

Initiatives to reduce poverty and social exclusion among children and recommendations for the implementation of the European Child Guarantee in Spain

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Acronyms

ABA	Applied Behaviour Analysis
AIReF	<i>Autoridad Independiente de Responsabilidad Fiscal</i>
AGE	<i>Administración General del Estado</i>
ALADINO	<i>Alimentación, Actividad física, Desarrollo Infantil y Obesidad en España</i>
AROE	At risk of poverty and social exclusion
ACs	Autonomous Communities
CDIAP	<i>Centres de desenvolupament infantil i atenció precoç</i>
CEIP	<i>Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria</i>
CERMI	<i>Comité Español de Representantes de personas con discapacidad</i>
CIS	<i>Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas</i>
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
DG	Direction General
E20	Second chance schools
EAPN	European Anti-Poverty Network
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ECG	European Child Guarantee
ECV	<i>Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida</i>
EPA	<i>Encuesta de Población Activa</i>
EPF	<i>Encuesta de Presupuestos Familiares</i>
ENSE	<i>Encuesta Nacional de Salud de España</i>
ESCS	Economic, social and cultural status
ESL	Early school leaving
ESSPROS	European System of integrated Social Protection Statistics
EU	European Union
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
FUCI	<i>Federación de Usuarios Consumidores Independientes</i>

HBSC	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study
IES	<i>Institutos de Educación Secundaria</i>
IMV	<i>Ingreso Mínimo Vital</i>
INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística</i>
INEE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa</i>
INSS	<i>Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social</i>
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MIS	Minimum Income Scheme
MODA	Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (UNICEF)
MSCBS	<i>Ministerio de Sanidad, Consumo y Bienestar Social</i>
MEYFP	<i>Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional</i>
NAP	National Action Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAE	<i>Programa de acompañamiento escolar</i>
PAR	<i>Programa de Apoyo y Refuerzo a IES</i>
PIAF	<i>Plan Integral de Apoyo a la Familia</i>
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PENIA	<i>Plan Estratégico Nacional de Infancia y Adolescencia</i>
PFHC	<i>Prestación Familiar por Hijo a Cargo</i>
PMAR	<i>Programa Mejora Aprendizaje y Rendimiento</i>
PROA	<i>Programas de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo</i>
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special education needs
SEPE	<i>Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal</i>
SEPES	<i>Entidad Estatal del Suelo</i>
SES	Socio-economic status
SSB	Sugar-sweetened beverage
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Introduction

The European Child Guarantee (ECG) aims to address the socioeconomic vulnerability of children in Europe through an integrated approach, which seeks to ensure that every child in Europe has guaranteed access to free and good quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), education and healthcare, good nutrition and decent housing. Meeting these five basic needs through national and European action plans will improve living conditions and opportunities for children in need significantly. The ECG pays particular attention to groups of children who are particularly vulnerable, including:

- homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation
- children with disabilities
- children with mental health issues
- children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma
- children in alternative (especially institutional) care
- children in precarious family situations.

In 2015, the European Parliament called on the European Commission and the European Union Member States, *“in view of the weakening of public services, to introduce a Child Guarantee so that every child in poverty can have access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition, as part of a European integrated plan to combat child poverty”*.

The European Commission proposal for the ECG was adopted by the European Union’s Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in June 2021. The focus is on effective and free access to quality services in the fields of early childhood education and care (ECEC), education, health care, nutrition and adequate housing.

The European Commission (DG Employment) has partnered with the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (UNICEF ECARO) to test how the ECG could work in practice and provide recommendations for the successful design and implementation of the ECG. As part of this engagement, UNICEF ECARO has been working since July 2020 with national and local governments from seven EU Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Spain) and key national and local stakeholders in these countries.

Part of this support has included the development of 'policy deep dive' country studies. The overall objective of these deep dives is to support the national governments in the seven pilot countries to design, implement, and evaluate ECG. The deep dives are designed to provide the information and evidence base that governments need for the development of evidence-informed Child Guarantee National Action Plans (CGNAPs). The deep dive analyses look at policies, services, budgets, and mechanisms to address children’s service access barriers and unmet needs in the five thematic areas of the ECG: early childhood education and care (ECEC), education, health, nutrition, and housing.

The deep dives have been designed to help governments to identify the children who should be prioritized in their future CGNAPs and to recommend the policy measures that need to be put in place at national, regional and local levels to complement existing policy measures that have been effective in providing positive outcomes for children. In addition, the deep dives identify, compile and recommend indicators that could be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of the CGNAPs and recommendations on how to address the identified gaps in data.

For more information on the ECG, see:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1428&langId=en>

About this report

As part of the preparatory studies for the implementation of the ECG in Spain, this document provides a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of the policies, programmes, systems, processes, and mechanisms that have aimed to address child poverty and social exclusion in Spain in recent years.

In the first chapter we review the situation of child poverty in Spain, as well as the basic policy framework that is in place to address monetary poverty and material deprivation among children in this country. In chapters two to five we explore the different policy areas that are at the core of the ECG (ECEC, education, health and nutrition, and housing), identifying the main lessons learned from the initiatives implemented to date by different public and private actors in those areas.

These experiences are intended to inform the proposal of specific programmes for inclusion in the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the ECG in Spain. A series of targets to be achieved by 2030 are listed to guide public administrations in the coming years in their efforts to reduce child poverty and social exclusion and a set of key indicators is proposed to monitor the progress of those initiatives. Finally, we provide a mapping of the distribution of responsibilities assumed by the different levels of public administration (national, regional and local) in relation to the regulation, financing, implementation and evaluation of the measures affected by the ECG.

This ‘deep-dive’ report is accompanied by a detailed literature review conducted by the same authors.¹

¹ UNICEF, *Diagnosis of the situation for children in Spain before the implementation of the European Child Guarantee*, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, Geneva, 2021.

1. MAIN POLICY FRAMEWORK TO CONFRONT CHILD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN SPAIN

- The resources devoted to policies for families and children in Spain have always been limited and, as a result, these policies have had little impact on the poverty and social exclusion experienced by many households with children.
- As a result of decentralization, policymaking tasks are scattered across the different levels of government and current schemes do not provide a coherent safety net to protect the unemployed – a situation exacerbated by a lack of disaggregated and comparable data.
- The effective implementation of the ECG in Spain requires major improvements in policy coordination and integration, backed by a political will to drive greater investment in policies for families and children and in the systematic collection of data on the most vulnerable groups.

Introduction

The interventions by public administrations to tackle child poverty and social exclusion in Spain are framed by a series of policies that have taken shape over the past two decades. These policies have helped to position children at the centre of efforts to promote equality and to fight against the most negative consequences of socioeconomic inequalities. This trend can be observed both at the Central Government level, and among Spain's Autonomous Communities (ACs).

Many of the policies to address children's well-being and fight against child poverty and social exclusion in Spain come under the powers of its ACs. The Central Government is responsible for the definition of the basic normative framework in this domain. It has, in this capacity, passed policy initiatives to provide support to families, such as the Comprehensive Family Support Plan (PIAF: 2015-2017),² particularly for families that have children and are living in a situation of severe material deprivation.

Other policies include the II Strategic National Plan for Childhood and Adolescence (II PENIA) (2013-2016)³ to promote support to families in the areas of care, education, the comprehensive development of children, and work-family balance. The Youth and Adolescence Protection Act, passed in July 2015,⁴ aims to address situations of risk and helplessness for children and for voluntary guardianship, as well as foster care and adoption.

In March 2019, the Spanish Central Government launched a new National Strategy for preventing and fighting poverty and social exclusion (2019-2023).⁵ This included the gradual implementation of a minimum income scheme (MIS) at the national level that should be compatible with the regional MIS (Marbán and Arriba, 2019). This Strategy focuses in

² tinyurl.com/ygn34mb3.

³ tinyurl.com/ygl2rabr.

⁴ Law 26/2015, 28 July, modification of protection of children and adolescents, <https://goo.gl/ijk34M>.

⁵ tinyurl.com/yz7amy7h.

particular on the fight against child poverty and social exclusion and makes explicit mention of the need to intervene in the areas of family policies, ECEC, inclusive education, adequate healthcare and nutrition services and housing.⁶ The ECG has the potential to contribute, in particular to the objectives of this key Strategy through its focus on the most vulnerable children.

All of these specific policies to support children must be framed within an environment of cross-cutting policies that support plans to combat child poverty and social exclusion. Here, we must mention the global Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The 2021 report detailing Spain's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁷ (*Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030*, 2021) highlights that the first 'lever' policy is the "*prevention and fight against poverty, inequality and social exclusion*". This policy focuses, in particular, on the fight against child poverty and social exclusion.

Other notable policy strategies, including the National Strategy against Energy Poverty 2019-2024,⁸ build on the SDGs, as well as the European Directive 2009/72/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the EU,⁹ the Winter Package,¹⁰ and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The State Housing Plan 2018-2021 and the Comprehensive National Strategy for Homelessness 2015-2020, also reinforce an institutional framework that has national and regional policies in place to support the design and implementation of the ECG in Spain.

The basic regulatory framework established by the Central Government to promote the well-being and protection of children is then replicated by ACs. They develop their own normative frameworks to define interventions to address child poverty and social exclusion in the most effective way, given the specific circumstances within their territories.

In this regard, it is important to note that decentralization has been one of the most significant trends in the institutional development of the Welfare State in Spain. This has resulted in a complex structure in which policymaking tasks are shared across the different levels of government. In Annex 2, we identify five territorial policymaking dimensions (decision-making, funding, implementation, evaluation and coordination) for the five key programme areas analysed in this report.

This intergovernmental complexity can be found in almost every area of public policy related to children, but particularly in programmes linked to health and education. In the case of social benefits, the main responsibilities for decision-making and funding tend to lie with one single level of government (either the Central Government or the ACs), but subnational levels of government are often involved in implementation when benefits are provided by the Central Government, such as the *Ingreso Mínimo Vital* (IMV) or unemployment benefits. The role of the Central Government in ECEC (and to some extent in housing) tends to be limited to the development of framework legislation.

⁶Estrategia Nacional de Prevención y Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social 2019-2023: <http://bit.ly/2KQkPNo>.

⁷<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

⁸tinyurl.com/yfh2amyf.

⁹tinyurl.com/yhlt7j3z.

¹⁰tinyurl.com/yhr5okg5.

While there is no national public policy evaluation programme, as such, in Spain, some agencies have taken on public policy evaluation tasks (such as AIReF)¹¹ to evaluate different health and education programmes as well as the IMV. There are other types of instruments, such as national surveys, which may allow for evaluations to be carried out, and there may also be internal ministerial technical analyses, but they are rarely published.

Sectoral or ministerial conferences or councils (and the second-level intergovernmental bodies within them) are the key instruments of intergovernmental coordination across governmental levels. As noted in the literature review that is part of this deep-dive analysis (Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021) they are found in all public policy sectors. This does not mean, however, that these bodies discuss the specific programmes that fall under the ACs. In addition, horizontal coordination is often deficient or absent among subnational governments (without the Central Government). Finally, as outlined in the literature review, decisions on the organization of inter-sectoral coordination can be complicated, particularly decisions about which of the national and regional ministries should be involved when discussing children's issues (Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021).

We focus our review of policies against child poverty and social exclusion on the cash-transfer programmes that aim to grant an income to vulnerable households that have children and that have particularly precarious or non-existent links to the labour market. Such programmes constitute one of the most common and efficient tools to reduce poverty, including the poverty that affects children.

1.1. The role of traditional cash-transfer programmes in the fight against child poverty and social exclusion

The chronically high levels of child poverty in Spain are linked directly to the country's traditionally high unemployment rates, the extreme segmentation and precariousness of its labour market and, most notably, to the limited effectiveness of its social benefits (Ayala and Cantó, 2020; Cantó and Sobas, 2020). The country's unemployment protection system has always been highly fragmented. A complex and largely incoherent set of benefits and subsidies organized at various levels has failed to cover all unemployed groups, most notably the long-term unemployed, women, those from a migrant background, youth, and workers with more precarious labour market trajectories.

As a result, these schemes do not provide a coherent safety net to protect the unemployed (Del Pino and Ramos, 2013; Toharia et al., 2009). In the first quarter of 2021, more than 663,000 households had no official income (salaries, pensions, unemployment benefits), and the children growing up within them were in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

Where unemployment benefits and subsidies do not reach, regional MIS are supposed to step in to prevent large numbers of families going without any formal source of income. These means-tested cash transfer programmes aim to guarantee basic monetary resources to vulnerable groups, together with initiatives to enhance their social integration and participation in the labour market – all intended to prevent poverty and social exclusion. These

¹¹ *Autoridad Independiente de Responsabilidad Fiscal* (Independent Authority for Fiscal Responsibility).

schemes are managed by regional or local social services¹², and there is no direct coordination with the unemployment protection system (other than checking that beneficiaries have exhausted their work-related entitlements before granting them access to MIS).

The Basque Country was the first AC to establish a formal MIS programme (in 1988), and the other 16 ACs had followed that example by the mid-1990s. Some regions have introduced expansive reforms of their respective MISs in recent years (such as Aragon, Castile-La Mancha, Basque Country, the Canary Islands). Other regions have introduced innovations to reduce conditionalities: Catalonia and Valencia, for example, have established a double level of benefit and conditionality, Navarre has reduced conditionality and delayed activation measures, while Cantabria and Aragon have introduced more flexibility. And others have introduced incentives to make work pay, such as Navarre and Valencia, following a path already developed by the Basque Country) (Aguilar and Arriba, 2020).

The mechanisms to establish the level of benefits are relatively similar across ACs: a basic amount for a single-person household is then supplemented with a defined percentage of that basic amount for each additional household member, with any other income received by the household subtracted from the benefit. However, while the mechanisms may be roughly the same, the benefit levels vary considerably across the different schemes for households with very similar levels of vulnerability. In addition, those levels are generally well below European adequacy standards (Ayala, 2016), and generally below 40 per cent of the national median income (NMI), with the exceptions of Navarre and the Basque Country (Zalakain, 2014). In 2018, the basic amount guaranteed for a one-person household ranged from €300 per month (Ceuta) to €644.49 per month in the Basque Country. This heterogeneity can also be seen in the supplements for additional household members.

Even if MIS design has been strongly influenced by horizontal emulation and policy learning mechanisms, they are still highly diverse at regional level (Noguera, 2019). There is, for example, a very large variation across Spain's ACs in the ratio of households receiving minimum income to the households at risk of monetary poverty. While two regions (Basque Country and Navarre) have a ratio of 75 to 90 per cent, followed at a large distance by Asturias (close to 40 per cent), most ACs have ratios below 15 per cent, with the ratios for some of the poorest falling below just 5 per cent. There are also wide variations in the amount of expenditure per inhabitant, and the share of the regional budget spent on MISs (Aguilar and Arriba, 2020).

It is not easy to assess the extent of effective access to a MIS, given the lack of adequate information on the actual practices taking place on the ground. The unequal nature of these schemes (with coverage bearing little relation to poverty, social exclusion or need in each region) seems to indicate that significant barriers prevent potential beneficiaries from accessing these programmes (see also Section 1.4). The lack of precision in the definition of the mechanisms that should ensure the rights and obligations of potential MIS beneficiaries seems to leave a wide margin for bureaucratic discretion, and for the development of (subjective) practices of behavioural control (Ayala, 2012; Cortinas, 2012).

As noted, the coverage of regional MIS has clearly been insufficient, and there have been huge differences between ACs. In addition to inadequate benefit levels, other potential obstacles have been linked to institutional factors around the administration of programmes, which tend

¹² In the Basque Country and Catalonia, they are run by employment services, and Navarre has developed cooperation mechanisms between social and employment services.

to favour a logic of social control and often lack the human and material resources they need to function adequately (Hernández et al., 2020). The lack of clear demarcation in the transitions between unemployment protection schemes, as well as between those unemployment schemes and MISs, implies that many unemployed workers spend long periods without any (or with only very limited) income, and without the resources that aim to reintegrate them into the labour market.

1.2. The limited role of ‘Family and children’ cash benefits and tax deductions

The resources devoted to ‘family and children’ policies in Spain have always been very limited and, as a result, these policies have had little impact on the poverty and social exclusion experienced by households with children (CES, 2019; Cantó and Ayala, 2014; León and Pavolini, 2014). The most important programme to support family and childhood has been structured around a Social Security non-contributory child benefit scheme, the Family Allowance for Dependent Children (*Prestación Familiar por Hijo a Cargo*, or PFHC) which has combined three key elements: a means-tested cash transfer programme for low-income families with underage children without disabilities or with a disability under 33 per cent¹³; an allowance for families with children who have a disability equal to or above 33 per cent (€1,000 in 2020); and a cash transfer for families with members above the age of 18 who have disabilities (€4,747.20 if the disability exceeds 65 per cent and €7,120.80 if the disability exceeds 75 per cent).¹⁴ The most common scheme was targeted to families whose annual income did not exceed €11,605.77 in 2018 (plus 15 per cent for every additional child).¹⁵

In March 2019, the government introduced a relatively significant increase in the child benefit for low-income families: the cash transfer increased from €281 to €341 per year, rising to €588 for families living in severe poverty (on less than 25 per cent of median equivalized income). The family income threshold was increased to €12,313 (rising to €18,532 for large families, plus €3,002 for every additional child).¹⁶

In 2019, the PFHC benefitted around 1.5 million recipients (1.3 million of them children). The total cost of the programme was €1,700 million, with around €610 million allocated to children in poverty, and the remaining €1,000 million devoted to families with sons and daughters with disabilities who were above the age of 18.¹⁷ However, this child benefit scheme has had relatively low coverage, with only 15.4 per cent of those under the age of 18 receiving it in 2019, partly because the maximum annual income eligibility threshold was actually lower than the national poverty threshold. In 2015, around one third – 33.5 per cent – children in poor households were not covered (Save the Children, 2017). The PFHC benefit was supplemented

¹³ The percentage of disability refers to a standardized and officially established system to measure the obstacles a person faces when performing daily activities such as moving, communicating, caring for themselves, etc. (tinyurl.com/yes734su).

¹⁴ The benefit basic amounts and income thresholds were established by the Social Security Act. The 2018 State Budget notes that these amounts and thresholds will be updated by the annual State Budget Act. (<https://goo.gl/bfuzh1>).

¹⁵ A clearly insufficient amount, as the poverty threshold for a household of two adults and two children was far higher, at €17,896.29 per year according to the 2017 EU-SILC, INE (<https://goo.gl/vioX8B>).

