerability. Only 17% of Roma complete lower secondary education and 63% of young Roma are neither in employment, nor in education or training (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2019). Poor educational outcomes result in low employment rate (30%), very high unemployment (52%) and extremely high at risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (92%).

**The number of homeless people spending the night in shelters continues to rise.** In 2018, 18,000 people were hosted in a shelter daily on average, 9.5% more than in 2016 (INE, 2019). The implementation of the 2015-2020 National Strategy against Homelessness, including the development of the 'housing first' approach, has been limited and lacks synergies with an overarching housing strategy. A legislative change in March 2019 strengthened the protection for vulnerable households at risk of eviction.



In the 2nd FAMS Survey on the impact of the COVID19 crisis on single-parent families, among mothers who telework and have responded, 94% acknowledge that it is very difficult for them to concentrate at home with children demanding their attention at all now and 58% say they do not have their own space to work. The report *Woman and remote work during the Covid-19* carried out by the IESE Centre for Work and Family points out how mental fatigue and stress skyrocket among single mothers.<sup>33</sup>

- **Households without income**, that do not receive benefits and that survived working in the underground economy. The most vulnerable people continue to go out to work since their families live daily and need to get some money every day to make the purchase. These people escape public policies, which were aimed at those who lost their jobs or ceased their activity as self-employed workers. Half of Spanish households have some degree of difficulty making ends meet. Households that are already below the poverty line will have fewer options. Half of single-parent households already are at risk of poverty and exclusion. That is, they lack options to acquire care services through the market or to assume extraordinary expenses, such as the meals of the children, who have meal scholarships. There are more than 1 million people living in incomeless households (679,000 households). Obviously, they also have no capacity to manage extraordinary expenses.
- **Children who were already at risk of poverty**, 1 out of 3 children, depended on breakfast and meals in schools. Many were forced to stay at home alone as well, as there are no additional resources to pay for home care services, if fathers and mothers must continue working as usual. Online learning and homework could not be carried out by children and adolescents who lacked a computer and Internet connection at home.<sup>34</sup> The Survey of Living Conditions estimates that 5.5% of the population of Spain cannot afford a computer, 5.4% of all men (1,242,425) and 5.7% of all women (1,363,826). That is, without being able to go to libraries, children living at homes without a computer or Internet connection will not be able to access this online substitutive education.

**Despite very low and decreasing fertility rates, Spain is the country providing the lowest family benefits in the EU.** Public spending on family benefits in Spain represented 1.2% of GDP in 2017, half of the EU average (2.3%) (Eurostat, ESSPROS). Family benefits come to just €31 PPS per month per child, ten times less than the best performer. This is equivalent, on average, to less than 1% of equivalised household disposable income in Spain. Even when other benefits are taken into account, the overall impact of social transfers (excluding pensions) in reducing child poverty in Spain is the lowest in the EU (18%, compared to 42% on EU average). Support to middle-income families is weak as child benefits target the

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<sup>33</sup> Mireia Las Heras (2020), *Mujer y trabajo remoto durante el COVID-19*, IESE, en <https://mireialasheras.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/infografias-teletrabajo-COVID19.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Children living in crowded housing and no room for studying, without Internet connection, without up-to-date computer, printer and equipment and without support from competent adults were left out of the online education system rapidly implemented by most of the schools. Public schools seemed to have struggled more in this process than private schools, with children belonging to mid and high-income households, who usually had the learning basics at their disposal.

most deprived while tax allowances tend to benefit the highest incomes. EUROMOD microsimulations reveal that the family benefits only have a meaningful impact on the income of the 10% poorest (decile 1), accounting for 9.5% of their equivalised household disposable income. This share decreases rapidly in the remaining deciles (2.4% for households in decile 2, 1.4% in decile 3, etc.). Meanwhile, child-related tax deductions benefit only families with taxable incomes above the tax-exempted threshold. As a result, the combined effect of the tax and benefit system for families with low-to-medium income (especially, deciles 2 and 3) is very low, as they are excluded from the means-tested child benefit and have limited access to tax deductions. Overall, *child-related tax deductions outpace child benefits, so that financial support to families with children in Spain follows a regressive pattern*. This pattern differs from that of other EU countries with low levels of benefits, which tend to be more progressive. Other countries have neutral or regressive patterns but provide much higher levels of support for children, reflecting stronger solidarity between childless households and those with children. The increase in means-tested child benefit is not helping to reduce the risk of poverty, and it has a very limited impact on the poverty gap. According to EUROMOD simulations performed by the European Commission Joint Research Centre, the impact of the recent reform on the Gini index and the risk of poverty is negligible. Some impact is observed on the at-risk-of-poverty rate of lone parents (-0.6 pps) and on the overall at-risk-of-poverty gap (-0.4 pps). The effects are limited because the benefits are very low (€341 or 588 annually, depending on annual income) and because the strict means test, which results in low coverage. The benefits are available only to families with very low incomes (around €14,200 per year for two parents with two children, well below the poverty threshold of €22,200 – children aged 14-17). As a result, roughly one in two children at risk of poverty or social exclusion receives benefits. Standard families above that threshold do not receive regular child benefits, except for children with disabilities.

Although steps to combat child poverty were taken in 2019, they are still not commensurate with the scale of the challenge.<sup>35</sup>

This weak and faulty social scenario could only worsen due to the pandemic, although the scope of the consequences cannot be fully appraised due to the lack of updated statistics.

### 3.4.1. Undocumented migrants and asylum seekers

At the end of 2019, the number of immigrants residing irregularly in Spain was assessed between 390,000 and 470,000 people. This range entails between 11% and 13% of non-EU immigrants and around 0.8% of the total population residing in Spain. The absolute numbers of irregular immigration grew during the first years of the last decade, fell abruptly during the crisis of 2008-2015 and has, since then, partially recovered.