¹⁶ Royal Decree-Law 8/2019 (<http://bit.ly/2ZpNlt8>).

¹⁷ Social Security Statistics (<https://goo.gl/sevDx6>).

by a means-tested single payment benefit for multiple births, for large and single-parent families and for mothers with disabilities, which reached 33,720 beneficiaries in 2018.¹⁸

In addition to these benefits, Spain's personal income tax scheme introduced two refundable tax credits in 2003 that aim to support tax-paying working families. This first was a tax-credit scheme for working mothers of children aged 0 to 3 amounting to €1,200 per year and child; plus an additional €1,000 if childcare expenses for children under the age of 3 were spent in authorized ECEC centres (reaching 821,652 beneficiaries and totalling €752 million in 2016). The second was a scheme for large families, single-parent families or families that include someone with a disability that provides €1,200 per year/person, or €2,400 for large families with five or more children (reaching 952,649 beneficiaries in 2016 at a cost of €949 million.¹⁹

Despite the 2007 creation of a one-time universal allowance of €2,500 at the birth of a child, and the reinforcement of the (traditionally small) cash transfers for low-income families with children (with a slight increase in the amount for children under the age of 3 between 2008 and 2010), the effectiveness of these schemes in terms of reducing child poverty was moderate at best (Rodríguez-Cabrero et al., 2016). The Great Recession and the fiscal consolidation policies implemented in response to this crisis led to a significant reduction in the already meagre resources devoted to 'family and children'. For example, the amounts received by low-income families under the cash transfer schemes were almost halved in June 2010, and the universal childbirth benefit of €2,500 was cancelled.²⁰ Public spending on family policies, which had peaked at €349.80 per capita in 2009, had decreased to €279.2 by 2014.²¹

The tax reform implemented in January 2015 included additional tax incentives for families, particularly those in vulnerable situations, by including more favourable treatment for people with disabilities, the elderly, and large families in terms of taxation on their personal income. There was a significant increase (up to 32 per cent, according to the National Reform Programme, 2015)²² in exempt personal and family allowances. In addition, three new income tax schemes were introduced: for large families, single-parent families with two children and those with disabilities, or older family members,²³ but these did not improve the situation of these vulnerable families. Indeed, around 1 million families were supposed to benefit from these tax schemes, but the final impact in the reduction of poverty was negligible: families below the poverty threshold are not required to hand in their annual income tax declaration so most of them did not benefit from these schemes.²⁴

1.3. The new Minimum Living Income scheme

The need to improve MIS in Spain, and the idea of creating a national MIS to respond to the problems of regional schemes, had both been on the political agenda since 2015 (Aguilar and Arriba, 2020). The socioeconomic emergency triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated

¹⁸ Social Security Statistics (<https://goo.gl/WgVgst>).

¹⁹ In the case of large families, the amount of the deduction can be increased by up to €600 per year for each child above the minimum number of children required for the family to be considered a large family of a general or special category.

²⁰ Effective only between July 2007 and January 2011, benefitting around 450,000 families during that period.

²¹ Eurostat Database family/children function, spending on family benefits (cash and in-kind), 2005-2014.

²² tinyurl.com/yhld4m6v.

²³ The amount in 2015 was €1,200 per year, accruable for each family situation and with reimbursements that could be sought in advance in monthly payments of €100 per month.

²⁴ NRP 2015, page 129 (<http://goo.gl/JJI0QU>).

the design and implementation of a programme to protect people who had no access to the measures put in place to tackle the pandemic's specific consequences.

The Spanish Government introduced a new MIS, the IMV, in May 2020 as a national non-contributory social security benefit. Although this initiative is still awaiting final parliamentary approval, it represents a significant step forward against child poverty and social exclusion, which are positioned at the centre of the programme.

The IMV aims to guarantee a minimum income level to those households (including single-person households) that lack the economic resources to cover their basic needs. It is configured as a subjective right to a cash transfer, and is expected to boost opportunities for social and labour inclusion. Beneficiaries of this new scheme must live independently and must have had legal and effective residence in Spain for at least one year prior to applying (with some exceptions). Primary beneficiaries must be older than 23 and younger than 65 years old. A household is considered to be 'economically vulnerable' when its monthly average income in the previous fiscal year is lower than the monthly income guaranteed by the IMV.²⁵ The labour income of every member of the household is taken into account, together with other benefits or pensions (with the exception of resources received from regional MIS). The total value of the resources and assets owned by the beneficiaries, excluding their main residence, must be less than three times the annual amount of the IMV (Arriba and Rodríguez-Cabrero, 2021).

The PFHC scheme for children under 18 without disabilities is integrated into the IMV, and no new applications may be submitted for that scheme.²⁶ Families that do not qualify for the IMV but that were receiving the PFHC may continue to receive it until they no longer meet the requirements. Again, however, no new applications can be submitted to that child benefit scheme.

The implementation of the IMV alongside the regional MIS faces significant and multilevel challenges related to governance. Each AC has full responsibility for the regulation, planning, financing, implementation and evaluation of its own MIS. However, there has not been any basic legal framework in place to define the fundamental traits of MIS programmes, or any system to articulate the interactions between those programmes, or between those programmes and unemployment benefit schemes.

The Central Government has had primary responsibility for the exchange of information and the sharing of experiences and good practices among Spain's ACs. In 2016, the Ministry responsible for social services commissioned a report with European funds on the effectiveness of all income guarantee schemes, such as social assistance benefits (including child benefits), unemployment social assistance and MIS. The objective was to identify their weaknesses in relation to coverage, articulation and adequacy, as well as their results in terms of reduction of poverty and social exclusion, and promotion of labour inclusion (Ayala et al., 2016). This report constituted a milestone for the development of the IMV.

²⁵The IMV (Minimum Living Income) was established at €462 for a one-person household for 2020 (€469.93 in 2021), with 30 per cent added to this amount for each additional household member (€138 in 2020, and €140.98 in 2021), and 22 per cent for single-parent households, regardless of the number of children, (€100 in 2020; €103.38 in 2021). The maximum amount that can be received by one household is 220 per cent of the basic IMV amount (€1,015 per month in 2020, and €1,033.85 in 2021). The amount of the benefit is reviewed annually, taking into account the household income in the previous year. The benefit is paid for as long as the need persists.

²⁶Royal Decree-Law 20/2020 Benefits remain in place for children under 18 years of age with a disability of more than 33 per cent, or over 18 years of age with a disability greater than 65 per cent.

The creation of a national MIS by the Central Government provides a common basis for a more integrated and comprehensive programme, but there is a potential problem in that the responsibility for social assistance lies with the ACs. The lack of clear roles and responsibilities has been seen as presenting the risks of 'vicious layering' (Aguilar-Hendrickson and Arriba, 2021) and 'blame-shifting' between the Central Government and ACs.

The IMV is financed by the Central Government and managed by the National Social Security Institute (INSS). ACs have the option to sign agreements with the Central Government to take over the management of the scheme, and the Basque Country and Navarre have already done so. However, most ACs are still waiting for a definitive configuration of the IMV so that they can redefine their own MIS approaches. This transformation is taking place with very little coordination across the different levels of government.

1.4. Access barriers: eligibility criteria, bureaucracy and information deficits

There are still important barriers to the achievement of guaranteed and effective access to social benefits for households in situations of poverty and social exclusion and their children. These barriers relate to three main dimensions that are inherent to the current design and implementation of the relevant policies: the definition of eligibility criteria, application procedures, and access to accurate and reliable information.

Eligibility criteria that are difficult to meet or confirm for vulnerable children and their households, coupled with bureaucratic bottlenecks, are cited as being among the main shortcomings of regional MIS and welfare programmes (Valls, 2021; Defensor del Pueblo, multiple years). The IMV is a prime example. Designed as a key measure to fight extreme poverty, it had reached just 725,000 beneficiaries one year after its introduction, less than one-third of its initial target of 2.3 million (Olías and Ordaz, 2021). Eligibility criteria and the proof required to confirm eligibility have been identified as limiting its effective coverage, creating a gap between its expected and actual results (Consejo de la Juventud, 2021; Fundació Ernest Lluch, 2021; RMI Tu Derecho, 2021; EAPN-CLM, 2020).

All members of a household (and not just the recipient) must have had a valid residence permit for a minimum of one year to be eligible for the benefit. Applicants aged 18 to 22 are excluded, and those aged 23 to 29 are required to prove that they have been emancipated for at least three years, and that they have contributed to the Social Security system for at least 12 months during that period. Numerous certificates are also required when applying for the IMV, such as domicile certificates (*empadronamiento*), or proof of marriage, documentation that has been even more difficult to obtain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bureaucratic delays in decisions, unclear information on the complementarity of the measure with other programmes (both national and autonomic), and the lack of clear explanations in cases where benefits are denied are all having an impact on the effectiveness of their coverage (Fundació Ernest Lluch, 2021; Lara, 2021). Although some degree of welfare conditionality is needed to guarantee both fiscal sustainability and equity, eligibility requirements and procedures may become barriers that exclude those in greatest need: the most vulnerable target groups (and their households), such as children from a migrant background who have irregular status or those who are unaccompanied, or children who experience severe housing deprivation.

Several barriers have also been identified that are caused by lack of information and complex application procedures. In relation to the IMV, for example, a survey by Caritas in October and November 2020 covering 927 households that were receiving support from this organization revealed that around 48 per cent of them did not have enough information to apply for the IMV, while 17 per cent had received some information but still not enough to be able to apply (Caritas, 2021). Those who did not apply for the IMV cited technical problems in the online application (the crashing of the platform, the lack of available slots, etc.), the lack of e-requisites (electronic IDs or digital signatures), and the lack of Internet skills and knowledge as key reasons for non-take-up (Fundació Ernest Lluch, 2021; Olías, 2020).

This demonstrates that a system that relies on full 'e-administration' may become an additional barrier for vulnerable households. They may lack the technology or knowledge to obtain information and carry out procedures online to, for example, apply for a benefit, or to make an appointment at a social security office or at a healthcare centre. There are also potential accessibility barriers for beneficiaries when they have to navigate application portals.

Important amendments were made in September 2020, January 2021 and February 2021²⁷ to improve access to and effective coverage of the IMV by streamlining the bureaucratic load.²⁸ Proposals for new amendments to the IMV are now being discussed in Congress, and the regulatory development of this programme is also pending, including new measures to promote social and labour market inclusion, or to make work pay.

1.5. Proposed targets for 2030

The coverage, adequacy and delivery of regional minimum income schemes have proven to be insufficient. Indeed, the EU has recommended that Spain should ensure that social services provide effective support to vulnerable groups as part of the 2019 Country Specific Recommendations in the framework of the European Semester. The capacity of Spain's social transfers (other than pensions) to reduce monetary poverty remains among the lowest in the EU, particularly for children, so one clear objective is to increase the impact of social transfers on relative child poverty reduction to approach the EU average by 2030.

The resources available to spend on family benefits have been very low in Spain. The 2020 Country Specific Recommendations from the EU noted that Spain was the Member State with the lowest average of family benefits per child in 2019. The recommendations also note that families with low-to-medium incomes are not always entitled to child benefits.

Particular attention must be paid to single-parent households, particularly those in the first quintile of income distribution, as well as children with a migrant background and those from ethnic minorities. The authors of this report propose, therefore, that expenditure on benefits in cash for families and children approaches the EU27 average of around €400 by 2030, and that the coverage of child benefit schemes should be expanded by transforming targeted benefits into universal family benefits.

²⁷ Such as less strict requirements for cohabitation and the involvement of third parties (such as social services or third-sector entities) in the certification of specific requirements (RDL 3/2020, art.3).

²⁸ Certain requirements, such as the requirement to be registered as a job seeker, were removed, and the regional administrations were allowed to certify certain requirements for which no documentary evidence exists for people applying for a transfer to the IMV (RDL 28/2020 of 23 September and RDL 30/2020 of 29 September).

At present, child benefits are targeted to children in foster care, adopted children, large families, single-parent families and parents with disabilities. The removal of the barriers related to targeting, which include exclusion errors, coupled with a stronger focus on a universal transfer for every household with children, could help to expand the coverage of child benefit schemes and reduce child vulnerability. If the targeting of benefits through means-testing is still preferred, one simple solution would be to extend minimum income schemes to the 31 per cent of Spanish households at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The impact of the 2015 tax reform on poverty reduction has been very limited – another issue raised by the 2020 Country Specific Recommendations. In line with the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) – to end poverty in all its forms everywhere – as well as the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Spanish Government, the authors of this report propose a goal of halving the proportion of children in households with child-specific material deprivation by 2030, as well as the proportion of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The choice of targets for benefits is closely related to the indicators already used in relation to the following regulatory and strategic frameworks: the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principles 1, 3, 11, 14, 19 and 20)²⁹; Spain's National Strategy for preventing and combating poverty and social exclusion (target 1, and 3.4)³⁰; the Spanish sustainable development strategy³¹; the European Semester Recommendations of 2019 and of 2020³² (which encourage improvements in the coverage and adequacy of minimum income and family support schemes); Objective 3 of the March 2021 European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan³³; and the EEA Education Area Strategic Priorities (2021-2030)³⁴.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for Spain's central and regional governments to make fully informed decisions at present, given the limited disaggregation of data, the irregularity of data collection on children, the multiplicity of agencies that collect data across subnational governments, and the insufficient sample size at the AC level. Data quality is crucial, and we have the following suggestions to address some of these limitations.

First, political will to invest more in data collection is necessary (notably to increase the size of samples), but it is not enough on its own to solve these limitations. Further disaggregation could be achieved with the involvement of the ACs and their greater collaboration with the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE). For example, many of the current indicators come from Spain's Living Conditions Survey (*Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida*, ECV). Yet Catalonia is the only AC that has an active collaboration with the INE that allows it to increase its sample size (Interview with the INE). Data for target groups could be included in these national surveys by incorporating socio-demographic questions that enable the self-identification of vulnerable and target groups.

Finally, all indicators should be collected for all of the target groups envisaged by the European Child Guarantee. It should be possible to disaggregate all of these indicators by age, household type, sex, and income quintile as a minimum. These are common and widely used control

²⁹ tinyurl.com/yf49ff8a.

³⁰ tinyurl.com/yz7amy7h.

³¹ tinyurl.com/yzoapam5.

³² tinyurl.com/ydwz5hq3, and tinyurl.com/ydtyb6z4.

³³ tinyurl.com/ygfd28z4.

³⁴ tinyurl.com/yhl7eckn.

variables in surveys, which make it possible to identify further vulnerabilities on the basis of socioeconomic traits.

Table 1.1. Spain's targets on poverty and social exclusion (primary indicators)

Indicator	Current EU27	Current Spain	Target 2030
Child-specific material deprivation (0-15y)	23.3% (2014)	28.3% (2014)	14.2%
Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)	22.2% (2019)	31.1% (2020)	17.2%
Cash transfers for families and children (purchasing power standard per inhabitant)	€403.96 per year	€149.05 per year (2018)	€403.96 per year

1.6. Concluding remarks

The design and implementation of the ECG in Spain requires an effective institutional governance framework, a customized response to the needs of the most vulnerable groups and a territorialized approach to programmes based on best practices.

This will require measures to address the following key issues.

- The multi-level governance structure is based on unequal policy coordination across central government, the ACs and local governments. The effective implementation of the ECG requires, therefore, substantial improvements in policy coordination and integration.
- Despite progress on childhood integration policies, there are continued gaps in the networks that are supposed to enable access to services and benefits, and these prevent the implementation of a personalized response to the most vulnerable groups.
- Finally, the response to local needs continues to be a major challenge that requires an effective conjunction of social and institutional actors around personalized and comprehensive programmes based on best practices.

Table 1.2. Proposed indicators

No.	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, halve the proportion of children living in child-specific material deprivation	Child-specific material deprivation (0-15y)	Material deprivation is defined here as a child's inability to access 5 or more items from a list of 18 personal, household and child-specific indicators	ECV	One-time collection	Primary	Monitor	Result	28.3% (2014) 1-5 years: 26.5% 6-11 years: 27.3% 12-15 years 32.4% Single-parent households: 36.3%	14.2 %
2	By 2030, halve the proportion of children living at risk of poverty or social exclusion (baseline 2015)	Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) (<18 years)	A child is considered at risk of poverty or social exclusion if he or she presents at least one of the following characteristics: relative income poverty, severe material deprivation and/or living in households with low work intensity	ECV	Annual	Primary	Monitor	Structural	31.1% (2020) Single-parent households 49.1% Single-parent households in the first quintile: 100%	17.2%
3	By 2030, reach the 2015 EU27 average for cash transfers to families and children	Cash transfers to families and children per capita (at purchasing power parity)	Social protection benefits in the form of cash transfers for households with children. Data are per capita and on average.	ESSPROS	Annual	Primary	Monitor	Process	€149.05 per year (2018)	€403.96 per year
4	By 2030, reach the EU27 level in terms of the impact of social transfers on relative poverty reduction	Impact of social transfers on relative child poverty reduction	Difference between at-risk of child poverty before and after social transfers (excluding pensions)	EU-SILC	Annual	Secondary	Evaluation	Result	6.4% (2020)	13%
5	By 2030, reduce the proportion of children living in households	Children in households	Percentage of households with at least one child (0-17y) without income	EPA	Trimester	Secondary	Monitor	Process	22.7% (2020)	14.2%

	without an income by at least half of the pre-financial crisis level (2008T1)	without any income								
6	By 2030, halve the proportion of children living at risk of poverty (baseline 2015).	At-risk of poverty (AROP)	A child is considered at risk of poverty if he or she lives in a household with incomes below 60% of the median equivalized income after social transfers.	ECV	Annual	Secondary	Monitor	Result	27.4% (2020) With a parent who is a Spanish citizen: 19.7% With a parent who is a foreign citizen: 56.6%	14.8%

Notes: The aspirational goals in the AROP, AROPE and the child material deprivation indicator use 2015 as a base year. Child-specific material deprivation uses 2014 as a base year. Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources. Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

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2. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

- Attendance in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services is almost universal among children aged 3 to 6 in Spain, but average enrolment rates remain relatively low for children aged 0 to 3 and many vulnerable families cannot afford the services on offer.
- As well as being vital for the development and well-being of young children, ECEC services are important for work-family balance, and for parents' participation in the labour market.
- The successful implementation of the ECG in this area requires the enforcement of an integrated data strategy; greater access to ECEC services for the most disadvantaged groups; the continued expansion of ECEC for younger children; a stronger focus on children with special needs and those in alternative care; and efforts to promote flexible ECEC services that support a better work-family balance.