Four out of five undocumented immigrants are aged under 40 and 77% come from Central and South America. Africa contributes 9.2% (around 43,000 people) of irregular immigrants

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<sup>35</sup> European Commission, Country Report Spain, 2020.

residing in Spain. Of these, more than half are from Morocco. Women represent the majority of the irregular immigrant population in Spain.<sup>36</sup>

According to the organization for the attention and defense of the rights of immigrants Fundación CEPAIM, belonging to EAPN Spain, people in an irregular situation work in the underground economy or in formal activities but without a labor contract. They predominantly work in agriculture, cleaners, cooks, assistants, personal care and other services. Around 15,000 people throughout Spain live in extreme conditions in shanty towns that it is urgent to eradicate, far from the populations, lacking running water, electricity, "in conditions that no citizen would recognize as typical of this country," as noted, the Rapporteur United Nations Special on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, in February 2020.<sup>37</sup>

On top of the important progress in human rights and fight against poverty, the fiscal effects of a regularization would be positive for the Spanish economy: The irregularity of immigrants represents an average annual loss of 2,000 euros per immigrant for Spanish public coffers. The net tax contribution of immigrants in a current irregular situation would be beyond 3,250 euros. Voices against this regularization often neglect the figures and the potentially important contribution to the public income, while remarking the "pull effect". However, there is no empirical evidence linking a significant increase in irregular immigration with administrative amnesty measures. The intensity of migratory flows to Spain during the last two years has been inversely proportional to the dynamism of the economy in relation to unemployment rates.<sup>38</sup>

#### **COVID-19. Migrants without papers, unable to go to work and without government aid: "We ask for regularization"**

They have no papers and their only job opportunities were hidden in the shadow economy. They lived on a daily basis. Faced with mandatory confinement, many cannot go out to work but neither do they access the aid of the emergency plan launched by the Executive to alleviate the social consequences of the State of Alarm. They are street-vendors as "manteros" and "lateros", domestic workers and caregivers, restaurant employees and other clandestine workers. Supported by more than 200 organizations, they asked the Government for extraordinary regularization for migrants in an irregular situation and those asylum seekers who have been waiting for years for the response to their applications.

Djiby used to work hours and hours with his blanket on his back, in the center of Madrid. The money obtained allowed him to pay the rent, eat and send the rest of his income to Senegal. Now he spends his days at home, like most, accompanied by his five roommates, four of them "manteros" as well.

<sup>36</sup> Fanjul, Gonzalo and Gálvez-Iniesta, Ismael (2020), **Foreign, essential and undocumented: A snapshot of irregular immigration in Spain**. Investigación PorCausa, 2020, at <https://porcausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/snapshot-of-irregular-immigration-in-Spain-by-porCausa.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Fundación CEPAIM, "Por una regularización de personas migrantes indocumentadas, ante la pandemia del Covid 19", Press release, April 4, 2020, at <http://cepaim.org/fundacion-cepaim-almeria-acoge-sevilla-acoge-horuelo-y-acisi-apuestan-por-la-regularizacion-de-personas-migrantes-indocumentadas-ante-la-pandemia-del-covid-19/>

<sup>38</sup> Fanjul, Gonzalo and Gálvez-Iniesta, Ismael, Loc. Cit.

The second half of April begins and paying the rent is impossible for him. In recent weeks he has eaten thanks to the resistance fund of the (informal) “Union of Manteros and Lateros” of Madrid, where for years its members contributed what they could to have a mattress in case of need. The crisis linked to the pandemic has triggered requests for help, so Djiby is already beginning to pull the food distribution initiatives of other neighborhood organizations.

He, despite his situation, “feels lucky”. As a member of the Union, he receives requests for help from many people in even more difficult circumstances. *“There are people who have just arrived and have nothing. I had something saved and networks that support me, but others do not even have that. So, I am also taking money out of my pocket to give them money so they can talk with their family, buy them meals, help them ...”*, says the Senegalese citizen.

*“We all share what little we have. If I receive help that lasts 15 days, I can only last a week because I share it with my neighbors who have not been here long, who do not know how to manage this situation and are very hungry. They are suffering a lot”*, Djiby regrets over the phone from home.

He has lived in Spain for nine years and has not yet managed to regularize his work and residence status. After exceeding three years of residence in the country -one of the requirements-, he has requested it on three occasions but the Administration denies it due to the harsh conditions imposed by the Immigration Law on the labor contracts required to demonstrate “roots” (arraigo), a bureaucracy that the current Executive promised to make more flexible before the spread of the virus. *“All those aid schemes that the Government promises are not valid for us. We ask for a regularization, because if not, we will be left out,”* says the 35-year-old man.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.5. Gender inequality

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented pressure on the health system and revealed its vulnerability, generating very high mortality, the dimensions of which have yet to be determined.

In addition to these events, the pandemic caused a series of unusual measures in the history of Spanish democracy, with the establishment of the State of Alarm, home confinement, the suspension of activities classified as “non-essential” and a series of added restrictions. , in order to reduce the scope of the disease among the population and decongest the health system, in order to be able to attend in a timely manner to the growing number of sick people. The pandemic has revealed existing structural problems, some of which stem from certain deficiencies in investment in physical infrastructure, as well as in the recruitment and working conditions of health personnel, mostly female. The closure of educational centers and other workplaces led to the rapid development of online education and teleworking, for which many people and households were not prepared, because they suffered from a digital divide or lacked adequate devices to connect to Internet. Homes became the new axis of daily life for most of the people during the State of Alarm, with women making extraordinary efforts to

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<sup>39</sup> Gabriela Sánchez, “Migrantes sin papeles, sin poder salir a trabajar y sin ayudas del Gobierno: Pedimos una regularización”, April 14th 2020, El Diario, at [https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/trabajadores-sumergida-gobierno-pedimos-regularizacion\\_1\\_2258549.html](https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/trabajadores-sumergida-gobierno-pedimos-regularizacion_1_2258549.html)

support the new needs generated by the situation; This overload was especially notable among those who also tried to keep their jobs by going to work outside the home or by reinforcing telework, in the case of those who were employed. The temporary job retention schemes, ERTES, prevented a significant part of the layoffs, but another group of workers who did not meet the conditions to request them, who worked in domestic and care service or in the informal economy quickly remained no income. This set of situations originated, both in Spain and in most of the EU, a series of new social measures aimed at protecting a good part of the social groups affected by the initial economic shock, although the inequalities and pre-existing complexities left many out.

The pandemic had a major impact on gender inequality, with women on the front lines of the response to COVID-19. Women were overrepresented in crucial and often poorly paid occupations in health centers and hospitals, residences for the elderly and / or with disabilities, as well as in educational establishments, while at the same time carrying the greatest workload at home. The impact of intersectionality is particularly evident, where poor women belonging to ethnic minorities, racially diverse, migrants or asylum seekers, with serious illnesses or disabilities, engaged in prostitution and other similar activities face greater risks and a discriminatory burden double or triple.