Introduction³⁵

This chapter begins by exploring the main challenges for Spain's socioeconomically vulnerable groups in terms of access to, and the quality of, services for early childhood education and care (ECEC). These include obstacles to ECEC access for children between 0 and 3 years old, particularly those within the lowest income quintiles (INE, 2016; see also Espinosa Bayal, 2018 and Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020).

Other key challenges that need to be addressed are economic and cultural barriers, and the barriers related to work-family balance that limit early enrolment in ECEC for children of migrant or Roma origin (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020; Centro Social Comunitario Gastón Castelló, 2017). There is also a need to focus on the quality of the attention given to children with disabilities, who often face delays in the detection of their special needs and a lack of specialized interventions (Jiménez Lara et al., 2019). Finally, concerns have been raised about the lack of deinstitutionalization for children in alternative care. While family-based care is now the norm and the objective for very young children who are separated from their families, further steps are required to consolidate and strengthen this model of care (Lerch and Nordenmark Severinsson, 2019).

We review the main recent policy measures implemented in Spain to encourage the promotion of ECEC for children under the age of three; to eliminate the barriers (particularly economic) to ECEC access; to improve work-family balance and parental care; and to ensure specific attention for children who are likely to experience particular disadvantage or difficulties (foreign-born children, Roma children, children with disabilities, children in alternative care or in situations of extreme vulnerability). We examine policy measures at the national, regional and local levels, given the wide distribution of responsibilities for ECEC

³⁵ Interviews with representatives of the following organizations were conducted to inform this chapter: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training; Save the Children Spain; Plataforma para la Atención Temprana (Spain) (national level); Plataforma para la Atención Temprana Murcia, (regional level); Aldeas Infantiles, Spain; CERMI's Commission for Early Intervention and Child Development, Ávila's Early Intervention Team, Castile and León's Educational Board (regional level); Early Intervention Team, Cantabria's Health Board (regional level).

regulation, planning and service provision. The role of the third sector is also mentioned because of its participation in interventions targeted at disadvantaged groups.

This chapter examines both the strengths and weaknesses of the measures in place, while discussing good practices highlighted by experts and key informants. The main objective is to formulate recommendations for action that are in line with detected needs, successful policy examples, and the priorities that are to guide the European Child Guarantee (ECG).

2.1. Review of existing programmes, schemes and initiatives

First-cycle ECEC is the educational stage that has experienced the greatest expansion in recent years (reaching an enrolment rate of 60 per cent for children aged 2 to 3) and this expansion has been visible in all regions, regardless of their baseline levels (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020). Indeed, enrolment doubled between 2007 and 2017 (Save the Children, 2019).

One of the key components of the national Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan launched in 2021 is the modernization and digitalization of the educational system. More than 40 per cent of the funds devoted to this objective will be targeted to the promotion of first-cycle ECEC for children aged 0 to 3 through the creation of new public slots (mainly for children aged 1 to 2), the construction of new ECEC units and reforms to improve those that already exist (Gobierno de España, 2021).

This builds on efforts by every AC in Spain to extend enrolment in ECEC to children aged 0 to 3 over the past two decades, as attendance among children aged 3 to 6 is almost universal. The trends have been favourable, although average enrolment rates remain relatively low for very young children (12.3 per cent for those aged 0 to 1; 40.2 per cent for those aged 1 to 2) (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2020).

To increase early participation in ECEC, some ACs (Aragon, Cantabria, Extremadura, Valencian Community) have established programmes that incorporate 2-year-olds into universal schooling in second-cycle ECEC services (3 to 6) and centres that provide both second-cycle ECEC and primary education. The case of Cantabria is covered in Section 2.2 as an example of good practice (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020; Interview with representative of the MEYFP). This incorporation approach has made it easier to reach the families in economic difficulties (Interview with a representative of the MEYFP) that, as noted, often find it hard to meet the costs of first-cycle ECEC (INE, 2016). The rise in ECEC enrolment has been most noticeable among children aged 2, even though 6 out of every 10 did not attend ECEC in 2017 (Save the Children, 2019).

Other ACs, while maintaining schooling for those aged 0 to 3 in first-cycle centres, have devised mechanisms to eliminate the costs of public centres, as seen in Madrid, La Rioja, and the Autonomous City of Ceuta (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al. 2020). These programmes are new – in Madrid and La Rioja they relate to regulations that were only introduced in 2019 – and little is yet known about their effectiveness. La Rioja is mobilizing the most ambitious project, which is described in Section 2.2 as an example of good practice, given its potential to eliminate attendance costs.

It should be noted, however, that public ECEC still entails considerable economic costs for families in many ACs and municipalities, with financial difficulties reported to be a serious obstacle to ECEC attendance for families in the lowest income quintiles (INE, 2016). The expansion of first-cycle ECEC has been based primarily on models in which families still bear a

substantial share of the cost, given insufficient public investment and the extensive supply of services that are provided through the private sector (Save the Children, 2019).

Other actions have aimed to increase the provision of public ECEC for all children aged 0 to 3. One key drawback, however, has been the lack of emphasis on the need for affordable public services. This has resulted in persistent economic barriers to access for families in relatively disadvantaged socioeconomic positions.

This problem is underpinned, in part, by very wide dispersion and heterogeneity in terms of the extent, levels and types of funding that supports ECEC services. There is significant variation in the degree of stable commitment to this funding among ACs, and as noted, the economic burden has often been transferred to municipalities and to families, resulting in fewer ECEC slots and reduced enrolment rates in times of economic downturn.

There has been a lack of supply of new public slots in recent years, which can be linked to a lack of economic resources at municipality level. There has, however, been action at both national and regional level: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' early childhood programme prior to 2007; the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training's plan 'Educa3' between 2008 and 2012; the creation of 30,000 new public slots in Catalonia between 2004 and 2012; and the merging of several programmes in Madrid between 2004 and 2011. Nevertheless, the expansion of the public network of first-cycle ECEC centres has relied mainly on the local level, which has been responsible not only for the provision of slots, but also for the planning of this provision. Given that municipalities have very diverse degrees of economic capacity, this has resulted in wide variations in supply that do not respond to equity criteria or to actual need.

Consequently, the importance of planning at the AC- level that is based on a thorough analysis of supply and demand has been underscored, as well as the need for financing that goes beyond the creation of new slots to guarantee their endurance over time. Efforts in this direction can be informed by the increased supply of municipal slots driven by planning at the national and regional levels (e.g., the experience of Madrid between 2004 and 2011, where different non-local plans were implemented) (Save the Children 2019).

In the context of an insufficient supply of public slots (which tend to be more affordable, despite the fees charged), some efforts have focused on regulating access to ensure that it favours disadvantaged groups, with the selection of access criteria that follow different rationales. While most regional regulations on access to public or subsidized centres/public aids prioritize vulnerable children to some extent by taking family income into account (and, in some cases, the conditions of single-parent and large families), income thresholds are often very low. This has reduced the actual impact of the measure, as it overlooks families who are not in situations of extreme disadvantage, but who, nonetheless, experience economic difficulties, such as those in the second income quintile (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta, et al., 2018; Save the Children, 2019).

In addition, some ACs favour dual-earner families in admission scales to promote a better work-family balance, which presents an access barrier for families where one or both parents are unemployed, inactive, actively seeking employment, working in the informal economy or in unstable jobs. The positive impact of the measure in terms of work-family balance is offset by the exclusion of vulnerable families who would benefit doubly from first-cycle ECEC, as it would enhance their children's opportunities while facilitating their parents' search for work and their entry into the labour market (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta, et al., 2018). Where the two-

earner criterion is applied, access to ECEC is often easier for middle-class families than for those families that are economically vulnerable (Interview with a representative of the MEYFP, national level).

It should be noted that the new Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December on Education includes an explicit objective to advance towards a system characterized by sufficient public supply of affordable, equity promoting and high-quality slots through the gradual implementation of an eight-year-plan. ECEC that is free-of-charge will be promoted within this framework, and children at risk of poverty and social exclusion will be prioritized (BOE, 2020).

First-cycle ECEC has often been conceptualized as a work-family reconciliation measure for full-time workers with regulated conditions and stable schedules. However, many families where the parents work in the informal economy, in very unstable employment conditions and irregular schedules, in jobs that are only part-time or sporadic do not fit neatly into this system. The lack of administrative and organizational flexibility may also lead parents to decide not to use ECEC services at all if the economic costs outweigh the benefits, or if the ECEC on offer cannot meet the family's specific needs (e.g. if the family only needs a few days or hours of childcare each week, with timings that change in response to the family's atypical schedules) (Save the Children, 2019). The orientation of Spanish ECEC policies has been towards (standard) work-life balance objectives. More than 50 per cent of children with employed mothers attend first-cycle ECEC, compared with 31 per cent of those whose mothers are unemployed and just 24 per cent of those with inactive mothers.

While financial costs are an important part of the equation, voices have been raised on the need to widen the focus of policies and emphasize the benefits of ECEC not only as an instrument favouring work-family balance, but also as a key resource to improve children's cognitive and socioemotional development and as a way to promote intergenerational equality of opportunity. Attention has also been drawn to the rigidity and limited coverage of some school schedules, with families often resorting to additional and sometimes informal care services that may not be the best option for very young children, and that may be provided by carers who do not have enough experience or specialized training.

Despite the focus on work-family reconciliation, some ACs and municipalities also facilitate access to ECEC services through income-related criteria. Again, the income thresholds established for preferential, more affordable or free-of-charge access are usually very low, while public fees remain too high for many families (Save the Children, 2019). Not all vulnerable children are reached, as shown by the lower enrolment rates in municipalities with lower average yearly income per capita (Save the Children, 2019). The Programme for the Protection of the Family and Attention to Child Poverty, established in 2020, distributes credit funds across the ACs to promote projects that support work-family reconciliation (by, for example, helping to cover ECEC fees) among families undergoing social and employment integration processes (Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, 2021).

Access to first-cycle ECEC is also facilitated through different regional-level formulae for children in situations of extreme vulnerability or considered to be at risk in Aragon, Cantabria, Castile-La Mancha, the Autonomous City of Melilla, Extremadura, Galicia, La Rioja, Navarre and the Valencian Community (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al, 2020). These children also benefit from the Reinforcement, Guidance and Support Plan (*Plan de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo – PROA*), a territorial cooperation programme between the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the ACs.

This initiative was devised to meet the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged children through school support for their primary and secondary education. However, it is extended to the second cycle of ECEC for children aged 3 to 6 in response to very particular cases of substantial vulnerability. Roma children are often covered by these measures. While Roma organizations insist on the need for programmes targeted specifically to the needs of Roma children, it has been deemed more inclusive to reach them through general initiatives (Interview with a representative of the MEYFP), such as the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of the Roma Population in Spain.

Policy-related obstacles to ECEC attendance for Roma children – and for children from disadvantaged families more generally – include complex bureaucratic processes and information barriers. The picture is complicated by diverse regulations (even between municipalities) on admission conditions, procedures and timetables and by the rigid approaches (in terms of deadlines or required documentation) that often characterize admission procedures.

Another policy feature that hinders ECEC access for disadvantaged children is the frequent conditionality of support from social services, such as referral aids and mediation. These services are sometimes shunned because of their associations with stigma or mistrust (Save the Children, 2019).

All of these barriers can be particularly important for families of migrant origin, who may face additional linguistic obstacles and may lack the social networks that could help them with procedures. While institutional actors and entities such as social workers or third-sector personnel sometimes provide information and support, their reach has proven to be limited.

In addition, migrant families often face obstacles related to their administrative situation, their mobility and changes of residence (it might be difficult to access ECEC once the school year has begun), unstable labour-market situations, documentation requirements, or the need to have their specific situation evaluated by social services. Their ECEC participation, as seen in relation to Roma families, can be discouraged by the anticipation of a cultural clash or a lack of understanding (Save the Children, 2019). In fact, families of migrant origin from non-EU countries are far less likely to use first-cycle ECEC than native families or parents of migrant origin from EU-countries (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020). Unfortunately, first-cycle enrolment data for Roma children are not available.

By law, children with disabilities are granted some priority access to public and subsidized ECEC centres (Art. 84, Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación; Art. 12.5, Ley Orgánica 8/2021, de 4 de junio, de protección integral a la infancia y la adolescencia frente a la violencia). Most ACs reserve slots for children with special educational needs with the exception of Galicia, which does, however, do so for children with socioeconomic circumstances that require immediate intervention. Some ACs provide additional support staff in the classroom in these cases, as seen in Castile and León, La Rioja, and Navarre (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al, 2020).

Concerns have been raised, however – by families, professionals, and third sector entities – about the lack of coordination between Social Services, Educational Boards and Health administrations to guarantee early detection and prompt integral interventions for these children, which are not guaranteed at present. The main obstacles to effective educational support that are often found in school centres are insufficient collaboration between professionals and families, and limited knowledge about developmental disorders (Interview

with a representative of CERMI's Commission for Early Intervention and Child Development, national level, and a representative of Ávila's Early Intervention Team, Castile and León's Educational Board, regional/local level).

Special needs are often identified late in ECEC centres, as the educational system does not act unless there are very clear curricular gaps (in the second cycle), very evident developmental delays, or a very proactive family (Interview with a representative of Save the Children Spain, national level). There is also wide variation across Spain's regions in terms of both the degree of regulation and implementation of early intervention measures. In some ACs, these fall under the Health Department; in others, they are linked to the Education Board, and, in many, they depend on the social services. Therapeutic interventions (*Atención Temprana*) are provided by a myriad of entities of very diverse nature (public, subsidized and private centres, some of which are family, professional or third-sector associations). Access procedures and the duration and costs of the services differ widely across ACs and municipalities.

Many ACs find it difficult to meet the demand and needs for early detection and intervention. Insufficient economic investment and bureaucratic procedures that hamper coordination across policy areas generate bottlenecks and long waiting lists that are entirely incompatible with the objective of early intervention.

The substantial challenges so often faced by educational and care professionals in Spain impose additional burdens when children with special needs are present, and include short-term contracts, high turnover (particularly in high-complexity ECEC centres: those with a high concentration of children with vulnerabilities), high pupil-to-staff ratios and deficits in training (Save the Children, 2016; Interview with a representative of the MEYFP). A Working Group was created in 2019 to deal with this policy area, but its activities stopped with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Interviews with a representative of Plataforma para la Atención Temprana, national level, and a representative of Plataforma para la Atención Temprana Murcia, regional/local level).

The pressing need for detection, intervention and support in first-cycle ECEC centres has been underscored, and requires increased support resources (including personnel) and more teams of specialized counsellors for this age group. At present, first-cycle ECEC is not fully incorporated into existing protocols to address diversity in every AC, which means that not all children receive the support they need (Save the Children, 2019).

In some ACs (Aragon, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Castile and León, Galicia, Community of Madrid and Basque Country), children in alternative care have priority access to first-cycle ECEC (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020). Children aged 0 to 6 are enrolled in ECEC while, if possible, they are cared for within a family-based framework. However, there are serious data limitations in terms of the policies targeted to this group, and little systematic official information at the AC level on specific educational, psychological, and therapeutic needs and interventions to meet their needs. In addition, public measures for these children still tend to focus more on intervention than on the prevention of situations of vulnerability (Interview with a representative of Aldeas Infantiles SOS Spain, national level). Some good practices by the third sector on this issue are described in Section 2.2.

Finally, policies for the reconciliation of paid work and to improve the conditions for appropriate parental care are crucial for ECEC. There is a wide consensus among experts on the clear cognitive and socioemotional benefits of ECEC for children, except for the very youngest babies, where these benefits are not so evident (Zachrisson et al., 2020). This

reinforces the need to promote a high-quality caring environment within the family for the first year of a child's life – as a minimum.

Spain still faces difficulties in guaranteeing the legal rights to reconcile employment with care and in making good use of work-family balance measures, particularly for the workers with the least protection. However, important measures have been introduced in recent years to promote the co-responsible division of care between mothers and fathers (the extension of paternity leave and the ensuing introduction of a gender-neutral birth leave of 16 weeks), and to enable greater flexibility to adapt parents' working schedule and the sites where they work to the actual care needs of their children, as outlined in Section 2.2.

In March 2021, the Spanish government also approved a plan (*Plan Corresponsables*) to facilitate public employment in the care sector, aiming to make it easier for families to find high-quality and affordable care – a programme that will rely on collaboration across the ACs (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2021). The Strategy for Sustainable Development agreed in June 2021 contemplates further steps in this direction through the Strategic Plan for Effective Equality between Women and Men 2021-2025 (Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, 2021).

Table 2.1. Main characteristics of formal models for early childhood education and care in Spain

First-cycle ECEC (for 0–3-year-olds)	Second-cycle ECEC (for 3–6-year-olds)
Not a universal right. Costs shared, to different degrees, by ACs/municipalities, and families. Families – except for those in the lowest income quintile – bear a substantial part of the cost, even in public centres.	Universal right. Free-of-charge access guaranteed to publicly funded (public or publicly subsidized) slots.
Most commonly located in centres devoted exclusively to first-cycle ECEC. Sometimes located in first-cycle and second-cycle ECEC centres.	Most commonly located in ECEC and primary education centres ('CEIPs') ³⁶ ; sometimes also located in first-cycle and second-cycle ECEC centres.
Dependent on the ACs' Education Boards (except in Galicia, where the Social Policy Board also shares some responsibilities, and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, where it depends on the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training). The regulatory frameworks on the minimal requirements of centres and curricula are established by the ACs.	Dependent on the ACs' Education Boards (except in the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, where it depends on the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training). The regulatory frameworks on the minimal requirements of centres and curricula are established by the Central Government.
Public, publicly subsidized, and private provision. Public provision by the ACs, municipalities and/or other institutional entities (other Ministries or Regional Boards). Diversity of models and management formulae: public centres can be directly or indirectly managed, but are always publicly funded. Private	Public, publicly subsidized, and private provision. Public provision by the ACs.

³⁶ *Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria*: School of Early Childhood and Primary Education.

centres are always privately managed, but some receive public subsidies. Beyond formal ECEC centres, some ACs (Madrid, Navarre) have regulated home childminding.	
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Sources: Vélaz-de-Medrano et al., 2018; Eurydice, 2021.