From the perspective of equality between men and women, we especially have to point out the following ten negative consequences of the COVID epidemic:

1. **The high levels of contagion and mortality due to the disease in certain profiles of women more prone to a negative evolution due to the fact that their immune systems are depressed or have previous pathologies, such as older women and / or those with poor health or disability.** Despite the fact that men have died in greater numbers than women, there are certain profiles of deceased people, such as the elderly in residences, who are mostly women.
2. **The high levels of contagion and mortality due to prolonged exposure to the virus and the lack (or inadequacy) of personal protective equipment, especially in the first two months of the pandemic.** 76% of health personnel in Spain are made up of women (doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, laboratory technicians, guards, etc.). These differential levels were due to their high level of exposure and proximity to the public with health demands, including infected people, without being able to count on sufficient and adequate equipment to avoid contagion. Also affected were those employed in the homes for the care of people and cleaning, due to the proximity with the people served, agricultural workers, street sweepers, store replenishers and employees in other essential services.<sup>40</sup>
3. **Problems for care, follow-up, delivery, postpartum and puerperium due to the closure of health centres or less availability of health resources, health aspects that specifically affect women.** These less obvious issues within the context of the epidemic are likely to have a long-term impact on increasing gender inequalities in health that women already experience.
4. **The negative impact of measures related to the restriction of mobility, confinement and the reconversion of economic and educational activity with respect to the work overload at home.** Before the pandemic, data from the

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<sup>40</sup> Instituto de la Mujer (2020), *La perspectiva de género, esencial en la respuesta a la COVID-19*. Madrid. NIPO 049-20-024-8



National Statistics Institute indicated that 91.9% of women (aged 10 and over) performed household chores and took care of children, the elderly and dependents for 4 hours and 29 minutes a day, compared to 74.7% of men who spent an average of 2 hours and 32 minutes. Women were the ones who mostly took work leave to care for family members. With the COVID-19 crisis, this process of burdening women has worsened. Women continue to do most of the housework and care for dependent people, paid and unpaid, also assuming a greater mental burden derived from it.

5. **The crisis of single-parent homes, without significant economic and social support.** The pandemic has caused a differential crisis of conciliation by single-parent households, mostly headed by women, when they lack or cannot count on additional support. 61.9% of single-parent families in Andalusia, that is, 134,806 families of this type, are at risk of poverty, according to the latest Survey of Living Conditions of the National Institute of Statistics, published on June 27, 2020, with the household income data for 2018. In other words, this alarming panorama does not reflect the impact of the crisis generated by COVID-19. This percentage is much higher than the state average, which places 42.9% of single-parent households at risk of poverty. 80% of these households are headed by a woman, that is to say that it is a highly feminized, impoverished and, therefore, vulnerable type of household. Single mothers have much more difficulty accessing the labour market and reconciling, so they end up having a much lower salary than men and are more exposed to poverty. In nuclear families (which do not have supportive family members or the financial resources to hire help), women tend to extend their usual care, staying at home, which has repercussions on their jobs and their economy.
6. **The increased risk of gender violence derived from the situation of confinement.** In the context of confinement measures, there has been an increase in gender-based violence due to the longer time the victim-aggressor has lived together, greater control over the victim, more difficulty in receiving external help, more invisible attacks and more difficulty in going assistance centres, which has given rise to the need to reinforce protection measures.
7. **The increase in gender inequality in employment, in wages and the increase in economic inactivity.** The current economic, labour and reproductive crisis places women in a worse place to face a new period of crisis, especially in the cases of young women, with low qualifications and migrant women, with an increase in economic inactivity, in gaps employment and wages, and poverty at work. In addition, some of the most affected sectors, such as commerce, tourism and hospitality, are highly feminized. Men have a part-time employment rate of 7%, while women have a rate of 23.9%, that is, 4 times higher. The high level of precariousness is completed with permanent-discontinuous jobs and in sectors in which payment is made per hour worked, as is the case of the 700,000 domestic workers. If there is no work, there is no salary. Until all the necessary extraordinary aid materializes, a cascade of negative consequences will be generated with respect to family income.
8. **Greater risk of impoverishment and social exclusion of women.** Before the pandemic, women already had a higher risk of poverty than men in all European countries, in Spain and Andalusia, with 4,250,510 women and 4,133,898 men at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) in 2019. The greater feminization of poverty, an increase in severe material deprivation and residential exclusion is causing greater difficulties in maintaining the habitual residence of the household,

especially among households headed by women.<sup>41</sup> The crisis generated by the pandemic may cause a setback in gender equality, with a situation similar to that of the 2008 economic crisis, so resources and measures must be established to compensate for the aspects described above.

9. **Some groups of women face intersectional inequality due to their sexuality, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and physical ability.** For example, women in prostitution have been particularly affected by the pandemic. Not only are they a higher risk group due to intimate contact with sex buyers, but there is also a lack of support and specific protective measures. Foreign women (and men) living in immigrant and refugee centres are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and other illnesses as a result of overcrowded conditions, poor sanitation, and lack of access to decent health care. Physical distancing and permanent hand washing are simply impossible. Migrant women may face barriers to accessing health care, such as language, access restrictions depending on their residence situation, or lack of knowledge of available services. There have been many complaints of increased exploitation during confinement by migrant women working as caregivers, often without a registered contract, by the families who have hired them. People with disabilities, a majority of them women, have not been able to follow the recommended physical distancing measures.<sup>42</sup> They depend on the help of others to eat, dress, or shower, making physical distancing almost impossible. When it comes to domestic violence, women with disabilities are more vulnerable. They are often unable to physically access shelters and other facilities, so they remain with abusers. Roma women face more precarious living conditions than men: across the EU, 30% of Roma households live without access to running water. Without running water in the house, it is very difficult to wash your hands frequently, which is one of the ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These circumstances are added to greater poverty, limited levels of education that prevent them from helping their children in tele-education, or patriarchal customs that make Roma are suffering higher levels of vulnerability than other women in this crisis.<sup>43</sup>
10. **A further deterioration in mental health among women.** According to the 2017 Spanish National Health Survey, women already doubled the rates of depression and chronic anxiety in men. Since the pandemic began, women have suffered from mental health problems. A study carried out by the University of the Basque Country (UPV) and five other institutions (the universities of Barcelona, Murcia, Elche, Granada and the National University of Distance Education-UNED) is based on surveys and interviews with almost 6,800 adults (over 18 years). 44% of the women surveyed reported an increase in panic attacks and anxiety, compared to 25% of men. The work indicates that the women surveyed have had more problems than men to disconnect from worries (37% compared to 26%). In addition, they have

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<sup>41</sup> Dirección General de Igualdad, Instituto de la Mujer (2020), *La perspectiva de género, esencial en la respuesta a la COVID-19*, [http://www.inmujer.gob.es/disenov/novedades/IMPACTO\\_DE\\_GENERO\\_DEL\\_COVID\\_19\\_\(uv\).pdf](http://www.inmujer.gob.es/disenov/novedades/IMPACTO_DE_GENERO_DEL_COVID_19_(uv).pdf)

<sup>42</sup> There are 61 million women and 47 million men with disabilities in the EU (EUROSTAT). In Spain there are 3,528,221 people with some kind of disability, which represents a global prevalence rate of 9% (INE).

<sup>43</sup> Fundación Secretariado General Gitano (2020), **Impacto de la crisis del COVID-19 sobre la Población Gitana**. At [https://eapn.es/covid19/ARCHIVO/documentos/noticias/1587475880\\_1587475196\\_encuesta-participantes-fsg.pdf](https://eapn.es/covid19/ARCHIVO/documentos/noticias/1587475880_1587475196_encuesta-participantes-fsg.pdf)

noticed that anxiety and anguish attacks increased (44% of women versus 25% of men) and depressive feelings (48% versus 36%). The women also experienced more feelings of guilt, mood swings, and had more insomnia problems. 59% of the women surveyed have had trouble falling asleep during confinement, compared to 46% of men. An outstanding fact of the report is that, during this period, the consumption of tobacco and psychotropic drugs has increased more among women than among men.<sup>44</sup> In another study carried out by the Complutense University of Madrid and the social services company Grupo 5, the effects of the alarm situation and confinement on the Spanish population have been analysed. The first wave of the study was carried out between March 21 and 29 and the second, between April 13 and 27. The study shows that, comparing both periods, depressive symptoms increased in the second. While in the first, youth was the social group that was experiencing the worst, in the second section they observed that depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress have prevailed with women "probably related to the greater burden that combining work or telework together with the care of children and other gender roles during the pandemic".<sup>45</sup>

### 3.6. Social Shield

The regulations to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the measures related to the State of Alarm have a triple focus:

- Avoid the loss of the habitual residence;
- Grant access to extraordinary income to workers in precarious conditions, including domestic workers, through the temporary extraordinary subsidy;
- Provide more temporary liquidity to households with total income below the defined by the postponement of:
  - debt by mortgages,
  - debt by personal or consumer loans,
  - habitual house rent,
  - utilities (electricity, gas, Internet) of the habitual house

The key components of the “Social Shield” are the following:

- Establishment of ERTES (temporary employment regulation file) by the companies affected by the lockdown. It is an existing instrument that prevents layoffs and grants 70% of gross wages to workers.
- Prohibition of layoffs during the state of alarm.
- Protection with unemployment benefits to those workers whose temporary contract ends after the declaration of the state of alarm and are not entitled to this benefit. The “exceptional circumstances allowance” is applicable to the group of temporary workers whose contract is terminated because it reaches its end. The only requirement is the minimum duration of 2 months of the former contract.

<sup>44</sup> Nekane Balluerla Lasa y equipo (2020), **Las consecuencias psicológicas de la COVID-19 y el confinamiento**. At [https://www.ub.edu/web/ub/ca/menu\\_eines/noticias/docs/Consecuencias\\_psicologicas\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.ub.edu/web/ub/ca/menu_eines/noticias/docs/Consecuencias_psicologicas_COVID-19.pdf)

<sup>45</sup>Pantallas, deberes y madrugones: así es la conciliación real para las mujeres durante el confinamiento”, **Women NOW**, 21 Mayo 2020, en <https://www.womennow.es/es/noticia/estudio-conciliacion-teletrabajo-mujeres-durante-el-confinamiento/>



- Deferment of payment of mortgages and rental income for vulnerable families.
- In the case of vulnerable households, the suspension of evictions and the extraordinary extension of the leases of habitual residence.
- Expansion of the group of potential recipients of the social electricity bond.
- Sanction of the Minimum Vital Income, of a state nature, aimed especially at households without income and in severe poverty (to be sanctioned this week).

### 3.7. Guaranteed Minimum Income

#### 3.7.1. Background situation

In the last available statistics, with income data from 2018, the proportion of people at risk of poverty and /or social exclusion decreased but still remained high, especially for children. Labour market challenges and the low impact on poverty of social transfers result in one of the highest risks of poverty or social exclusion for children in the EU. The weakness of family benefits and income guarantee schemes limits the poverty reduction effect of social transfers. Regional minimum income schemes are estimated to **only reach 20% of their potential beneficiaries nationwide, with strong regional disparities.**<sup>46</sup>

At the beginning of 2020, the Basque Country reaches almost three quarters of the people at risk of poverty and Navarra reaches two thirds of its population below the threshold. Asturias follows, where one in three people below the poverty line receive the minimum income. Of the rest, only five Communities guarantee percentages greater than 10% (Balearic Islands, Aragon, Cantabria, Asturias, C. de Madrid and Catalonia). The minimum incomes of the remaining 9 Communities do not even reach this coverage, and in the case of Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha, their percentages are below 2%.

The minimum income programs have, from a legal point of view, different durations, ranging from 6 months, as in the case of Andalusia, the Valencian Community, Galicia and Ceuta, to indefinite benefits, as is the case of the Country Basque, Castilla y León, and Madrid.

Main obstacles or issues:

- There are important territorial differences both in the nature of the benefits and in the coverage offered.

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<sup>46</sup> **The take-up of regional minimum income schemes remains limited.** Currently, only three Spanish regions still make the right to their means- tested income support schemes conditional on budgetary availability. However, coverage remains very low in most regions. According to EUROMOD simulations performed by the European Commission Joint Research Centre, only 20% of potential beneficiaries (according to regional eligibility criteria) were receiving regional minimum income benefits in 2018. Nationwide, the number of beneficiaries decreased by 7% between 2016 and 2018 (MSCBS, 2019), but trends differ across regions. Take-up seems to have improved in some regions (for instance, the number of beneficiaries tripled in the Balearic Islands), while it fell in others (in Andalusia, for instance, the number of beneficiaries fell by 49%). The average amount of the benefits increased by 2.9% in 2018, but there are still large regional disparities in terms of adequacy. *Simulations suggest that the schemes have a limited but varying impact on reducing the at-risk-of-poverty gap* (by 1.5 pps in 2018 nationwide, with zero impact in half of the regions but a very significant effect in others, such as Navarre, the Basque Country and Asturias). No progress has been made on the portability of benefits across regions in 2019. European Commission, Country Report, 2020.

- The result has been both coverage of households with fewer resources, in terms of population served, as well as great heterogeneity in the rates of adaptation or economic sufficiency of benefits, beyond the differences in the cost of living in each territory.