2.2. Examples of good practice

Two recent measures at the national level on work-family reconciliation have proved to be important for a co-responsible division of care within the household and the achievement of greater employment flexibility for parents, enabling them to tend to the care needs of their children. The initial **two-week non-transferable paternity leave** with 100 per cent wage replacement introduced in 2007 was gradually extended and finally replaced in 2021 by non-transferable, fully paid, and gender-neutral leave of 16 weeks (previously reserved for mothers), resulting in increasingly high take-up rates (Jurado-Guerrero and Muñoz-Comet, 2021). In addition, an unprecedented modification of the Workers' Statute in 2019 established **the right for employees to demand adaptations to the duration and distribution of their working day**, as well as permission to work remotely, to reconcile the needs of work and family (Real Decreto-ley 6/2019, art. 34.8).

At regional level, as noted, some ACs have taken steps to extend the provision of and enrolment in first-cycle education. To this end, **children aged two have been incorporated into second-cycle schools of early childhood and primary education (CEIPs)**, where the services are free-of-charge, with the exception of supplementary services such as school meals and childminding outside the official opening hours.

The programme developed in **Cantabria** since 2007 is the most consolidated and has been highlighted for its positive results, achieving a coverage rate of 75 per cent of children aged 2 (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020).³⁷ This region's programme is also an example of successful collaboration between the regional and the local level. The Education Board provides the teachers, while the municipalities provide auxiliary staff to assist teachers and children throughout the school day, during mealtimes and before and after school hours. This provision of auxiliary staff results in a two-pedagogue model (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020).

In 2019, **La Rioja** introduced a **'Child Voucher' (Bono Infantil)**, aiming to provide free-of-charge first-cycle ECEC in every centre within three years, regardless of whether they are public, subsidized, or private. The AC provides centres with the voucher, which commits the centres to holding fees below a threshold (supplementary services are not included). During its first year of implementation, this voucher covered all first-cycle stages in municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants, and the 2-3 age group in the rest of the region (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020). Coverage has since been gradually extended.

³⁷ Some drawbacks to this initiative have, however, been identified. The focus on children aged 2 to 3 has led to a limited supply of (and demand for) ECEC slots for children under the age of 2. In addition, questions have been raised about the suitability of school spaces for children aged 2 to 3 (Save the Children, 2019).

Menorca provides an example of successful promotion of ECEC enrolment for children aged 0 to 3 at local level, with total enrolment rates of 74.5 per cent (69 per cent in public centres). Behind this success lies planning based on a thorough analysis of needs carried out in 2004 and repeated in 2012, which was used to create **a network of public ECEC centres (*Escoletas*)**. This case also provides an example of good practice regarding schedule flexibility, with the provision of very diverse attendance options (Save the Children, 2019). Menorca's ECEC schools have also been praised for their functioning as territorial early childhood service centres: they provide not only formal education and care, but also meeting spaces for families, leisure activities, information about parenting, and staff training. In addition, their teams incorporate support personnel from the social services or the third sector who have specific channels to reach the most vulnerable families, inform those families about the importance and characteristics of ECEC, and bring them closer to the centres (Interview with a representative of Save the Children Spain, national/regional/local level).

Such family spaces, where parents or other relatives can find support for their caring role, have also been created in **the Balearic Islands** as a gateway to ECEC for families who are reluctant to enrol their children in formal, full-time care and who prefer family-based options. Similar initiatives have been integrated into **local first-cycle ECEC centres (*Escoles Bressol*)** in **Catalonia**, where children who are not regularly enrolled in ECEC share experiences and play with those who are (Save the Children, 2019).

Social charging systems have been proposed as an effective practice to promote first-cycle ECEC enrolment of children from low-income families. These systems charge progressive fees depending on family income without the need for intermediation by the social services, and this helps to avoid stigma or mistrust and enhance access. One local-level example of good practice can be found in **Barcelona**, where fees range from €50 to €395, depending on the family's income (although the total cost can be covered for the most vulnerable families by using a social services' card). The elimination of social service intermediation (other than for the total exemption of fees) has increased access for vulnerable families.

Social charging schemes are reported to be more efficient than charging no fees at all, as they make it possible to devote more resources to increase access, improve service quality or even create new slots. This is seen as important in contexts with significant economic restrictions (Save the Children, 2019). That said, even in such contexts it is crucial to devise mechanisms that guarantee all children in need free-of-charge access to ECEC.

Barcelona also provides an example of how to **encourage ECEC enrolment of children from potentially disadvantaged or vulnerable groups** and increase the quality of attention they receive. One initiative to promote the enrolment of Roma children in ECEC was launched as an academic – rather than political – initiative, in collaboration with the third sector and highlights potentially fruitful practices. This **collaborative project, '*Vakeripen*'**, carried out by the Research Group GRITIM-UPF and the Roma associations Fundació Privada Pere Closa and Rromane Siklovne, with the inclusion of some political actors as associate partners, has promoted communication between Roma families and schools in four neighbourhoods in Barcelona's city area.

The project focused on two main areas: 1) to raise awareness, combat negative stereotypes, and increase sensitivity to the situation and needs of Roma families among school staff; and 2) to encourage positive attitudes towards education among Roma families by providing information. The project used different types of institutional and third-sector mediators, and encouraged direct participation by families, avoiding a top-down perspective. Although this

initiative was not restricted to the early childhood stage, it provides clues to the promotion of ECEC for Roma children. In fact, it has already given rise to related interventions in Barcelona (Zellgren and Gabrielli, 2018). Recent research indicates that such **intercultural awareness initiatives** are necessary in ECEC in Spain (Silva et al. 2020), and there is evidence of positive results (Khalfaoui et al., 2020).

Navarre has developed a policy that gives **children with disabilities direct access to first-cycle ECEC centres** and to supplementary support personnel (*'personal educativo de apoyo'*) who can each support a maximum of three children with special needs. Navarre's regulations also envisage a ratio reduction, but the AC has not yet specified how this should materialize in each case. The AC's Educational Board provides and finances the necessary support resources for children with special educational needs (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020).

Cantabria has developed a **free-of-charge public model for the early detection of and therapeutic interventions** for children with disabilities, developmental disorder, or related risks (*'Atención Temprana'*). In contrast to the scenario found in many other regions, this model provides swift and universal attention to cover every child. The average waiting time for evaluation in 2021 has been around 15 days, and any necessary therapeutic intervention is immediate (offered within 5 days).

One of the main strengths of this programme – and a key to its success – is its integrated character, with efficient coordination between the different policy areas and actors involved. In its first stages, the service has been conceived as a health response and falls under the competence of Cantabria's Health Board (*Consejería de Sanidad*). Early intervention services in primary healthcare centres facilitate access, relying on multidisciplinary teams of professionals. Access to families in rural areas or with mobility-related difficulties is guaranteed. The approach favours an encompassing, family-centred intervention model, with therapy offered within the child's everyday social environment, and parents furnished with the tools to provide optimal stimulation and high-quality care.

Coordination with the Education Board avoids overlaps, and the school takes over as the early intervention provider when the child enters second-cycle ECEC, if it is agreed that the intervention required can be offered by specialized school personnel. There are, however, protocols that establish which interventions should fall under the responsibility of the Education and Health Boards, respectively. This gives the programme enough flexibility to tend to complex needs that require simultaneous educational and clinical interventions (Interview with a representative of Early Intervention Teams at Cantabria's Health Board, regional level).

All public and publicly subsidized second-cycle schools in Cantabria have hearing and speech teachers, therapeutic pedagogy specialists, and physiotherapists, who carry out prevention, counselling and intervention tasks under the supervision of educational orientation teams. The Education and Health Boards also collaborate on protocols that facilitate special-needs detection in ECEC centres.

Importantly, the programme has managed to eliminate burdensome and long bureaucratic processes for families: because any early intervention is provided initially as a response to basic health needs, families do not need to apply for further evaluations in order to receive it. The programme has also achieved satisfactory coordination with social services in healthcare centres. As a result of this holistic approach, up to 50 per cent of children are referred to evaluation in the first six months of their life, which bears witness to the programme's success (Echevarría Saiz, 2020). The model also transcends concerns about the medicalization of

disability, as it is based on clinical intervention at very early stages before shifting gradually to become an educational intervention.

The **local-level early intervention model** developed in **Barcelona** through municipal centres for early intervention and child development (CDIAPs) merits attention because of its efforts to reach disadvantaged groups. These centres, offering free-of-charge early interventions, are located in two districts with high levels of social vulnerability (Ciutat Vella and Nou Barris). Many of those receiving this support are families of migrant origin, and the CDIAPs use the municipality's translation and mediation services to overcome any linguistic and cultural barriers. In 2018, a spin-off of the service ('Antena Nord') was created in a particularly disadvantaged area of Nou Barris to encourage greater access. As seen in Cantabria, there is regular collaboration between multidisciplinary teams and specific ECEC centres to detect intervention needs and facilitate access for education professionals or families. CDIAPs also help to motivate families to apply for ECEC services for children under the age of three and in counselling them to facilitate their access (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2020). The expansion of this model to all publicly financed ECEC centres in these areas is currently under discussion.

Andalusia has made efforts to facilitate ECEC access for children in particularly vulnerable situations by developing **programmes for the children of seasonal and mobile workers** (Vélaz-de-Medrano Ureta et al., 2020).

Regarding children in alternative care, some third-sector practices support their integration and provide examples to inform official policy interventions for children under the age of six. **Aldeas Infantiles** carry out interventions, within family-like or family-based contexts, to address physical, psychological, educational, cognitive, emotional, and neurodevelopmental needs, after those needs have been carefully evaluated. The focus of ECEC interventions is the well-being of the child – both psychological and physical – to prevent later educational difficulties. There is a strong emphasis on early stimulation, as well as on prevention measures within the family of origin to avoid, as much as possible, recourse to alternative care (Interview with a representative of *Aldeas Infantiles*, Spain, national/regional/local level).

Finally, total expenditure on education, in general, has increased in recent years through territorial cooperation programmes that share the costs between the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the ACs (Interview with a representative of *Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional*). There are now several examples of successful and legally regulated co-funding initiatives for first-cycle ECEC between the ACs and the municipalities. In **Galicia**, each municipality covers about one third of first-cycle ECEC and if the municipality commits to maintaining its funding, the quantity it has to provide is reduced. In the **Basque Country**, the regional government takes responsibility for administration of ECEC centres and their cost if the municipalities assume maintenance, cleaning and surveillance (Save the Children, 2019).

2.3. Proposed targets for 2030

This section sets out five key recommendations related to ECEC to be considered in the development of the NAP for the implementation of the ECG in Spain. These recommendations draw on the previously identified policy and data needs as well as on promising or successful initiatives at different government levels.

Enforce an integrated data strategy

Appropriate data to diagnose the status of ECEC-related topics are not always readily available for policymakers, stakeholders and researchers. Indicators collected at the national level tend to be insufficient, and those gathered at the sub-national levels are diverse and are not easy to access. In addition, existing data are fragmented across the different departments and policy areas involved, and specific interventions (and policy changes more generally) are often implemented without a systematic plan for their design, assessment or evaluation. This is the result, in part, of a lack of planning, but also the lack of resources to accommodate data collection and monitoring in the already bulky schedules of the professionals involved.

An integrated data strategy (in terms of both administrative competency levels and areas) is a prerequisite to the implementation and monitoring of the ECG and the assessment of its success, covering not only the main objective of increased access (particularly for vulnerable groups), but also its cost-effectiveness. This entails a demanding and bold coordination plan, which spans the various levels of government involved, on the choice of indicators, processes for data collection and sharing, and the benchmarking of what a successful implementation would look like.

Ultimately, the objective should be a commitment to the harmonization and regular, open access provision of data on the key indicators chosen to monitor and evaluate the ECG – as a minimum. It is essential that data are collected systematically for all the groups identified as more vulnerable, including homeless children or those experiencing severe housing deprivation, children with a migrant background, Roma children, children with disabilities, and children in alternative care.

Increase access to ECEC services for the most disadvantaged groups

Children in particularly disadvantaged groups are often under-represented in ECEC services. There is consensus in the academic literature that while ECEC has clear cognitive and socioemotional benefits for all children, it is most beneficial – and crucial – for children from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds (Cebolla-Boado et al., 2017). These often include Roma children, those of migrant origin, those in vulnerable housing arrangements or in alternative care, and those with special needs.

Access becomes a challenge for some of these children if it entails a time-consuming and/or cognitively demanding administrative procedure, if information on requirements and entitlements is not easily accessible and understandable, and if specialized professional assistance (by mediators, social workers, etc.) is not readily available. Action is needed, therefore, to prioritize these groups not only through mechanisms that guarantee the affordability of services (such as the removal of financial costs for the most disadvantaged combined with the promotion of social charging systems for families in the middle and upper part of the income distribution) or prioritize their access, but also through the elimination of bureaucratic, informational and cultural barriers. Measures devised to increase awareness about the benefits of ECEC over and above work-family balance among families who are not acquainted with these services or show reservations are particularly crucial in this respect.

Continue to promote the expansion of first-cycle ECEC through coordinated action and shared responsibilities and costs across all levels of government

Given the importance of ECEC for the mitigation of social inequalities, it is vital to continue to encourage enrolment in first-cycle ECEC education by reducing the costs borne by families. A realistic target would be an overall average enrolment rate of 50 per cent in first-cycle ECEC (rising to 75 per cent among children aged 2 to 3). This target appears to be within reach, given that the ACs and municipalities that have implemented successful policies have attained enrolment rates that are equal to³⁸ or higher than³⁹ these targets.

The good practices outlined in Section 2.2 suggest that one way to reduce the economic burden borne by families is to redistribute ECEC costs and responsibilities (regarding regulation, planning, funding, provision, and the maintenance of services) across the central government, ACs and municipalities. It is likely that such a coordinated, multilevel approach would make it possible to increase funding for the creation of new first-cycle slots. In addition, service provision should be based on previous and data-driven analyses of needs.

Ensure high-quality attention for children with special needs and those in alternative care

Children with disabilities, developmental delays or other special needs are in a position of vulnerability; not least because of the significant time demands and economic and emotional strain faced by their families. Early detection and intervention in ECEC services is necessary to address their needs in full and maximize their skills development, yet there is evidence of substantial interventions delays and insufficient support in many ACs.

Effective coordination between health and education authorities and the social services is key to avoid service overlap and bureaucratic bottlenecks, and to promote the multidisciplinary, integral attention that is needed to cover both educational and clinical needs successfully. When it comes to attention in schools, the quality of services and the intensity of support could be enhanced significantly by the promotion of a 'two-pedagogue model'⁴⁰ when children with disabilities and special educational needs are present. This would, in practice, be equivalent to a substantial reduction in the ratio of teachers to pupils, but could have additional benefits in terms of shared pedagogical strategies.

As noted, key informants have also emphasized the need for increased and regular collaboration between education specialists, external therapists and families. In relation to children in alternative care, one strategic priority should be to expand the policy focus to incorporate and encourage prevention measures targeted at the family of origin, given the fundamental importance of family-provided care for every young child.

³⁸ Cantabria in the case of those aged 2 to 3 (see Section 2.2).

³⁹ Menorca has achieved an enrolment rate for children aged 0 to 3 of almost 75 per cent (see section 2.2).

⁴⁰ This model – already introduced in some ACs (see section 2.2) – requires regular support for the professional in charge of an ECEC unit/class during the school day by another staff member (be it another teacher/pedagogue, a technician, or another auxiliary professional, depending on the specific ECEC model implemented). As a result, it entails the availability of more than one qualified adult to tend to the children and provide additional support throughout the day, which enhances the quality of attention when children with special needs are present, in particular. The presence of two teachers/carers in the classroom is an instrument that could be recommended more broadly for all children in the first and second cycles of ECEC.

Promote flexible work-life arrangements in ECEC centres/services

Beyond the benefits of formal ECEC, young children's development also depends on the establishment of solid bonds with their parents, their socioemotional stimulation, and the provision of high-quality parent-child interactions (Britto et al., 2017). Therefore, ECEC-related measures that promote co-responsibility of mothers and fathers in care as well as flexible arrangements that avoid excessively long days in external childcare (and exceedingly long or odd working hours) should also be part of the strategy.

In addition, flexibility at the workplace and in ECEC schedules is essential to protect parental employment and facilitate a dual-earner model that protects families against economic vulnerability, particularly in the Spanish context where two salaries are often needed to sustain a family (Gálvez Muñoz, 2013). A number of these recommendations are clearly aligned with the general spirit of and some specific objectives developed in response to the Sustainable Development Agenda, 2030.

Table 2.2. Spain's targets for early childhood education and care (ECEC) (primary indicators)

Indicator	Current EU	Current Spain	Target 2030
% of children (0-6 years) enrolled in early childhood education centres (first and second cycle)	<2 y.o.: 8.8% 2 y.o.: 29.9% 3 y.o.: 89.9% (Eurostat, 2019)	<2 y.o.: 27.7% 2 y.o.: 61.4% 3 y.o.: 96,1 % (Eurostat, 2019)	More than 50% in the first cycle and 96% in the second cycle
Cost of early childhood education (0-3 years)	12% of an average family income (Melhuish et al., 2015)	€205 (public system) – €540 (private) (Average, 2019)	Zero cost (free)
Percentage of public expenditure allocated to childcare benefits in programmes targeted or not targeted by income.	0.5% GDP (2018)	0,5% GDP (2018)	1% GDP

Table 2.3. Proposed indicators

Nº	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, reach at least 50% of children enrolled in the first cycle (and 96% of children in the second cycle). No region below 50% in first cycle	% of children (0-6 years) enrolled in early childhood education centres (first and second cycle)	Percentage of children enrolled in the first cycle (ages 0-3 years) and second cycle (ages 3-6 years)	MEYFP	Annually	Primary	Monitoring	Result	<2 y.o.: 27.7% 2 y.o.: 61.4% 3 y.o.: 96.1 % (Eurostat, 2019)	More than 50% in the first cycle and 96% in the second cycle
2	By 2030, the provision of early childhood education will be universal and free of charge	Cost of early childhood education (0-3 years)	Monthly direct and indirect costs (including food, clothing, transportation and educational materials) to be borne by parents or caregivers of children aged 0-3 years	FUCI	Irregular	Primary	Monitoring	Structure	€205 (public system) – €540 (private) (Average 2019)	Zero cost (free)
3	By 2030, double the expenditure on childcare benefits to close the gap between Spain and the best-positioned European countries (Denmark and Norway: 1.3%)	Public spending on family/child benefits – day-care centre	Percentage of public expenditure allocated to childcare benefits in programmes targeted or not targeted by income	EUROSTAT	Annually	Primary	Monitoring	Process	0.5% GDP (2018)	1% GDP
4	By 2030, reduce the percentage of households that have unmet needs for childcare services for financial reasons to the EU-27 average (13.4%)	Unaffordability of ECEC	Percentage of households that cannot meet their needs for formal childcare services because they cannot afford it (financial reasons)	ECV	Irregular (not foreseen until 2024)	Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation	Process	51.8% 65.9% for households with income below 60% of median equivalized income	13.4%

									62.4% for single-parent households (Eurostat 2016; ILC_ATS04)	
5	By 2030, increase the uptake of the newly introduced birth leave by fathers to 90%	Uptake of parental leave by mothers and fathers	Population with work interruption for childcare	<i>Segurid ad Social</i>	Annually	Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation	Result	83% uptake of parental, paternity and combined leave by fathers (Eurostat, 2018; LFSO_18PARLVED)	90%
6	By 2030, universalize the coverage of children with special needs	Children with special needs	Children with special needs receiving intervention by type, by type of centre (public, subsidized, private) and time to intervention	ACs	Annually	Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation	Structure	55,884 children with special education needs (e.g., auditory, motor, intellectual, visual, pervasive, developmental disorders, severe behavioural or personality disorders) (2019-2020 school year) 78% are in public ECEC, 20.2% in subsidized/charter ECEC, and 1.7% in private ECEC	100% receiving attention within 6 months

Notes: Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources. Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

2.4. Concluding remarks

The following issues need to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of the ECG in the area of early childhood education and care.