Left out groups:

- Young people who leave the State guardianship system after they are 18 years old,
- Young persons, under 25, without family responsibilities
- People who cannot work with disabilities not medically certified by the authorities
- Women victims of gender-based violence without trial and sentence
- Immigrants without legal residence, or with less than 5-year residence
- Emigrants who return to Spain due to the lack of opportunities outside of Spain
- Unemployed persons, over 55 years of age, entitled to a retirement benefit, living with working family members
- People who have never entered the labour market for carrying out unpaid or unregulated tasks
- Persons with a temporary and/or “atypical” job
- Unemployed people who do not accredit previous insertion activities
- Homeless persons who cannot register in the local registers. This registration “*empadronamiento*” is a common requisite among the Autonomous Communities as the scheme is regionally based.

Apart from the constant advocacy for a better income support system by EAPN and other NGOs, there was a call for increased efficiency in the use of public resources by the European Union.

Country Report 2018, European Commission (CSR of 2017, as written by the Council)

<p><b>CSR 2:</b> Reinforce the coordination between regional employment services, social services and employers, to better respond to jobseekers’ and employers’ needs. Take measures to promote hiring on open-ended contracts. Address regional disparities and fragmentation in income guarantee schemes and improve family support, including access to quality childcare. Increase the labour market relevance of tertiary education. Address regional disparities in educational outcomes, in particular by strengthening teacher training and support for individual students. (MIP-relevant)</p>	<p><b>Limited progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some progress in reinforcing coordination between employment services, social services and employers</li> <li>• Limited progress in promoting hiring on open-ended contracts</li> <li>• Limited progress in addressing fragmentation in income guarantee schemes and improving family support</li> <li>• Limited progress in increasing labour market relevance of tertiary education</li> <li>• Limited progress in addressing regional disparities in educational outcomes</li> </ul>
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**The weaknesses of family benefits and income guarantee schemes limit the capacity of social transfers to reduce poverty.** Social transfers other than pensions reduced the overall risk of poverty in Spain by 22.9% in 2018. As flagged up in the Pillar of Social rights Scoreboard, this is one of the lowest values in the EU, 10.3 pps below the EU average. The poverty-reduction effect is particularly low for children, in a context of low and poorly targeted income support for families. Contributory unemployment benefits are relatively effective in Spain in terms of coverage and adequacy. By contrast, the non-contributory unemployment assistance has major shortcomings. 77% of the very long-term unemployed in Spain receive no benefits (EPA, Q1-2019). The maximum amount of non-contributory unemployment assistance received is €430 a month, equivalent to less than half the statutory minimum wage.<sup>47</sup>

The effectiveness of poverty reduction for every Euro invested is very low in Spain. Social protection (including pensions) represents a 19.2% of GDP in EU-28 average, while it's only 16.9% in Spain. This 2.3 percentage points difference accounts for more than 27 billion euro. There is a very low investment in social protection of families and children (1.2% of GDP), below the EU average (2.3% of GDP), around 5 billion euro less in Spain, although the fertility rates are among the lowest and the child poverty rate among the highest. There isn't a universal child allowance, therefore having children is a risk factor for becoming poor.

**EAPN ES, very active in this matter since 2014 within the EU-funded EMIN Program, sent the government a detailed proposal which not only took into account the scheme's consistency and viability but also brought the binding arguments provided by people experiencing poverty, agreed through their participation at numerous national and regional meetings.**

**During the former Socialist government, Spain adopted a National strategy to prevent and combat poverty, 2019-2023.** One of the main measures proposed was the “Ingreso Mínimo Vital”, but neither the political climate, nor the national budget gave room for its development, as reflected in the 2019 National Reform Program.

The plan to concretize a Guaranteed Minimum Income dates back to December 2019, when the Socialist Party (PSOE) and Unidas Podemos struck a governing agreement after the inconclusive results of the November general election. In this deal, the parties agreed to create “a general mechanism to guarantee earnings for families with no or low income.”

### **3.7.2. The new *Ingreso Mínimo Vital* (Guarantee Minimum Income)**

The social-democrat government in Spain assumed the task of sustaining its economy with anti-cyclical measures, costing €300 billion in all, aim to safeguard the viability of business, the employment of millions of Spaniards and the supply of essential goods for a population constrained by the virus. It is a window of opportunity for the Sánchez government to demonstrate that the state can prevent mass layoffs and generate security to households who were already struggling. Among other measures, the Spanish government also adopted important measures, as the work temporary retention schemes (ERTE), which prevented the

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<sup>47</sup> European Commission, Country Report Spain, 2020.

layoffs of thousands of workers during the State of Alarm, as is currently preparing a special unemployment payment of €430 that would benefit 550,000 jobseekers, while is improving the conditions of the furlough scheme for part-time workers.

In the context of an unequal adaptation and lack of coverage of regional systems, as well as an increase in poverty and vulnerability, caused by unemployment and the general economic crisis related to confinement<sup>48</sup>, the Spanish government took the opportunity to launch a new “Ingreso Mínimo Vital”, Guaranteed Minimum Income, to help 850,000 vulnerable families, on May 29, within a set of measures called “Social Shield.”

Finance Minister María Jesús Montero called the guaranteed minimum income scheme “a giant step in the fight against inequality in our country.” The program aims to lift around 1.6 million people out of extreme poverty, a group that represents 12.4% of the population, compared with the EU average of 6.9%. And 26.1% of the population is at risk of poverty, meaning that they are living on less than 60% of the median income, or €8,871 a year.

“Today is a historic day for our democracy,” added Deputy Prime Minister Pablo Iglesias, who is the leader of the leftist Unidas Podemos, at the press conference held during the presentation of the measure. “Today this government is showing that its political choice is social justice and that it takes the [Spanish] Constitution seriously.”

### 3.7.3. Characteristics

To be able to access, the claimant has to register at the Social Security electronic headquarters, where there is a simulator to find out whether or not you can benefit from the minimum vital income.

Households must prove they are in a vulnerable situation with a household income in the year before of less than €5,500 for a single person up to approximately €12,000 maximum for the case of a couple with three children, for example.

Migrants who have been living in Spain for more than a year could also claim the new benefit, with the residency requirement waived if the person has been the victim of abuse or trafficking.

Adults between the age of 23 and 65 who live alone can also be eligible.

The amount each claimant will receive will vary between a minimum of €462 and a maximum of €1,100 per month depending on family composition. If there is a single-parent household, there are additional €100. The benefit could complement other income as low-wages, pensions, or regional benefit up to the established maximum.

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<sup>48</sup> Spain's GDP is to drop by 9.2 percent this year and unemployment is expected to rise from 14.4 percent to 19 percent. In September 2020, it is already above 20% in Andalusia, Canary Islands, Extremadura, Ceuta and Melilla. Immigrants' unemployment rate is also very high, at 27.13%, while the Spaniards rate is 13.86%. Spain has now the highest EU youth unemployment rate of the EU. Source: INE, Economic Population Survey, 2 T, 2020.

The claimant must be enrolled in the Employment Services and be willing to follow an activation program.

The new scheme from the Social Security Ministry is compatible with existing regional aid and low-income or temporary employment.

#### **3.7.4. Assessment**

Civil society positively values measures such as the approval of the Minimum Vital Income that, according to estimates by the Spanish High Commissioner for the Fight against Child Poverty, will allow more than 400,000 children to get out of very high poverty.

The new “Ingreso Mínimo Vital” is intended to provide a lifeline for people experiencing extreme poverty and social exclusion to enable them to remain active in the society, reconnect to the world of work and live a life in dignity.

**This last resort non-contributory benefit does not seek, at least for the moment, to eradicate poverty, but it does seek to reduce it in its most extreme aspect by 80%, taking some 550,000 families out of the threshold known as “extreme poverty”. It is a first step in the good direction to building a social and fairer Spain by implementing principle 14 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.**

**However, the exclusion of highly vulnerable groups such as migrants and youth can impede the progress in ending poverty though. Having well-designed work incentives features (including childcare costs) and achieving cooperation between the central and regional governments will be key for its success.**

The case of Spain illustrates how policy reform to establish accessible, adequate and enabling minimum income schemes could be the right path to fight poverty and social exclusion, and highlights the importance of supportive EU-level frameworks to grant an EU free of poverty in every MS.

### **3.8. NGO**

During the State of Alarm, NGOs experienced cuts in the call for proposals and in the available funding. There have been stoppages, delays, cuts and reformulations of NGO programs in order to meet the socio-health needs generated by COVID-19. These financing problems have generated an increase in ERTE for those workers in non-essential services and in layoffs in the NGO that had to close, due to not having received the funds granted by the regional Administration.

Social NGOs had to face the impact of lockdown and confinement measures on their services, with an abrupt increase in demand of basic emergency aid, hygienic kits, and rooming for homeless.

Supply of food through food banks suffered a high increase due to the loss of family income of those who didn't receive the cash support or who were waiting for the cash support to appear. Those working in the shadow economy, that virtually stopped functioning, were particularly affected, as they cannot apply to the cash support measures. The access to the new "Ingreso Mínimo Vital" is very delayed in September 2020, with only 90,000 claimants accepted, from nearly 900,000 applications.

This new, increased food distribution comes from donations and reorganization of NGO expenditures in order to get/distribute more protection gears and food.

Non-utilized Structural Funds have been partially reoriented towards COVID-19 related demands.

Erica Camargo is close to tears when she arrives to pick up her first basket of food from the Red Cross. She lost her job in a hotel in Barcelona the night before and has not yet received any unemployment benefit. With three children and a disabled husband to feed, she is unsure how she will manage.

*"I am in shock. The worst thing is the uncertainty about the future," she says, as she picks up a box of fresh vegetables, frozen fish and rabbit from a pick-up point outside Barcelona. "I don't know how I am going to feed my family."*

Camargo joins the growing ranks of Spain's new poor, who led normal lives until the Covid-19 epidemic forced them into dependence on handouts. *"Since the virus started, we have seen a total cross-section of society come for help,"* says Manolo Jerez, a Red Cross manager. *"I have lived here all my life and what has affected me most is to see friends and people I know come in here and ask for help. There is a mixture of necessity and shame on their part."*

**Since the country went into lockdown in March, the Red Cross has offered help to 1.6 million people – five times more than in the same period in 2019.**

Graham Keely, "Hunger queues' and use of food banks on the rise as Spain struggles to recover from coronavirus", *The Independent*, May 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, at <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/food-banks-spain-hunger-coronavirus-poverty-covid-19-a9536341.html>

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1. Framework recommendations

The following are 5 framework recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Advance towards gender equality in Spain, without leaving anyone behind, due to poverty, vulnerability or social exclusion (Principle 2 of the PEDS, SDG 5, all the goals and SDG 10, goal 10.3.). In 2020, 25 years after the promising Beijing Summit, we will not yet have achieved gender equality and, instead, we are witnessing systematic



processes of violence against women and the existence of misogynistic populist governments in many countries of the world, including some of the largest and most powerful. While in 2020 we will reach the 5-year mark of the Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, of its Goal 5 consisting of "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls", we must continue to firmly defend the commitments made in Beijing, especially those that have not yet been made. In Spain, an explicit commitment should be reached with the incorporation of the gender perspective in all the objectives, goals and indicators included in the 2030 Agenda. Both the European Union and Spain can and should do more to advance decisively and sustained towards gender equality.

Recommendation 2: Improve the quality of employment (Principles 4 and 5 of the PEDS and SDG 8, targets 8.5. And 8.8.). In addition to solving the problem of job offers, it is necessary to address the poor quality of a good part of these and the precariousness of the market. Many of these mainly affect the young population, women, people with disabilities and immigrants. Therefore, the current characteristics of the contract should be reviewed and the precarious aspects that are in force should be eliminated.

Recommendation 3: Invest in the creation of new small businesses (Principle 5 of the PEDS and SDG 8, goal 8.3.). In addition to saving existing small businesses, we consider that it is necessary to strengthen entrepreneurial initiative by establishing policies and objectives aimed at impregnating entrepreneurial attitude with professional and labour orientation in education, so that the social economy and self-employment are inserted really in formal and professional training plans. Within this context, resources should be invested in supervised entrepreneurship (to reduce the failure rate) and support young entrepreneurs with a base-social salary and two years exempt from taxes. From a gender perspective, it is proposed that women who want to develop their own companies be financed, trained and supported, since they tend to have less access to credit and training.

Recommendation 4: Invest in the development of the social economy (Principle 5 of the PEDS and SDG 8, target 8.3.). The creation of quality employment is essential for the economy, but also for people who have been unemployed for a long time. In addition to measures aimed at strengthening the standardized labour market, we propose that the business sector of the social economy be promoted. Through new and sufficient insertion companies, social companies and special employment centres, of social initiative, it will be possible to tackle unemployment in groups that have difficulties accessing the labour market, such as people over 45 and people with disabilities. Continue to improve and expand the concepts of "social clause" and "market reserve". Encouraging companies and public administrations to hire people in situations of exclusion and / or subcontract part of their production with insertion companies and with special social initiative employment centres.