- The lack of sufficient and appropriate data for monitoring and evaluation.
- The need for far greater coordination between the national, regional and local levels, not only on data production, harmonization, and supply, but also on regulation, planning, policy implementation and the distribution of costs.
- The need for better coordination between all of the different authorities, entities and professionals involved.
- Useful action to promote greater coordination could include:
 - regular meetings of the different government levels and professionals from different areas to ensure that objectives and priorities are aligned,
 - the design of clear protocols with distribution of responsibilities, and
 - the replication of these protocols by the ACs and local governments.

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3. EDUCATION

- Schooling in Spain, which should promote equity and social cohesion, is instead reproducing the country's inequalities. As a result, the most vulnerable children are more likely than other children to experience educational underachievement, tensions in the transition from primary to secondary school and early school leaving (ESL).
- The challenges include a lack of available data for some of these children, socioeconomic school segregation, and the use of grade repetition for those lagging behind in their educational achievements. In addition, Spain's education legislation and programme implementation are characterized by frequent changes, and there is little empirical knowledge about the impact of educational policies.
- The effective implementation of the ECG in this area will depend on poverty reduction to improve educational outcomes; preventive measures that involve students, families and schools; the reduction of educational segregation; and effective collaboration across all administrations with responsibility for education.

Introduction⁴¹

This chapter reviews policies on education and leisure. It provides an overview of the general organization of education in Spain with a focus on the provision for vulnerable children and identifies relevant programmes at the national, regional and local levels. It prioritizes experiences that have been evaluated, innovative programmes grounded in previous evidence, and experiences that cut across policy areas and that engage multiple levels of Spain's public administration. We also highlight good practices in four areas: educational support programmes for students with low educational attainment; interventions to reduce socioeconomic school segregation; preventive interventions for specific groups; and compensatory interventions.

3.1. Overview of education programmes, schemes and initiatives

Schooling in Spain, which should promote equity and social cohesion, is instead reproducing the country's inequalities. Children from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, and from some minority groups (Roma students, and children with migrant origins), children with special needs and children in care are all more likely than other children to experience educational underachievement, tensions in the transition from primary to secondary school and early school leaving (ESL).

There are a number of key challenges. There is, for example, a lack of available data for some of these children, which makes it difficult to monitor their educational trajectories and their access to educational services, or to evaluate their learning outcomes. Socioeconomic school segregation is commonplace in Spain, particularly at primary level, with disadvantaged children often grouped together in certain schools. Achievement gaps, as measured by

⁴¹ In all, 13 interviews were conducted to inform this chapter, consisting of interviews with representatives from regional public administration (Catalonia, Castile and León); local administration, (Madrid, Barcelona); central public administration (education, poverty); the third sector and academia.

underachievement rates and grade repetition, tend to widen during primary school. Unresolved learning difficulties in primary school mean that a significant minority of children enter secondary education at a disadvantage, and many of them never catch up. Low initial levels of achievement leave children in vulnerable conditions far more susceptible to negative influences from their neighbourhood and their peers on their learning.⁴²

Education in Spain is decentralized. The Central Government sets the basic elements of the organization, coordination and financing of education establishments, while the ACs are responsible for funding allocation and for defining education plans, the academic curriculum, staff to student ratios and support activities. It is important to distinguish between ACs that have assumed the full responsibility for education (Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia, Andalusia, the Canary Islands, the Valencian Community and Navarre) and the other ACs that have normative responsibilities for the development of the standards defined by the State, as well as the management of the educational system in their own territory. In general, local administrations manage public education facilities, the provision of out-of-school activities and the control of absenteeism (and are also responsible for the social services that may detect vulnerable children).

Nevertheless, the distribution of responsibilities differs from region to region, with provinces, counties or metropolitan areas playing varying roles (interviews with local administration, Madrid and Barcelona). Spain's education system is also characterized by a substantial private grant-aided school sector. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), often funded by regional and local administrations, also play an important role in the provision of complementary services for vulnerable children. It is clear, therefore, that the implementation of education programmes requires the collaboration of multiple and varying actors.

Spain's national legislation regulates special or adapted education provision within mainstream education. The legislation (LOE, 2003 modified by the LOMCE 2013 and the LOMLOE 2020) identifies the students with the following characteristics as having "specific needs for educational support":

- special educational needs associated with physical, mental or sensory disabilities, or serious conduct disorders
- maturation delay⁴³
- language and communication development disorders
- high intellectual abilities
- needs derived from a late incorporation into the educational system
- attention or learning disorders
- a severe lack of familiarity with the teaching language
- personal conditions or school history.

The final category of 'personal conditions' is deliberately abstract and includes, in broad terms, students who are vulnerable or whose education has been delayed for reasons that are not included elsewhere in the list. The specification of this category varies across ACs. In Madrid, for example, only students who have repeated two or more years are entitled to support under this category. In Catalonia, however, the new admissions decree (see Section 3.2) aims

⁴² For further detail on the existing evidence, see the accompanying literature review (Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021).

⁴³ The new legislation (LOMLOE 2020) introduces this concept for the first time in the category of 'specific needs for educational support'. Defined as *"The child has several areas of their development affected: psychomotor skills, language, cognitive development or social interaction. The affectation consists of a chronological delay, that is, the boy or girl with maturational delay, maintains characteristics similar to those of children of a younger chronological age"*.

to include students in precarious situations (exposed, for example, to poverty, social exclusion or violence) that may threaten their education – a preventive approach that expands the number of children entitled to support (interview with regional public administration, Catalonia).

The regulation of ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) provision also varies by region (Jiménez Lara et al., 2019). The ECG aims to fund SEN education, establishing procedures for the early detection of SEN and the provision of compensatory resources, including economic support. There are large variations across ACs in the extent to which students with SEN are integrated into mainstream education and in the learning support and resource allocation for individual students (interview, national, third sector). Evidence on the latter is scarce, however, and there is a clear need for information that is disaggregated by type of disability and by children's other characteristics. The Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI, 2020) has identified three main priorities for children with special educational needs in Spain⁴⁴: the promotion of early (pre-school) interventions; violence prevention; and access to digital technologies.⁴⁵

Two further characteristics of the Spanish educational system are worth noting before we consider specific programmes. First, education legislation and programme implementation are characterized by frequent changes, with nine national education laws passed since 1980. Second, there is little empirical knowledge about the efficiency of policies on educational support and remedial education. Achievement and attainment indicators are collected on a regular basis through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the educational administration collects information on graduation. However, there are few programme evaluations and, where available, they tend to rely on participation and perceptions, making it hard to assess what works best and why.

The available literature identifies two main types of education support initiatives: preventive and second-chance (Soler et al., 2021). General preventive support (for students with low attainment) seeks to reinforce attainment in compulsory secondary education and in the last years of primary school – crucial periods during which students tend to show the first signs of learning difficulties and higher failure rates. The prevention of failure and ESL accounts for the bulk of policies carried out by Spain's ACs. Prevention programmes also include actions for specific groups of students enrolled in compulsory education, including Roma students, those with a migrant background, and students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability.

The so-called ‘second chance programmes’ include all actions that promote the return to the (formal and informal) education system of young people aged 18 to 24 who have dropped out. Programmes developed by the ACs to address ESL focus mostly on the prevention of school failure as the most effective way to reduce ESL as there are few public options available to help young people return to school once they have left (Soler et al., 2021).

Two nationwide programmes have been identified that involve collaboration between the Spanish Central Government and ACs and both were promoted in response to high rates of ESL: the National Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving (*Plan Nacional para la reducción del*

⁴⁴ Within its Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030, the Spanish government has committed to start an investment programme to improve the integration of SEN students in ordinary schools by 2022.

⁴⁵ The ‘*Educa en Digital*’ programme, promoted by the central government aims to improve access to online devices in schools.

abandono educativo temprano, 2014-2020); and the Programme for Reinforcement, Guidance and Support (*Programas de Refuerzo, Orientación y Apoyo*, PROA, 2005-2012).

The National Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving provides funding for preventive measures to minimize the risk of ESL, such as external evaluations for the early detection of learning difficulties. A royal decree regulates the general system of scholarships and study aids each year. Studies are conducted to identify areas with high ESL, analyse both causes and profiles, and to evaluate and design specific intervention pathways. Awareness campaigns target students and their families to ensure the best possible use of training. Specific programmes are also implemented in areas and groups with the highest risk of ESL through cooperation and coordination with institutions and local and regional authorities. In addition, 16-24 year-olds who leave school early are supported through adult education institutions and local authorities to facilitate their reintegration into learning. Second-chance programmes and vocational training measures⁴⁶ offered by adult education institutions have contributed to the reduction of ESL rates in Spain (Interview, academic).

PROA provided additional resources to primary and secondary schools that had a high concentration of students with low socioeconomic status, including additional tutoring, support and mentoring, and interventions to change school culture and expectations.⁴⁷ An evaluation found PROA to have significant positive effects on secondary school students in the short and long term, particularly in reading. Such an effect proved to be cumulative: students in schools that implemented PROA for two or more years obtained better results than students in other schools (García-Pérez and Hidalgo, 2014). Manzanares and Ulla (2014) report a positive and general perception about the impact of the programme on improvements in three areas (2008-2011): work habits, reading, and writing in primary schools. The impact of the programme appears to have been most significant in its first two years of implementation, with the improvements decreasing in its third year – findings that provide some insights into the programme's sustainability. Experimental studies based on outcomes are needed to validate such findings.

PROA has now been reactivated, and renamed as PROA+, with an initial budget of €60 million financed by the Ministry of Education, with the intention that it will become co-financed by the ACs (see Section 3.2). Programmes such as PROA and PROA+ represent a first experience of adaptation of national remedial education strategies for the ACs. Regional characteristics (such as extension, rurality, GDP per capita, public and private spending on education, school population, priority in the political agenda, etc.) tend to condition the implementation of educational policies, as well as the structure of the regional administration and the internal decision-making processes (Interview, central public administration, education; Interview, regional administration, Castile and León) Furthermore, actors do not merely apply the programmes but develop a fundamental role in their promotion and interpretation (Buenfil, 2006).

⁴⁶ The national government has committed to update vocational training by improving the integration between education and labour market in Spain's Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030.

⁴⁷ PROA was based on two types of programmes. First, the School Mentor Programme (PAE) provided individualized support to students with learning difficulties from the centre's mentors or teachers for at least four hours each week. The Support and Reinforcement Programme (PAR) ran in schools that had difficult environments and a high proportion of students with low educational prospects. It included actions related to the school, the family and the wider environment and targeted the transition between primary and secondary school, capacity development, educational reinforcement and school libraries. It also promoted collaboration with families, the use of mediators, workshops, extracurricular activities and an anti-truancy strategy.

Regional specificities translated into disparate criteria in the implementation of the PROA programme and into successive approaches to this day. In 2020/21, for example, Catalonia complemented PROA+ Central Government funding to provide additional support to 500 schools for a whole academic year as part of a broader programme, while regions such as Andalusia or Madrid used central funding to implement specific actions such as provision of guidance counsellors (Andalusia) or support teachers (Madrid) for a three-month period (Interview, regional public administration, Catalonia). The regional government in Madrid refused the second round of funding associated with the programme on the basis of low take-up.

Some regional initiatives are similar to PROA, such as the School Accompaniment and Support Programme (*Programa de acompañamiento y apoyo escolar en centros públicos de educación infantil y primaria 2012-2021*) in Madrid region, which offers remedial education at public primary schools to students with poor performance from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, covering a significant proportion of children from migrant origins. Around 20 per cent of public primary schools participate in the programme, a percentage that has remained relatively stable since it began.

The Programme is financed by the regional government, which allocates €4,000 to each support group (DGEIP, 2020). Each school formalizes a contract with an external entity for the provision of small group classes outside school hours (2-4 days per week), to help pupils develop their work habits, enhance their study techniques and develop a liking for learning, while improving their maths and language skills. A recent study on the effectiveness of this intervention found that the programme could help to reduce the gap in grades between native students and those from a migrant background (Hidalgo and Battaglia, 2021). However, the programme was found to have no significant impact in groups that had a high concentration of students from a migrant background, suggesting that socioeconomic school segregation may limit the effectiveness of such interventions.

There have been mixed reviews for the Learning and Performance Improvement Programme (*Programa Mejora Aprendizaje y Rendimiento*, PMAR), which was included in the education law in 2013 (LOMCE) but was not fully applied until 2015-2017. PMAR grouped low-ability students for two academic years – equivalent to the 2nd and 3rd years of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE). Upon completing the programme, the participants returned to the mainstream group to complete their last year of CSE and obtain their certificate.

Mato et al. (2021), drawing on data from the Principality of Asturias, found that pupils who accessed PMAR in 2016-2017 were at least 12 per cent more likely to stay in education (or graduate from CSE) after two years, and conclude that the programme helps to reduce ESL, especially among girls. Their findings contrast with international longitudinal evidence indicating that segregation within schools can improve outcomes for high-ability students, but hurts lower-performing students who no longer learn from their better-performing peers (Kang, 2007; Hanushek et al., 2003). Furthermore, working class and students from minority backgrounds are consistently over-represented in the lower-attainment tracks (Francis et al., 2020). In other words, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are placed in 'low ability' groups face a double disadvantage as this measure is both socially divisive and detrimental to students who were already struggling with low attainment. PMAR has been eliminated under the recently approved educational law (LOMLOE 2020).

A number of educational leisure initiatives for children have been running each summer in Spain for years, although coverage is far from 100 per cent (ACPI, 2019). The VECA Programme

(Programme for the Guarantee of the Rights to Food, Leisure and Culture of children during School Holidays) has, since 2018, reinforced existing summer educational leisure activities at local level. It aims to improve the quality of summer camps, reduce the 'summer learning gap' and guarantee adequate nutrition among disadvantaged children while schools are closed.

Few local experiences in Spain have undergone rigorous evaluations of their educational impact. However, two tutoring and mentoring programmes developed by the Barcelona Education Consortium, *Èxit* ('success') and *Èxit Estiu* ('summer success') have been evaluated. The *Èxit* programme aims to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary education, and to improve academic performance and learning and work habits for primary and secondary students (Alegre et al., 2017a). Activities are often led by young students (e.g. alumni of the same secondary school). Alegre and colleagues (2017a) detected significant and positive impacts: a reduction in failed subjects, an increased probability of not failing any subject, and an increased probability of obtaining the secondary certificate.

The *Èxit Estiu* programme provides academic support during the summer to secondary students who must resit failed subjects in September. It aims to improve academic performance, increase graduation rates and prevent ESL. Small groups of students receive 2-hour tutorials each day led by college volunteers over 3 to 4 weeks, with the option of combining academic activities with sports. The impact assessment of *Èxit Estiu* by Alegre et al. (2018) showed positive results, indicating that summer reinforcement and formal learning interventions can reduce repetition and ESL. The literature suggests that tutoring and mentoring programmes can have a significant positive impact if they meet certain criteria: if they are individualized or cover small groups; if they are run by qualified personnel or competent volunteers; and if they encourage family involvement (Terzian et al., 2009).

Other interventions have aimed to expand the range of activities that combine education and leisure and that are available in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. An example is Baobab, promoted by Barcelona City Council through the Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB) (Interview, local administration, Barcelona), which aims to promote and strengthen education-oriented leisure projects for children, young people and their families (Alegre et al., 2017b). Free activities run by young volunteers allow poor children and families to participate. One flagship activity is the Urban Camps that offer education-oriented leisure activities each August, a month that is often neglected in interventions.

3.2. Examples of good practice

Educational support programmes for students with low educational attainment

The Spanish Government is preparing to implement the PROA+ programme, designed as a continuation of PROA, and aiming to improve educational outcomes for vulnerable students. PROA+ seeks greater integration across administrative levels, with ACs involved from the design stage and greater flexibility allowing adaptations in the implementation of interventions if these adaptations are evidence-based, evaluated and align with the programme objectives (two interviews with central public administration, education).

Preliminary work in advance of the programme's implementation, particularly in terms of the identification of indicators and territorial collaboration, can serve as a springboard for interventions by Central Government. In addition, there are plans to create 618 personal and family accompaniment and guidance units for educationally vulnerable students. These new

units will be based in the educational or psycho-pedagogical services located in areas and school districts with high rates of ESL.

The **Educational Success Improvement Programme** (*Programa de Mejora del Éxito Educativo*) in **Castile and León** was first implemented in 2007 through coordination between the AC, the provinces (*Direcciones Provinciales*), city councils and schools (ORDEN EDU/136/2019; interview, regional administration, Castile and León). The regional administration manages funding, runs internal evaluations to identify needs, sets priorities and proposes measures (from a catalogue listed in the legislation) to be implemented in each school year. Provinces, meanwhile, identify the target schools for the different measures and the schools themselves identify the target students on the basis of performance (failed language and/or maths) and report on any special support required. City councils provide the additional services needed to provide the programme(s) (e.g. cleaning and maintenance of school facilities).

While the initiative includes many forms of support, its flagship programme is the 'Extraordinary July Classes for students in the last year of compulsory secondary education' (which is to be extended to primary education). July activities involve morning classes in math and languages. These are, in general, delivered by school teachers who receive additional pay for doing so, and tend to include students not only from the school delivering the programme, but also students from other parts of the province, which enables the programme to reach rural populations.