Recommendation 5: Reconvert the carbon economy to the green, clean and circular economy (SDG 12, 13, 14 and 15). The EU is committed to decarbonizing the European economy, through the Green Deal. Spain is one of the countries most affected by climate change and the level of preparedness for its consequences is low. In this process, it is necessary to incorporate a social transition, which leaves no one behind. Investment in small companies is proposed to associate young professionals in all aspects related to the green economy (transition to clean energy, recovery and protection of natural and human habitat,



efficient use of resources, recycling, reuse ...) with the EU transition fund within the Green Pact. All companies and institutions should develop and implement a conversion plan in this regard. The educational system should incorporate the contents of this productive transformation, so that the new generations are pioneers (even more so) in the defence of the environment and sustainability. With adequate financing, social economy companies are willing to incorporate these Green Pact indicators when creating jobs.

## 4.2. Specific recommendations

These are specific recommendations related to COVID-19:

### 4.2.1. Healthcare

1. The COVID-19 pandemic poses an extraordinary challenge to public health. The impact is estimated at several tens of thousands of deaths and a level of stress in the health system that has driven the collapse of many health units in the last weeks of March and the first weeks of April of this year 2020. With the help of this experience, preparation for future epidemic shocks must be guaranteed, in better conditions to protect the population in the diversity of situations that exist.
2. It is essential to ensure universal and free access to medical care and health and public health resources. Public administrations in all their strata must commit themselves in a reliable way to maintain this guaranteed, universal and free access.
3. A consolidated and universal health system is also essential if we want to build an inclusive society free of poverty and social exclusion. In addition to the "determinants of health" as understood by the National Health Survey of the National Institute of Statistics, there are other economic and social factors that are not being assessed (and should be taken into account), such as poverty and material deprivation severe chronic in time; the effect of energy poverty and poor diet on health; the circumstances of children living in families that have been poor for more than one generation; involuntary loneliness; the accumulation of major problems in the family; addictions to legal gambling; anti-vaccination movements, among others. These factors are playing an important role in the way extreme measures, such as prolonged confinement or the suspension of economic activity, are endured.
4. Any measure in the health field that leads to breaking the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination of migrants, especially those who are in an irregular situation, should be avoided, eliminating those that still exist, especially in terms of pharmaceutical services.
5. Investment in public health must be reinforced to reverse these problems, solve the current crisis as adequately as possible and lay the foundations to prevent those to come.
6. The employment situation of medical and health personnel must be protected and improved.
7. Resources and plans for mental and oral health care should be established. These plans should be quickly integrated into an updated healthcare portfolio with a comprehensive healthcare vision.
8. Similar services must be guaranteed in all Autonomous Communities and facilities so that people can access medical care and specialists in other Autonomous Communities other than the one of residence.

9. Re-invest in disease prevention and address the consequences of the current pandemic.

#### 4.2.2. Income protection

1. As the Final report of the United Nations Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty to Spain underlines, COVID-19 has revealed major flaws in public policies to combat poverty in Spain. The data from the Living Conditions Survey certify the need to continue promoting and defining measures such as the Minimum Vital Income, placing it above the poverty threshold, as well as its coverage so that it reaches all the people who need it. Therefore, it is crucial to fully develop the protective capacity of the *Ingreso Mínimo Vital*, the Guaranteed Minimum Income.
2. **EAPN has consistently worked on the topic of decent wages**, and this mainly since 2010 in the framework of a **long-standing thematic focus on fighting in-work poverty and promoting quality jobs and employment as part of integrated active inclusion policies**. One key insight guiding EAPN's policy and advocacy work is that **not any job is a sure route out of poverty** and that **many people are in employment, but still face financial hardship and/or social exclusion**. A second main guiding theme for EAPN is that **in order for employment to fulfil its role of effectively shielding people from a life in poverty, it needs to fulfil a set of quality criteria**. Broadly in line with trade union requests, for EAPN quality jobs are those with decent standards on pay and other work-related benefits, decent working conditions, good health and occupational safety protection, and access to lifelong learning and career prospects. Therefore, **EAPN has consistently called for an EU framework on minimum wages which follows these criteria**.
3. Under Key Principle number six, which deals with wages, the European Pillar of Social Rights lays down the following three commitments: one, the right of workers "to fair wages that provide for a decent living standard"; two, the commitment to ensure "adequate minimum wages ... in a way that provide for the satisfaction of the needs of the worker and his / her family"; and three, the commitment to prevent "in-work poverty". Minimum Wages are **key for ensuring fair working conditions and decent living standards for all workers** in the EU. They are **essential to protect low-wage workers and to prevent in-work poverty**. It is crucial to protect income from employment and grant that jobs are decent and provide sufficient income, so that a decent standard of living can be maintained. With the current long-term unemployment rates, it is essential to promote active policies in favour of people with a greater risk of exclusion from the labour market, also counting on market reserve contracts. Measures must be established against precarious and ultra-precarious employment, the abusive use of "scholarships" and false self-employment, formats that promote the existence and growth of the rate of poor workers and job insecurity. The conciliation between care (of children and adults) and employment has to be widespread, effective and affordable.
4. Ensure that the pension system also provide an adequate standard of living. Social protection and, particularly, the pension system is a key Welfare State's hallmark in Spain. At least three aspects that require corrective measures are the outdated amounts with respect to the CPI, the feminization of the lower amounts and the negative impact on rural areas (51% of people over 65 years of age live in

municipalities with less 1,000 inhabitants and 74% in those with less than 100 inhabitants).

5. Income guarantee policies should contemplate corrective actions for gender inequality. Women are more affected by lower wages, involuntary part-time hours, the wage gap with respect to men and the greater dedication of time to reproductive care, all of which have an impact on their lower income in the active and active ages. passive. Income guarantee policies must introduce mechanisms to promote and monitor equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
6. Discrimination has also spread to other sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, family situation, sexual orientation, rurality, among other factors, having repercussions in strong inequalities in the labour market and in household income.

#### 4.2.3. Sustainability, digitalisation

7. The economic activities that are promoted with public funds have to adjust more and more to the environmental conditions in increasing deterioration and scarcity, betting on the circular and social economy and contributing to the sustainable development of rural regions, especially those located in danger from climate and demographic change. Because we defend the well-being of people, we must also demand the responsibility of the authorities in the defence and protection of non-renewable and renewable natural resources, both in Spain and abroad, increasing technological investment for innovation and the creation of new jobs with this perspective.
8. It is utterly important to develop skills to embrace the digital economy in the labour market. In order to increase work and personal opportunities, in a context of constant technological change and globalization, it is necessary to extend the participation of adults in lifelong learning and, especially, of those with low qualifications, with a special attention to the retraining of women who have had to interrupt their working lives or their education due to family responsibilities, and young women who are not trained in science and technology

### Annex. Advocacy: “Futuro en Común” Alliance

We live in a scandalously unequal world. Unequal in economic terms in the first place. We must remember that half of humanity survives on less than five and a half dollars a day, while only 25 people concentrate more wealth than 40% of all humanity! But it is also unequal in access to education, culture or technology; unequal in rights, in the distribution of power, in gender relations. Not surprisingly, the growing inequality between and within countries, together with the environmental unsustainability of our development model, were the two great global challenges identified by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda.