The interventions are evaluated through satisfaction surveys (conducted with teachers, students and families), school-produced intervention reports and through the comparison of September examination results for the students taking part in the programme with the results for students in similar circumstances who do not. The programme is deemed to be effective at improving results as well as students' well-being and their sense of belonging. The key factors in its success have been identified as the positive perceptions of the initiative by families and schools, its continuity, the participation of school teachers, and flexibility in the implementation of its measures. The programme is funded through multiple sources including European (cohesion fund), national and regional funds.

Interventions to reduce socioeconomic school segregation

The new **Admissions act to reduce school segregation and inequality in Catalonia** (approved by the regional government on 16 February, 2021) aims to help municipalities reduce socioeconomic school segregation through a range of measures that include the creation of a new entity to tackle this problem, known as detection units (interview, regional public administration, Catalonia). Another important change has been the development of new distribution guidelines for late registration – often an issue for students from migrant backgrounds who tend to be concentrated in under-subscribed schools and high-complexity schools under the current system. The Act is to be implemented alongside an ambitious set of economic support measures for vulnerable students (e.g. subsidies for school meals, leisure activities), including students living in poverty as defined by the Regional Department of Education, and additional funding for schools for each vulnerable student.

The programme aims to encourage a **preventive approach to educational disadvantage** by establishing criteria (disability, poverty, family violence) that make it possible to identify vulnerable students before this disadvantage has an impact on their attainment. To achieve this, the programme is moving away from exclusive reliance on specialist reports (by schools, the municipality or psycho-pedagogical assessment) to make use of administrative data on, for

example, family income. The implementation of this new approach is expected to increase the number of vulnerable students identified from 66,000 to 200,000 (interview, regional public administration, Catalonia; interview, academic).⁴⁸

Preventive interventions for specific groups

Fundación Secretariado Gitano⁴⁹ runs a number of projects under the umbrella of the **‘Programa Promociona’** in collaboration with local authorities. Promociona is funded through the ESF and currently runs in 49 cities across 13 regions. The programme aims to **reduce ESL among Roma students** and promote their participation in post-compulsory education through integrated interventions with students (individual guidance and group school tutoring), families, schools and other local actors (e.g. companies, social organizations, citizens). It targets students in the last two years of primary education and in secondary education (aged around 11 to 16). Students, families and schools must all commit to the programme, with a requirement of 80 per cent attendance in the previous term.

An evaluation in 2019 concluded that 87 per cent of 1,300 participants (over the age of 10) obtained a secondary education qualification, compared to 17 per cent of the wider Roma population in Spain (de la Rica et al., 2019). This approach aligns closely with similar interventions that have proven to be effective. For example, a recent review on interventions targeting Roma students in the OECD (Salgado-Orellana et al., 2019) highlights the centrality of family participation and the mobilization of teaching assistants and/or mediators from the Roma community to act as role models for the students as being crucial for the achievement of sustainable interventions for inclusive education.

Manlleu is also a pioneer municipality in the development of good practices to improve outcomes for students from a migrant background (Bonal, 2012). One example is the **participation of Moroccan women who speak Arabic, Catalan and Spanish as auxiliary teachers in the early educational stages**. They reinforce the first three weeks of schooling to accommodate students who may have language problems, and to foster close collaboration between schools and families. Qualitative assessments found both teachers and families to be satisfied with the programme (Bonal, 2012).

The **Aude project** was a pilot project under Erasmus+ developed in five European countries including Spain (2017-2018) (Sapere Aude, 2019). It aimed to **improve the school performance of young people (12 to 17) in residential care through mentoring that had a focus on their education and well-being**. Retired high-school teachers volunteered as mentors, offering young people support in the organization and planning of school-related tasks, following up on their school activities, and setting out the educational pathways that are available to them. They also reinforced the interests of the young people in education through visits to museums, theatres, science parks, etc.; and participation in cultural and leisure activities to promote their

⁴⁸ Several provinces and municipalities have implemented measures to reduce school segregation. Some local initiatives, such as in Valencia (de Madaria et al., 2018) or in Terrassa (Bonal, 2012) provide examples of good practice in the design of zoning policies to adjust supply and demand. While still in the planning stage, these studies show the importance of strategic alliances between educational planning and urban planning, as well the design of policies that adapt to the existing diversity within as well as between municipalities. In Vitoria-Gasteiz (2016), the segregation plan includes improved information and personalized guidance to families to facilitate their school choice, as well as measures that help to distribute students more equitably (e.g. managing late registrations). This latter issue was also identified as key in Manlleu and Valles (Bonal, 2012).

⁴⁹ A similar programme, ‘Kumpania’, is run in the Valencian Community as a publicly funded initiative in collaboration with third-sector organizations (DOGV 8464).

social integration and well-being (visits to the cinema, for example, or listening to music); as well as offering emotional support.

An independent pre-test and post-test evaluation of the Aude project showed improvements in several areas: with enhanced perceptions of academic performance among the young participants, better school attendance (and as a result, less absenteeism), and greater expectations of continuing education (academic or vocational). The expectations of caregivers and teachers also improved, although to a lesser extent (interview, academic). The programme remains active in some residential care centres in Catalonia.

Compensatory – or second-chance – interventions

Second-chance education refers to programmes that aim to combat social exclusion, particularly among unemployed young people (aged 15 to 29) who have had difficulties in their ordinary schooling and who have not obtained their secondary education certificate. Some of these programmes take place in **Second-chance Schools (E2O)** for which there is a European network (European Association of Cities, institutions and second chance schools) and an association in Spain, where these schools are run chiefly by third-sector entities. Their key challenges are to ensure their own long-term economic sustainability, and to achieve normative, economic and functional autonomy.

The aim of such compensatory interventions is to provide individualized and comprehensive educational responses to young people who are outside the education system and who have low employability, aiming to foster their social and professional integration. **Fundación Adunare's E2O (in Zaragoza)** achieves this by providing a range of psychosocial interventions that entail the coordination of multiple actors who intervene with the young person during their time in the E2O (tutor, educators, counsellors) plus their family. Psychosocial intervention allows young people to progress towards their academic objectives and increases their chances of success in both their training process and in their personal lives. In **Barcelona**, the municipality opened its first public second-chance school in 2019.

3.3. Policy recommendations and 2030 targets

Our examination of educational policies, programmes and interventions, and our interviews with experts, have enabled us to identify five key factors that have facilitated the success of educational programmes in general, and their ability to have a positive impact on vulnerable children in particular.⁵⁰

Continuity and stability of programmes

Lack of continuity was cited as a challenge for the success of programmes, while stability was associated with positive feedback loops. The establishment of every new intervention has costs in terms of training, ensuring cooperation, identification of target students, and more. Running a programme repeatedly (while evaluating and revising) makes it easier to obtain and maintain the collaboration of local administrations, families, teachers and schools (interview, regional administration, Castile and León). The need for continuity also applies to the personnel delivering the activities (interview, academic) (e.g: Programa de Mejora del Éxito Educativo).

⁵⁰While these are not the only factors to have emerged from this examination, they were factors that appeared repeatedly and that were seen as key to success.

Multilevel cooperation

Effective education interventions always involve multiple actors. To ensure buy-in, some programmes seek to involve all stakeholders from the design stage to the identification of indicators, and from activities to evaluation (e.g: Programa Promociona, PROA+).

The involvement of teachers and families or carers

The OECD (2011) notes that support programmes delivered by regular teachers are more successful in improving educational outcomes. The advantages include being able to rely on their expertise and their knowledge of students and families, and the stronger integration between school and out-of-school activities. Preventive and tailored interventions that involve multiple actors (such as families, schools and so on) are identified as more likely to succeed (González Motos, 2020; Secretariado Gitano, 2020), with the Programa Promociona, the Aude project and Adunare's E2O offering prime examples.

Flexibility in the selection and design of programmes

This allows the adaptation of interventions to the realities of the school and its wider environment, as seen in the Programa de Mejora del Éxito Educativo. This can be achieved by allowing regions, cities and schools to choose from a list of validated activities and programmes and by ensuring monitoring and evaluation (interview, central public administration; interview, regional administration).

Consistent identification, monitoring and evaluation

Common themes that emerged from the interviews for this analysis were the difficulties in obtaining consistent and harmonized data that allow the identification of vulnerable students and in the effective and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Data on the schooling of children with SEN, which vary widely between years, provide one example of the current limitations of Spain's data collection and sharing systems. The establishment of clear criteria to identify vulnerable children is the first step towards targeting and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation should be based on consistent and pre-defined indicators (interview, central public administration; interview, national, third sector), as seen in the Admissions act that aims to reduce school segregation and inequality in Catalonia. Improved monitoring and evaluation would also contribute to the achievement of the objectives set by the Spanish Government in relation to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. This aims to improve educational opportunities for all and in particular for vulnerable students, including those from a migrant background, Roma students, and students with special educational needs.

We now propose five indicators to monitor progress towards greater educational attainment and reduced educational inequality in Spain. These indicators relate to the key challenges for the country today in this area, according to our interviews and literature review, as well as our experience as researchers on poverty and inequality. All five are of particular relevance for the monitoring of ECG implementation and must be disaggregated by socioeconomic status, migration status, gender and disability. The benchmarks for these indicators are summarized in Table 3.1.

- ***Underachievement in maths, reading and science.*** This indicator examines the extent to which the three basic skills are assessed in national tests during compulsory education. Spain has a high proportion of students who are low performers and underachievers throughout their educational trajectory when compared to its neighbouring countries. Socioeconomic inequalities in reading are already apparent at age 9 or 10 and widen during lower-secondary education. Education authorities should, therefore, allocate additional resources (including extra educational staff, special allowances and professional development opportunities) to schools that enrol large numbers of disadvantaged students. For examples of good practice, see Section 3.2: *Educational support programmes for students with low educational attainment.*
- ***Grade repetition.*** This is a key indicator for the analysis and projection of pupil flows from grade to grade within the educational cycle (and a predictor of ESL) and is seen as an indicator of internal efficiency. Strategies on grade repetition are interlinked with responses to underachievement. At present, repetition remains one of the main tools used in Spain to respond to weak performance, yet empirical evidence indicates that it is applied unequally, with students from a migrant or low socioeconomic background at greater risk of repeating a grade, even after accounting for performance (Cordero et al., 2014; OECD, 2014). There are also huge variations among Spain's regions. Closer examination of repetition patterns across grades may identify specific causes and possible remedies. Overall, reducing repetition requires the activation of learning support and curriculum adaptation policies, with a strong focus on their application among children in the most vulnerable situations. For examples of good practice, see Section 3.2: *Preventive interventions for specific groups.*
- ***Socioeconomic school segregation.*** Factors such as residential segregation, a focus on school choice, and the presence of a strong private grant-aided school sector have exacerbated school segregation by socioeconomic group as well as by migration status, ethnicity, disability, between public and private sectors, and within each of these school networks, particularly in some regions and cities in Spain. As a result, Spain has one of the highest rates of socioeconomic segregation (0.32 using the Gorard index)⁵¹ in primary education in the OECD, with only Lithuania and Turkey being more segregated (Ferrer and Gortázar, 2021). This segregation is associated with increased educational inequality and can reduce the effectiveness of remedial policies (Hidalgo and Battaglia, 2021). As a 2030 target, Spain could aim for the segregation level observed in its neighbouring countries, such as Portugal's 0.25 rate in the Gorard index. For examples of good practice, see Section 3.2: *Interventions to reduce segregation.*
- ***Early school leaving (ESL).*** Reducing ESL remains a key challenge in Spain, which has the highest rate of ESL in the EU (as shown in Table 3.1) at 16 per cent (rising to 33.9 per cent among those of migrant origin from non-EU countries), well above the EU27 average of 10 per cent and the benchmark target originally set for 2020 (10 per cent). This is a major challenge for Spain, given the scale of the problem, its consequences for equality and labour market opportunities, and the multiple and complex factors involved. Reducing ESL requires preventive initiatives that aim to minimize the risk of

⁵¹ The Gorard index is one of several measures of segregation in use. The Gorard index reported here is based on the proportion of students in a school who belong to a specific group, such as students with a low socioeconomic status (SES), in relation to the proportion of students of that group in the area where the school is located. In this case, 32 per cent of low SES students in Spain should change school in order to achieve an even representation within schools.

ESL by reducing repetition and improving outcomes (as noted above), but also by offering students a wider choice of programmes and alternative pathways (academic, technical or vocational) that are integrated with the labour market, as well as the opportunity to switch tracks or programmes when necessary. Reducing ESL also requires support for the transition between education levels (especially from general education to vocational education and training programmes) and improvements in the recognition of skills and qualifications, which would help students to progress or to re-engage in education or training. This requires both preventive and compensatory measures (see Section 3.2).

- **Deprivation of leisure and educational activities.** The most common forms of material deprivation among Spanish children relate to their lack of participation in social and leisure activities, and in extended educational opportunities (Ayllón, 2017) and are most likely to affect the most disadvantaged households (Lanau, 2021). Participation can also be particularly costly for children with special educational needs and/or those living in rural areas. Access to leisure and sport activities depends not only on household income, but also on the capacity to develop a framework of cooperation that includes educational establishments and local communities, as well as social, health and child protection services, to ensure equal and inclusive access (European Council, 2021). Reducing education deprivation is vital to ensure that children have enough resources in place to ensure the success of other interventions, which means that efforts in this area should be integrated into wider policy approaches (interview, local administration, Madrid). This could be achieved through two the provision of grants and scholarships (usually by the ACs) and the provision of services (often at the municipal level).

Table 3.1. Spain's targets for education and leisure activities (primary indicators)

Indicator	Current EU	Current Spain	Target 2030
Early leavers from education and training	9.9% (2020)	16% (2020) Other European citizens (EU-27): 28.3% (2020). Non-European citizens: 33.9% (2020)	10%
Participation in leisure and educational activities, school trips and events	N/A	Educational activities 10.9%, Leisure activities 12.9% (2014) Income poor: Educational activities 27.%, Leisure 30%	13% (leisure activities) 11% (educational activities)
School segregation (primary school) by socioeconomic status (SES) (TIMSS)	N/A	0.32 (Gorard index) (socioeconomic segregation in primary school; 2018) 0.29 (Gorard index) (socioeconomic segregation in compulsory secondary education; 2019)	0.21 (primary school)

Table 3.2. Proposed indicators

N ^o	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, reduce the school dropout rate to below the EU27 average and into line with EU targets (2021-2030)	Early leavers from education and training, total, by migrant backgrounds, by income quintiles, rural/urban, Roma, SEN	% youths aged 18-24 who had not completed upper secondary education and were not in any type of training	LFS/EPA	Quarterly	Primary	Monitor	Result	16% (2020) Other European citizens (EU-27): 28.3% (2020) Non-European citizens: 33.9% (2020)	10%
2	By 2030, ensure that less than 13% of children in poverty are deprived of regular leisure activities and less than 11% are deprived of regular educational activities	Participate in leisure and educational activities, school trips and events by migrant background, by income quintiles, rural/urban, Roma, SEN	Percentage of children in poverty who are deprived of educational or leisure activities	ECV	Irregular (2009, 2014, expected 2021)	Primary	Monitor/ Evaluation	Result	Educational activities 10,9%, Leisure activities 12,9% (2014) Income poor: Educational activities 27%, Leisure activities 30%	11% of the poor deprived of educational activities 13% of the poor deprived of leisure activities
3	By 2030, achieve universal coverage of education allowances for students in poverty and social exclusion	Coverage of education allowances	Proportion of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion benefitting from any type of education allowances or scholarships (transportation, text books, school meals, SEN, other) (coverage rate)	Encuesta sobre Gasto de los hogares en Educación/ Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional	Annually	Secondary	Evaluation	Result	Primary school: 27% (785.025) (2019-20 school year) Secondary school 44% (840.373)	100% of children in poverty and social exclusion

4	By 2030, reduce the repetition rate in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary to close the gap with the OECD average (11%)	Grade repetition	Students who reported that they had repeated a grade, in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school (%)	PISA (15yo)/Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional/ ACs	3 Years	Secondary	Monitor/ Evaluation	Process	28.7% (2018)	11%
5	By 2030, reduce the socioeconomic segregation of boys and girls in primary school to the levels of the leading ACs	School segregation	Concentration of 10-year-old students with vulnerable socioeconomic profiles in the school the child attends	PISA TIMSS	3 years	Primary	Monitor / Evaluation	Process	0.32 (socioeconomic segregation in primary school; 2018) 0.29 (socioeconomic segregation in ESO; 2019)	0.21 (primary school)
6	By 2030, halve underachievement among the poor (children living in households below 60% median income)	Underachievement in reading, maths and science	Share of 15-year-old students failing to reach level 2 ('basic skills level') on the PISA scale for the three core school subjects of reading, mathematics and science.	PISA	3 years	Secondary	Evaluation	Result	Math 23% Reading 22% Science 20% (PISA 2018)	Halve underachievement among the monetary poor (children living in households below 60% median income)

Notes: Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources. Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

3.4. Concluding remarks

No drastic reduction in ESL can be achieved by interventions that are targeted only to the highest risk groups (e.g. children from migrant backgrounds, Roma children or children in care). These children should always receive appropriate and specialized attention and interventions, which should aim to include them as active participants. The systemic problem of high ESL rates in Spain requires broad changes to:

- reduce repetition
- improve educational outcomes
- improve the sense of belonging among disadvantaged students.

The main conclusions from this chapter are as follows.

- Poverty reduction is central to improving educational outcomes.
- There is a clear need for preventive measures that involve students, families and schools.
- The reduction of educational segregation is a key requirement for the reduction of educational inequality.

Effective interventions require collaboration between all of the administrations with responsibility for education for the full implementation and sustainability of programmes that are based on robust evidence.

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4. HEALTH AND NUTRITION

- Health inequalities have widened in Spain over recent decades, with the decentralization of healthcare services across different administrative levels underlined as a major obstacle for the implementation of coordinated programmes and initiatives for children in need.
- In addition, many children in Spain lack access to mental health, dental and ophthalmological services, which should be incorporated into primary and community health systems. The country also faces increasing rates of childhood obesity and overweight.
- The effective implementation of the ECG requires rapid and continuous coordination between health, education and social services, as well as food policies to protect and promote children's health, and greater support for surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research.

Introduction⁵²

Social and health inequalities have widened in Spain over recent decades, including inequalities in access to healthcare services for children in need and their families (FOESSA Foundation, 2018). The multidimensional nature of well-being during childhood calls for the development of intersectoral and complementary policies (e.g., measures to address unmet health needs), in line with the global framework for Health in All Policies.⁵³ In Spain, however, despite the commitments expressed and efforts made at national, regional (AC) and local level, policies are still required that will protect and promote, in particular, the health and nutritional status of children in need.

In this chapter, we analyse specific policies, programmes and services designed to protect and promote the health of children, particularly those from the six target groups of children in need that are the focus of the ECG: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations.

We also identify a set of good practices across Spain that have aimed to improve healthcare services. Finally, we set out the aspirational and realistic impacts of recommended actions to promote and safeguard children's health and nutrition.

⁵²Information was gathered from six key informants: a primary care physician and a paediatrician working at local level; a university professor of health economics working at regional and national scale; and representatives from three NGOs (Red Cross Spain, UNICEF Spain, and Gasol Foundation) working at national scale.

⁵³ This framework was endorsed at the 8th Global Conference on Health Promotion in 2014, which adopted the Helsinki Statement Framework for Country Action (www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241506908).

4.1. Current health and nutrition programmes, schemes and initiatives for children in need

The decentralization of healthcare services among different administrative levels – including ACs, sub-regional divisions such as *Cabildos*, *Comarcas* and *Concejos*, as well as municipalities – has been underlined as a major obstacle for the implementation of coordinated programmes and initiatives for children in need. Each administration level has its own organizational structure, responsibilities and budgets, which hinders cooperation across between different levels and sectors. Lack of coordination among different administration levels also hinders further collaboration with NGOs and local residents' associations.

In theory, access to the *Sistema Nacional de Salud* (SNS) in Spain is universal. In practice, however, there are still large inequalities across ACs in children's health outcomes, the availability and range of specific preventive programmes, and the quality of such services.

There is wide evidence on the different impacts of the cycle of poverty, which includes poor health outcomes in the most vulnerable and underserved areas in Spain. Full access to the healthcare system remains problematic for some children with a migrant background: families from countries such as Romania, Russia and Paraguay, for example, find it difficult to obtain the health system card, which means that they cannot be referred to specialist physicians or access discounted pharmacy services. This is a particular concern for families from Romania, an EU Member State since 2007.

Given the limited access of migrant populations (e.g., undocumented residents) to information on the workings of the public national health system, studies have observed that children with a migrant background have had less access to specialized services but made more use of emergency services (Llop-Gironés et al., 2014). In addition, as pointed out in the literature review that accompanies this deep-dive report (see Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021), access to health care services that are not fully covered by the national health care system (including ophthalmological health, oral health or mental health services) is lower among Spain's most disadvantaged socioeconomic groups (i.e. children experiencing housing deprivation, children with a migrant background, and children in precarious family situations) as a result of financial problems (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2017). These issues have also been raised by the health care professionals interviewed for this report.

It is clear that insufficient dental and mental health care services have been provided by the public health care system in underserved communities. Oral health problems are increasing in general in Spain, and affect children in need: the non-regular use of dental services is higher among children aged 0 to 14 with a migrant background (51.8 per cent) than among Spanish children (35.4 per cent) (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2017). Oral health is also related directly to good dietary habits. However, parents from migrant backgrounds, Roma communities and living in precarious situations often work long hours and their children may spend a large part of the day at home alone, using their digital devices and eating non-perishable low-cost and low nutrition value foods. Again, these concerns were highlighted by all of the health care professionals interviewed for this analysis.

Mental health problems have, historically, received limited attention within Spain's public health system. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised the numbers of cases of mental health

issues in children and families in precarious situations exponentially (Patricio del Castillo and Velasco, 2020).

Paediatricians and nurses in Spain's primary care centres (at the local level of action) are responsible for the follow-up of health, growth, and development of children and adolescents from birth up to the age of 13 through the '**Healthy child programme**' (*Programa del niño sano*). However, our interviewees noted that this follow-up is particularly difficult for children in need in the six target groups due to the frequent changes in their residency and their high mobility, which hamper efforts to keep up with follow-ups and other visits to health services.

The Healthy child programme, which provides health and behaviour checks and vaccines to children aged 0 to 13 is found in all 17 ACs as part of the national healthcare system. It is, however, a less analysed and evaluated health policy area, although there are objective and high quality data on health care use and health outcomes, given the mandatory nature of the health checks and vaccination programme under the programme.

This Healthy child programme acts as a checklist 'passport' to access other social services for children in need and their families. In most cases, primary care physicians and families have the greatest engagement in the health promotion and disease prevention aspects of the Programme. This favours the fulfilment of the vaccination programme that enables access to further social and education programmes.

Healthcare professionals, nursing professionals in particular, are perceived by families at risk of social exclusion as genuinely and loyally trying to help without any judgement. Healthcare services that work in close collaboration with social and education services do, therefore, offer a great opportunity to alleviate the enormous disadvantages faced by families and children in all six target groups in Spain.

The need for rapid and continuous coordination between health, education and social services was highlighted by all the key stakeholders interviewed. One very common example illustrates this lack of coordination. A child living in poverty develops anxiety and/or depression. The problem is detected at school by the psychologists' team and, in the best-case scenario, the family consults a paediatrician. The paediatric service refers the child to one of Spain's few and far-flung mental health services that may finally prescribe a drug to treat the child. Yet the underlying causes of the mental health problem may go undiagnosed and untreated. These are often family based and linked to, for example, their parents' lack of work or income, or the substandard housing in which they all live. The coordination of policies and services in the areas of health care, social services, and the education system is, therefore, essential not only to improve the health of vulnerable children, but also to reduce their poverty and social exclusion.

Cañada Real, a shanty town 13 kilometres from the centre of Madrid is a prime example of an area that deserves specific attention, and illustrates the lack of programmes, schemes and initiatives at the national and regional levels to protect children and families in precarious situations. Over 4,000 people, mostly migrants, Roma and families in very precarious situations live in Cañada Real, which has had no electricity since October 2020. They include 1,800 children (45 per cent of its inhabitants). This is an absolute disaster for child and human rights, and healthcare workers and health NGO volunteers have stepped in to help ever since the electricity was shut down. This situation has been brought to the attention of the Spanish Government by Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. Regional and national authorities in Madrid have been discussing this crisis, but have

reached no final decision, and as of October 2021, a full year since the power was cut off, there has been no action (Minder, 2021).

Nutrition

Given the current problems with childhood obesity and oral health in Spain (again, affecting children in need disproportionately, see Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021), the nutrition component of the Healthy Child programme is vital. A specific service related to **childhood obesity** is now starting in several ACs.

Programmes within the nutrition policy area at the different administrative levels in Spain cover various areas, with regular maternity care including guidance on nutrition and physical activity both during and immediately after pregnancy. Although information on breastfeeding is provided, more initiatives and actions are needed to promote and protect breastfeeding, particularly among the most vulnerable women.

For children, particularly those in need, schools play a key role in the development of their dietary behaviour. In 2010, The Spanish Health System's Inter-Territorial Board approved the '**Consensus document on food in educational centres**', which included a set of national recommendations with nutritional criteria for the foods to be offered at schools. However, school menus and school food procurement are still highly deregulated areas for interventions. Current regulations (such as those governing vending machines within schools) should therefore be made compulsory, and an appropriate follow-up system should be set up.

Law 17/2011 on Food Safety and Nutrition also proposed special measures for children, particularly in the school environment (Spanish Parliament, 2011). These included promoting physical activity and prohibiting the marketing and sale of unhealthy foods, among others. In addition, schools and kindergartens were declared advertising-free spaces. To date, all school curricula (for which ACs are responsible) include physical education, but there is no mandatory nutrition education. Promoting a healthier environment in school settings was perceived by all interviewees as a necessary and positive action. Yet they also noted that more should be done to promote a healthier nutrition environment outside school.

Easy-to-understand labelling, such as NutriScore, is used at the national level and Catalonia has introduced taxation on unhealthy foods. However, no subsidies on healthier options have been implemented, other than the provision of healthy meals at schools. There are initiatives at the national level to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, but most are self-regulatory and voluntary actions for the private sector. They also tend to focus mainly on television advertising, but overlook other media (such as social media platforms or apps).

The stakeholders interviewed for this report highlighted three areas, in particular, that should be addressed to protect the health and high quality diets of children in need. First, children and families in need feel they are blamed for having their children eat a poor quality diet. Yet food of low nutrition quality is cheaper and more accessible in Spain's low-income areas. In addition, families in need often have less time and income to spend on perishable foods and cooking. The healthcare professionals interviewed also highlighted childhood obesity as the number one current health problem that affects children in need.

Second, food banks and other food charities are often inundated with foods of poor nutritional value, such as bakery items, cookies, sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and sugary dairy

products. Some of these food banks receive items directly from sponsoring food industries. What's more, the way in which these underserved families are 'offered' these products is very often disrespectful.

Third, several of the stakeholders interviewed were specialists and professionals who had been working with vulnerable children from the six target groups for more than two decades. All of them highlighted the pressing need for structural economic and labour policies to ensure adequate incomes, healthy housing conditions and decent jobs for the adults in the families as the fundamental and sustainable policies required for long-term impact on the health and nutrition of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

4.2. Examples of good practice

We identified a third-sector programme **Caixa Proinfancia** focused specifically on children and families in need. The Caixa Proinfancia programme against child poverty **aims to break the cycle of poverty** that is transmitted from parents to children. This programme addresses three specific health services directly: food and nutrition, glasses, and psychological support. The programme is operating in 134 municipalities all over Spain and collaborates with over 400 social-provider entities, organized in 177 networks. The programme includes an Observatory led by educational scientists and evaluators, but this does not, at present, include experts in public health and epidemiology who could evaluate its health impact. In all, 58,841 children from 35,326 families were assisted by the programme in 2020.

Regarding good practices on oral health, the **Basque Country and Navarre** have run the '**Child Oral Care Plan**' (PADI) since 1991. This plan has demonstrated its success in reducing the burden of dental diseases in childhood: the prevalence of tooth decay in these two ACs has decreased in comparison with the rest of Spain, and with hardly any differences between social classes. For this reason, this programme constitutes a clear example of good practice in relation to oral health care for children. However, the evaluation of the performance of other oral care models is complicated by the limited quantity and quality of the information available.

Other examples of good practices include **educational campaigns within schools to promote correct tooth brushing, and the use of dental floss and mouthwash to maintain good oral hygiene**. These campaigns are often designed by the different ACs. Several public/private partnerships have been established but these have not proven to be far-reaching or sustainable over time.

Food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs) are useful tools to share easy-to-understand messages with a wide audience. Given that they are based on the best available current evidence, their periodic review and update is crucial. In Spain, the latest version of the FBDGs was developed in 2018 (Aranceta-Bartrina et al., 2019). In brief, this follows the Mediterranean Diet as the reference dietary pattern and uses a pyramid as a graphic icon to illustrate and clear messages.

Other examples of good practice include **reformulation activities**. Several examples include the agreement signed to reduce salt in bread, the **National Plan for the reduction of salt intake** (Ministerio de Consumo, 2021), and an agreement to reduce the salt content of potato chips and savoury snacks (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2015). In 2018, the **Collaboration Plan for the improvement of the composition of food and beverages** (PLAN) was presented, which contains reformulation commitments for the manufacturing and retail sectors on the

reduction of added sugars, salt and saturated fats for several types of food and beverages that are regularly consumed by children, young people and families (Gobierno de España and AECOSAN, 2018).

As we stated in the previous section, mental health programmes and initiatives have been overlooked by public health services and administrations. However, **some ACs have developed several interventions focused on specific areas of mental health**, such as eating disorders, bullying, gender violence and more, including the Plan for the Prevention of Eating disorders conducted in Castilla-La Mancha some years ago.

These interventions consist mostly of informative talks and workshops in schools with the students and their parents (mostly engaged via the schools' Parents Associations). These practices might have some impact on improving the mental health of children, but further interventions in Spain should be accompanied by the effective monitoring of the prevalence and determinants of the different mental health disorders in children.

Information on unhealthy behaviours such as tobacco and alcohol use, physical inactivity or sexual behaviours was not gathered by our key informants. However, this information is particularly important in relation to adolescents, given the clear consensus in the literature about the harmful effect of, for example, substance abuse on adolescent health. Physical inactivity has also been related to cardiovascular problems (obesity and overweight), while tobacco use might cause oral problems, and alcohol use and binge drinking have been associated with mental disorders, etc. (Bunik et al., 2021; Craig, 2021; Chaffee et al., 2021; Storr et al., 2021). Again the perception of health professionals and parents is that adolescents do not receive the attention that is necessary to cover their needs; including information to enhance their sexual and emotional knowledge, information on substance abuse, or adequate mental health services.

4.3. Policy recommendations and 2030 targets

The views of the stakeholders interviewed on the current strengths and weaknesses of Spain's efforts on child health and nutrition provided insights into good practices and well-developed initiatives, as well as those that need additional action and support.

At least two ACs, **Asturias and the Valencian Community**, are currently working to create a primary healthcare system that emphasizes the **community health perspective**. According to Red Cross Spain, this is the best possible model to address entrenched health and nutrition problems related to child poverty and social exclusion.

Coordination models that establish long-term connections between healthcare, social services and education systems need to be implemented both formally and explicitly. Although stakeholders identified positive actions, there is still considerable scope to do more and better. This could include combining measures to address both food insecurity and childhood overweight/obesity. Health care and nutrition policies to address children in need in the six target groups were seen as highly diverse across Spain's different ACs. All children in need were entitled to access healthcare services although the accessibility and quality of services remained questionable. Bottlenecks were found in the provision of dental care, mental care and ophthalmological services, where public-private sector collaborations proved to be inefficient.

Three key action areas have emerged from our analysis: the need for coordination across a range of sectors; food policies to protect children's health and nutrition; and greater support for surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research.

Carefully coordinated organization of healthcare, social services and education systems services throughout children's life phases (0 to 3, 4 to 12, and 13 to 18)

There are wide variations in the needs of children in the six target groups, depending on their age and their stage of development. For example, children over 13 or 14 years of age visit regular family physicians and do not use paediatric services anymore. At the same time, children continue to be covered by paediatric services in hospitals until the age of 18. It is recommended that multidisciplinary primary care teams collaborate closely with education and social service teams to protect children in need specifically in the six target groups.

Mental health, oral health and ophthalmological care services are addressed differently across Spain's 17 ACs, with most either not covering these services or covering them poorly. Mental health services designed specifically for children at the paediatrics level barely exist, and are absent from the primary care/community health system.

The inclusion of psychologists, dentists and ophthalmologists within well-coordinated primary care teams

The poor coverage of these areas of health in the National Health System is responsible for the high percentage of people who report unmet needs for these healthcare services. This is because alternative private healthcare services are not affordable for the majority, and particularly for the six target groups that report poor mental and oral health, as exposed in the accompanying literature review (Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021). Another aspirational goal might be, therefore, the provision of subsidies to vulnerable groups to enable them to access these services.

Food policies to protect and promote children's health while reducing the burden of diet-related diseases and all forms of malnutrition

By 2030, as realistic outcomes for the ECG in Spain, we propose:

- halting the increase in the proportion of children with obesity: to date, Spain has made no progress towards this target, with an estimated 20.7 per cent and 14.2 per cent of children (aged 8-16) living with overweight or obesity, respectively (Gasol Foundation, 2019)
- reducing the proportion of children living in food-insecure households by 30 per cent
- reducing the mean intake of harmful dietary factors, such as SSBs (including energy drinks) by 30 per cent.
- increasing the daily intake of fruits and vegetables by 30 per cent.

These goals will be achieved by taking an intersectoral approach, which is crucial for the positioning of food policy on the political agenda. The focus should be on addressing the determinants of food security (e.g., ensuring accessibility and affordability) and the determinants of consumption patterns. Coordination is also essential to avoid the dissemination of conflicting information about which foods are healthy and nutritious and for

consensus among conflicting interests. We suggest, therefore, the implementation of the following initiatives.

- Improve current food environments
 - Reduce the marketing of unhealthy products to children of (including SSBs and energy drinks) (Boyland and Halford, 2013). A food marketing regulation code (CODIGO PAOS) already exist in Spain, and its revision and application is more necessary than ever to protect and improve nutrition-related outcomes (including oral health) for children in the six target groups.
 - Consider targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups to promote access to and affordability of healthy foods. Subsidies have been shown to be effective in increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables (An, 2013). Taxes should also be considered (e.g., a tax on SSBs) to help reduce calorie intake (Thow et al., 2014).
 - Promote consumer-friendly labelling on the front of food and drink packages, which has been shown to be particularly effective for the most disadvantaged population groups (Talati et al., 2017).
 - Implement food procurement policies in organizational facilities (such as hospitals or schools) to facilitate healthy food options. Canteens in educational setting, for example, can offer healthy meals (and even breakfast and afternoon snacks) free of charge to vulnerable children. The Barcelona Public Health Agency is currently working with municipal schools to develop a healthy and sustainable school menu.

Support surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and research

- Consolidate, maintain and extend existing nutrition and anthropometric studies (e.g. Ministerio de Consumo, 2019; Moreno et al., 2018; Gasol Foundation, 2019) to allow the disaggregation of data by gender, age group, socioeconomic status, migrant background, or disability status. At present, these different surveys use different age-ranges of children studied (6 to 9, 11 to 18, 8 to 16), which makes it difficult to compare the data. The age ranges should, therefore, be harmonized.
- Establish and expand studies that address food insecurity variables.
- Identify and monitor food prices (Andreyeva et al., 2010).