In this scenario, already worrying in itself, the Coronavirus appears to turn everything even more upside down. We are facing an unprecedented global health crisis, which will have serious social and economic consequences throughout the world. All countries and all people are potentially at risk. However, there is no doubt, it will be the most vulnerable countries and people who will receive the most social and economic blow from this disease.

It does not take great knowledge to understand it. The impoverished countries do not have the economic, political and institutional muscle necessary to respond forcefully to a global health emergency like the one we are facing. The fragility of their public health systems, together with institutional weakness or lack of resources, predicts a more than likely collapse of their health services. And we also know it before it happens, all this is coupled with a great economic and social crisis, in which the most vulnerable have the upper hand.

In our country, as well as in the rest of the developed world, the starting point is qualitatively better in terms of resources and capacities to face the health emergency. We are already suffering the onslaught of the virus. And we are already fighting it. Without a doubt, we will suffer the loss of many people and perhaps, some loved ones or acquaintances. But once again, the most devastating effects will fall on the poorest and most vulnerable population in our society.

Let's think for a moment about the implications of this crisis for people in a precarious job situation, or for those who live off the leftovers of the shadow economy. In domestic workers or caregivers, who do not fall within the measures to face the crisis. Let us think of homeless people, migrants in an irregular administrative situation, single-parent families or people - women, minors - in a situation of violence. In children and young people without tools to face online education in these weeks ... Somehow this health emergency shows that, as long as we continue to be infected by the virus of inequality, which grows and expands every day, we have much to do, to build an inclusive and sustainable world, in which no one is left behind.

That is why the organizations that make up *Futuro en Común* consider it urgent, in this context, to regain awareness of the importance of building, caring for and maintaining fair and supportive social structures, which allow us to get out of crisis and emergencies like the one we are experiencing together these days. A robust Welfare State. A universal, solvent and effective public health. Public services with the capacity to defend and guarantee the rights of citizens and the essential elements for a decent life.

In the design of reconstruction, our most recent history must be kept in mind: the neoliberal model of exit from the financial crisis of 2008 cannot be repeated. This exit will only be fair and sustainable if it is oriented towards a profound transformation of the foundations of the current development model and prominently incorporates policy coherence. The 2030 Agenda must be the roadmap to follow. And for this to make a difference, we consider essential:

- To walk towards an economic model that places care for life, people and the planet at its center, promoting sustainable sectors. Subjecting the model solely to economic growth generates unsustainable imbalances and reduces our resilience in the face of crises such as the one we are now experiencing.
- Guarantee labor rights and working conditions that allow a dignified life, considering the usually invisible care work, essential for life and for the existence of other economic dimensions, whose imperative need has emerged as never before in the situation we are going through.
- Shielding a system of social rights and social protection, solid and efficient, to protect the most vulnerable people in any context.

- Reform the tax system to increase its sufficiency, progressiveness and redistributive capacity, as key elements of social cohesion and so that no one is left behind. Reconstruction will require a new vision in the planning of public policies but also in the collection of the necessary resources to promote them. The fiscal burden of the exit from the crisis cannot be at the expense of the most vulnerable layers of society as it happened in 2008.
- Guarantee protection against violence and discrimination. The acts of discrimination and stigmatization towards certain groups since the health emergency began, alert us to the need to move towards a more inclusive society that neutralizes hate speech.
- Strengthen the leadership of our country in the international arena. The pandemic also shows us once again that the great challenges we face are global and require an internationally articulated response. Spain must improve its contribution, through international cooperation, to the defense of Human Rights and global public goods, such as health.
- Guarantee an ecological transition that leads us to a society that is neutral in emissions, resilient and that restores and preserves the natural heritage for the next generations. The exceptionality measures have led to a drastic reduction in consumption and emissions, undesirable because it was not planned according to criteria of social and economic justice, but which can serve as learning to propose ways of life with a lower carbon footprint.

Philip Alston, United Nations rapporteur for extreme poverty and human rights, said in an interview in *EL PAÍS* after his recent visit to Spain, that "The word abandonment has sounded recurrently. People feel abandoned. They do not receive the support they would expect from the Government, the local authorities, the education system, the protection system ... They just feel that they are on their own. "

From *Futuro en Común* we trust that these words, nowhere on the planet, will be repeated. For this, of course, it is essential to leave the Coronavirus crisis behind. But we can't do it either way. We must overcome it without leaving anyone behind.

***Futuro En Común*, Andrés Amayuelas (CONGD), Felix Ovejero (CCOO) y Graciela Malgesini (EAPN), El País, March 25th, 2020.**





## Nuestras redes y entidades miembro

### *19 redes autonómicas:*

EAPN-**Illes Balears**- Xarxa per la Inclusió Social • Red **Andaluza** de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Red **Aragonesa** de Entidades Sociales para la Inclusión • Red Europea contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **Castilla y León** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión social en **Asturias** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de **Canarias** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **Castilla-La Mancha** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **Euskadi** • Red **Madrileña** de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Red de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de la **Región de Murcia** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de **Extremadura** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social de **Melilla** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **Cantabria** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **Ceuta** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en el Estado Español de la Comunidad Autónoma de **Galicia** • Red Europea de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en **La Rioja** • Red **Navarra** de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social • Taula d'Entitats del Tercer Sector Social de **Catalunya** • Xarxa per la Inclusió social de la **Comunitat Valenciana**

### *Y 18 entidades estatales:*

Accem • Acción Contra el Hambre • Cáritas Española • Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR) • Confederación de Centros de Desarrollo Rural (COCEDER) • Confederación Española de Personas con Discapacidad Física y Orgánica (COCEMFE) • Cruz Roja Española • Federación de Mujeres Progresistas (FMP) • Fundación Cepaim • Fundación Cruz Blanca • Fundación Esplai • Fundación Secretariado Gitano • Hogar Sí • Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL) • Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) • Plena Inclusión • Provivienda • Unión Española de Asociaciones y Entidades de Atención al Drogodependiente (UNAD)



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