Table 4.1. Spain's targets for health and nutrition (primary indicators)

Indicator	Current EU	Current Spain	Target 2030
Unmet medical needs	1.6 % (2017) Population in poverty: 3% Single-parent household: 1.5% Single-parent household in poverty: 1.6%	0.3% (2017) In cities: 0.2% Rural area: 0.9% Population in poverty: 0.8% Rural poverty: 2.4%	0
Unmet dental needs	Population living in poverty: 7.8% (2017) Average: 2.67%. Single-parent household: 3.68%. Single-parent household in poverty: 6.6%	Population living in poverty: 17.2% (2017) Average: 5.7%. In the city: 6.7%. In rural areas: 3.8% Single-parent household: 9.8% Single-parent household in poverty: 20.8%	5.7%
Unmet mental health needs	-	1% (2017)	0.5%

Fresh fruit and vegetables intake	-	4.3% (2014)	1.2%
Overweight	-	Total: 18.3% (2017) 2-4 years: 12% 5-9 years: 20.5% 10-14 years: 21.4% 15-17 years: 15.4% Born in Spain: 18.29% Foreign-born: 17.87%	11.8%
Meat intake	6% (2019) Households in poverty: 16.7% Single-parent household in poverty: 19.5% Single-parent household: 11.1%	5.3% (2020) Households in poverty: 11.9% Single-parent household in poverty: 7.7% Single-parent household: 6.7%	5.3%

Table 4.2. Proposed indicators

Health indicators

N°	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, have zero children and adolescents with unmet need for medical coverage and treatment	Unmet medical needs	Proportion of households with children with unmet need for medical coverage, treatment and access to medicines	ECV (2017 ad-hoc module), ENSE	Ad-hoc module - Irregular ENSE - 5 years	Primary	Evaluation	Structural	0.3% (2017) In cities: 0.2%. Rural areas: 0.9% Population in poverty: 0.8% Rural poverty: 2.4%.	0
2	By 2030, reduce the proportion of children and adolescents living in poverty with unmet dental care needs to the national average	Unmet dental needs	Proportion of households with children and adolescents with unmet need for dental care. Unmet needs defined as inaccessibility to dental care due to distance, transportation or financial reasons	ECV (2017 ad-hoc module), ENSE	Ad-hoc module - Irregular ENSE - 5 years	Primary	Evaluation	Structural	Population living in poverty: 17.2% (2017) Average: 5.7% In the city: 6.7% In rural areas: 3.8% Single-parent household: 9.8% Single-parent household in poverty: 20.8%	5.7%
3	By 2030, reduce by 50% the proportion of children and	Unmet mental	Proportion of children and adolescents with unmet mental health needs. Unmet needs	ENSE	5 years	Primary	Evaluation	Structural	1% (2017)	0.5%

	adolescents with unmet mental health care needs	health needs	defined as inaccessibility to mental health care due to distance, transportation or financial reasons							
4	By 2030, reduce the average rate of adolescents' physical activity in low-income households to the Spanish average	Physical inactivity	Prevalence of vigorous or moderate physical activity or active transportation during the last week among children and adolescents aged 11-18 years; considering individual socioeconomic status and ethnic group	HBSC	3-5 years	Secondary	Monitoring	Process	4.6% (2018) Men (2.9%) Women (6.2%) Low income households: 7.1% Men (4.3%) Women (9.6%)	4.6%
5	By 2030, increase the average rate of adolescents' condom use in low-income households to the Spanish average	Reproductive health	Condom use in the last coital sexual intercourse (15-18y)	HBSC	3-5 years	Secondary	Monitoring	Process	75.4 (2018) Low-income households: 70.6% High-income households: 78.3%	78.3%

Notes: Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources.

Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

Nutrition indicators

N°	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, reduce the number of children and adolescents in poverty who cannot afford to eat fresh fruit and vegetables at least once a day to the national average (1.2%), and preferably to zero (as 20% of higher income population)	Fresh fruit and vegetables intake	Proportion of children and adolescents in households with the lowest 20% of income who cannot afford to eat fresh fruit and vegetables at least once per day	ECV (2017 ad-hoc module)	Irregular	Primary	Evaluation	Process	4.3% (2014)	1.2%
2	By 2030, reduce child overweight to 11.8%, with special attention to children and adolescents at risk of poverty	Overweight	Proportion of children and adolescents with excess body fat above the 85th percentile	ENSE HSBC	3-5 years	Primary	Monitoring and Evaluation	Result	Total: 18.3% (2017) 2-4 years: 12% 5-9 years: 20.5% 10-14 years: 21.4% 15-17 years: 15.4% Born in Spain: 18.29% Foreign-born: 17.87%	11.8%

3	By 2030, reduce the households with children in poverty who cannot afford to eat a meal of meat, poultry, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day to the national average (5.3%)	Meat intake	Proportion of households with children and adolescents in monetary poverty who cannot afford to eat a meal of meat, poultry, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day	EU-SILC	Annually	Primary	Evaluation	Process	National average: 5.3% (2020) Households in poverty: 11.9% Single-parent household in poverty: 7.7% Single-parent household: 6.7%	5.3%
4	By 2030, reduce the average rate of SSBs intake in low income households to, at least, the Spanish average and preferably to the best-case scenarios (La Rioja: 3.1%; Navarre and Basque Country: 3.3%)	SSBs intake	Percentage of children who drink one or more SSB every day (11-18 years)	ENSE HSBC	3-5 years	Secondary	Monitoring Evaluation	Process	6.5% (2018) Male: 7.7% Female: 5.3% Low income household: 7.9% Male: 9.7% Female: 6.3%	6.5%

Notes: Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources. Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

4.4. Concluding remarks

It is time to make significant progress on the development of effective health and nutrition policies to reduce the impact of child poverty and social exclusion in Spain. The health care services that need further development and reorientation are, in particular, services for mental health, oral health and ophthalmological care. The inclusion of these services in primary care and community health systems is now an urgent priority.

Nutrition policies need to include the monitoring of children's growth from 0 to 5 years; the implementation of sales and marketing restrictions on unhealthy products (such as highly processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages); and the use of taxes and subsidies to promote the consumption of healthier foods. Effective nutrition policies and programmes will also help to improve the worrisome situation of children's oral health in Spain.

Finally, the coordination of policies and services across the areas of health, social services, education and nutrition is paramount for the reduction of child poverty and social exclusion.

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5. HOUSING

- Spain has some of the most unaffordable housing in the EU, with a very limited stock of public housing and a housing market that is driven by private rentals – a situation that has a major impact on families with children. Yet there are few policies on child poverty and social exclusion or housing that address children specifically as the ultimate beneficiaries.
- The country's Autonomous Communities are responsible for housing leadership and budgets, but some municipalities, mainly for political reasons, have been reluctant to acknowledge the need for resources from the regional governments to tackle local poverty and housing issues.
- The effective implementation of the ECG will require policies to make it easier to access decent housing and intervene when families are facing evictions or energy poverty. Ambitious public housing policies, rent-control schemes and housing programmes for young adults are needed. In addition, child poverty and access to decent housing – and the links between them – need to be defined more specifically as subjects for political and public policy.

Introduction⁵⁴

This section reviews relevant policies and programmes developed by Spain's public administrations in relation to access to decent housing. One of the main conclusions of our work is that there are few policies within the realm of child poverty and social exclusion and housing that address children under 18 specifically as the ultimate beneficiaries (with the exception of unaccompanied children). Indeed, the term 'child poverty and social exclusion' is rarely used as a policy category.

We address some of these initiatives according to a systematic analysis of the focus of the programmes, their content, and more. This is not an exhaustive review of every programme or initiative, but rather an abundant sample that spans the country.⁵⁵ Our research has examined both anti-poverty and social exclusion policies that relate directly to housing and families and policies that relate indirectly to housing. The review of the latter policies considers those that include elements that might influence the poverty and social exclusion of families in relation to their housing strategy or in relation to their built environment: policies that aim to alleviate the burden on the household economy of expenses other than rent or mortgages, and with a focus on children. During our field work, informants have drawn our attention to access to

⁵⁴ A total of 15 interviews have been carried out for this chapter: FOESSA, National Level; Fundación Tomillo, Local Level; Secretariado Gitano Local level; Expert 1, Consultant; Expert 2, Academic; PROVIVIENDA, National Level; EAPN ES, National Level; Save the Children, National Level; Canarias, Regional government, Department of Family and childhood protection; Rioja, Regional government, Department of protection and shelter of minors; Andalucía, Regional government, DG Childhood; Cataluña, Institut Infància i Joventut, Regional public institution, Director; Cataluña, Institut Infància i Joventut, Regional public institution, Researcher.

⁵⁵ Some items (budget, indicators or evaluation) might not appear in our account because they are unavailable, either because they do not appear in the literature or because the resources used for access to decent housing are just one part of a larger budgetary item that is complicated to break down.

decent housing as one of the most important dimensions when analysing child poverty and social exclusion.

5.1. Review of existing housing programmes, schemes and initiatives

Research on a policy field that is relatively new tends to be complex, and this makes it very hard to track the details and the components of the programmes that address childhood directly. Therefore, we have confronted this challenge by exploring not only programmes and policies, but also budgeting, implementation and multilevel governance, with different degrees of success. What follows is a tentative categorization of the different types of programmes.

- Agreements, strategies, regulatory frameworks and policy initiatives that define needs, targets, alliances and road maps prior to programme design and implementation.
- Direct housing initiatives:
 - those that seek to grant access to a decent housing unit for households that are deprived (or at risk of deprivation)
 - protection for evicted families with children.
- Enhancing access to a decent housing unit:
 - through direct money transfers for rent, utilities and even for small upgrading
 - through indirect support: training in basic skills, social integration and ‘normalization’.
- Improving the conditions of the built environment.

It is also very relevant to mention the role of the non-profit and for profit organizations in service provision. Third-sector organizations, such as the Red Cross, Caritas, Save the Children, Provivienda, and the European Anti-Poverty Network Spain (EAPN) often have a more comprehensive view of the poverty context and propose and design programmes for and with regional and local administrations. A large number of programmes and services are externalized into these non-profits but also into big private companies that deliver all sorts of services for cities (gardening, cleaning, maintenance, etc.).

These organizations participate in programme implementation either through open calls (with the cheapest bid often chosen); or through direct selection (particularly for specialized services delivered by social organizations); or by agreements whereby big social organizations have traditionally delivered large programmes, or have even run facilities. Most of these programmes are developed at the local level and are defined by local and regional governments. They tend to be funded mainly by the Central Government (sometimes with support from EU resources) through transfers to regional and local governments that then select and distribute resources among departments and the private organizations that deliver the services or implement the programmes.

National plans and programmes

There is an increasing effort at the national level to insert child poverty and social exclusion into policy agendas and into public debate. The Strategy for Sustainable Development in 2007 (prior to the 2008 economic crises that unleashed evictions and a housing crisis) set out targets to be achieved during the first decades of the 21st century, including some related directly or indirectly to access to decent housing. For example, targets aimed to grant protection to people facing eviction (by 2022); to enhance access to rental housing that does not cost more than 30 per cent of household income (by 2024); to promote affordable rent by building public

housing in areas with high market prices (by 2030); and to grant protection to families at risk of energy poverty (aiming to reduce the number of families in this situation by 25 per cent by 2025 and by 50 per cent by 2030).

The **Alianza Pais Pobreza Infantil Cero**, a national strategic alliance launched by the Commissioner for Child Poverty, includes a focus on access to decent housing, among other policy approaches. It is comprised of 75 institutions, civil society organizations and corporations.

Target 3.4 of the **National Strategy of prevention against poverty and social exclusion** Estrategia Nacional de Prevención contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social (2019-23) launched by the Central Government includes housing measures and others that are territory-based that focus on vulnerable families with children and youth (MSCBS, 2019). There are already several common policy lines across a number of regional and local plans: to improve the social housing stock, eradicate substandard housing and homelessness, fight energy poverty and grant supplies, improve derelict public spaces and fight against rural depopulation⁸ (these last two are based in the territory).

In February 2021, the **Secretaria de Estado de Servicios Sociales** launched the **Directrices de Protección de las Familias y Contra la Pobreza Infantil y la Exclusión** (Secretaría de Estado de Derechos Sociales, 2021). The budgets for its components A1 (€45 million) and B (€15 million) include support for the housing and basic needs of households and alternative housing in cases of emergency. Both budgets are distributed to the ACs for implementation and assigned to specific municipal programmes that include, for example, a strong focus on vulnerable families with children and, in some cases, a specific focus on the Roma Community (particularly in Extremadura). A number of programmes defined by local governments focus on **gender** issues, such as support for single mothers and meeting points for children with separated parents. Regarding other targeted groups, such as those with a migrant background, the Guidelines do not discriminate among nationals and those born in other countries. This non-discriminatory approach is a key component for granting stability to vulnerable households, often of migrant origin.

While the **Estrategia Nacional contra la Pobreza Energética (2019-2024)** makes no explicit reference to child poverty and social exclusion, it is still relevant because energy poverty is connected to a range of issues that are linked very closely to that challenge – including education, health and nutrition (Ministerio Transición Ecológica, 2019). Energy poverty is certainly a key variable in relation to access to decent housing and, as shown in this chapter, indicators of energy poverty are often used to measure child poverty and decent housing.

The **Plan Estatal de Vivienda (2018-2024)** does not include specific items for child poverty and social exclusion but the strategy is often broken down into programmes developed and implemented by ACs and local governments to include support for households with children, single-mother families and those with children with disabilities. It is also important to highlight the gender dimension that is included in a number of these programmes.

Main regional programmes

The Alliance against child poverty, of the *Consejería de Igualdad, Políticas Sociales y Conciliación* of the Junta de **Andalucía** (2015) is a major agreement between institutions and 31 non-profit organizations that pool resources to assist families at risk of poverty with both material help and housing provision.

In **Aragon**, we have identified three main programmes at the regional level. First, the **Pacto por la Infancia 2020** (Agreement on Childhood), which is a framework launched by the regional government and supported by the City of Zaragoza and civil society actors (including UNICEF and Save the Children). Second, the **Plan Integral de la Infancia (2010-2014)**, which targets different vulnerable groups, including families of migrant origin with children. This programme had a budget of €462million shared across different departments of the Region of Aragon and was evaluated through indicators of implementation, resources and performance. Third, the **Ingreso Aragonés de inserción**, launched in 2016 (autonomic minimum income scheme), which includes a coefficient that considers housing in relation to the household composition, with an emphasis on families with children.

Asturias has a programme that is relevant in terms of access to decent housing: the **Ayudas a la pobreza infantil** (Principado de Asturias, 2021). This consists of money transfers to families facing different degrees of deprivation (in relation to the AROPE index). In some cases, the programme includes grants for rental housing, improvements in housing conditions and energy supplies. This programme is provided by the AC using State funding, and provides grants of €700 for families with children aged 0 to 6; €450 for families with children aged 7 to 18; and €550 for children with special needs. Asturias has allocated a budget of €1.4 million, which is complemented by the municipalities that also implement the programme.

Canary Islands has a comprehensive social policy system that includes some programmes that target access to decent housing either directly or indirectly. The **Plan de Vivienda (2020-25)** (Housing Plan), for example, seeks to improve social housing stock, including access to this housing stock for families with children. The plan is funded largely by the AC (€68 million). The **Estrategia Canaria de Inclusión Social** (Canarian Strategy of Social Inclusion) aims to grant access to housing to the most vulnerable households, particularly who have been evicted or who are at risk of eviction, with a special emphasis on families with children (Gobierno de Canarias, 2019). This plan also considers energy poverty and provides funding to help with domestic supplies. As a cross-cutting dimension, the Strategy also provides basic skills training for families on domestic energy consumption. The Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, with its **Plan de Rescate Social** (2018), also seeks to provide support to unaccompanied refugee and migrant children.

Cantabria has developed the **II Plan de Emergencia Social de Cantabria** (2018-2020), which is a cross-cutting plan that spans several Departments operating in an interdepartmental commission (Gobierno de Cantabria, 2017). Strategic line 2 of the Plan, which aims to guarantee access to basic supplies, includes a Housing Guarantee Programme built around 11 specific actions with a designated budget of around €5.7 million. Its integrated approach focuses in particular on parents under the age of 35 with children, as well as single-parent families or households that include a victim of gender violence; foster care units for children orphaned by gender violence or households affected by eviction. The programme is evaluated through coordination meetings of the interdepartmental commission to ensure coordination across all departments.

Castilla-La Mancha has two particularly relevant programmes. The **Plan CUIDA** and the **Plan de Garantías Ciudadana** (Citizen Guarantee Plan) focus on individuals and families in deprivation, with special support to households with children in a situation of energy poverty (Junta Castilla-la Mancha, 2017). However, no indicators on childhood or access to decent housing are available and there are no data on the evaluation of these programmes. They are

implemented by the AC and supervised by a consultative board of institutional and civil society actors (Mesa Regional de Garantías Ciudadanas).

Castile and León has incorporated a programme to eradicate slums and substandard housing and favour a transition to standard housing into its **Programa de Actuaciones Estratégicas con la Población Gitana** (Roma People Strategic Action Program) (Junta de Castilla y León, 2018). The programme is implemented by a cross-cutting coalition of public and non-profit stakeholders and is designed and implemented using participatory methods.

Extremadura's implementation of its **Plan Integral de familias, infancia y adolescencia** (Integrated Plan for families, childhood and adolescence) aims to enhance access to social housing and rent benefits (Junta de Extremadura, 2020). To this end, it provides a Service of Protection for Families at Risk of Eviction, and anti-energy poverty programmes (i.e. isolation and household improvement) and financial aid for energy supplies. Importantly, the programme provides economic aid for families with different profiles of vulnerability, including families with children and families with children with disabilities. The programme also promotes the design, construction and adaptation of playgrounds for children to favour their integration, particularly in deprived areas. The programme is led by the region's Department of Housing and Social Services in cooperation with local and civil society organizations.

In **Galicia**, the **Estrategia de inclusión social** adopts an integrated approach that includes a large battery of measures around social integration and housing (Xunta de Galicia, 2014). Its efforts to improve housing conditions for people in vulnerable situations include specific measures for the Roma community, and to ensure access to decent housing, as well as slum clearance. This Strategy takes a holistic view of housing needs for children's development, looking beyond the home to consider other critical and safe urban spaces to promote the design, construction and/or adaptation of spaces for children's play and leisure activities. The Strategy's procedures for decisions on the allocation of protected housing prioritize large families or households living with three or more children, single-parent families, families with a member with a disability or dependency, and women victims of gender violence.

La Rioja is implementing its regional **IV Plan de infancia y adolescencia con enfoque basado en derechos humanos 2018-2021**. This is cross-cutting in nature and has been prepared and implemented with the participation of different parts of the government, civil society and children and adolescents, whose opinions have been considered through a participatory process. Within this Plan, Action Line 1 aims to ensure access to resources that enhance the well-being of children and adolescents and guarantee their integral development (Gobierno de la Rioja, 2018, p. 40). To do so, objective 1.1. aims to reduce the impact of poverty and social exclusion in families with children in their care through, among other, specific housing actions (Gobierno de la Rioja, 2018, p. 50). The total budget for Direction General of Urbanism and Housing, responsible for the monitoring and implementation of housing actions, amounts to €5.3 million.

The **Region of Murcia** has specific housing stock for families with children with disabilities or living in poor housing conditions included in its **Plan Municipal de Infancia y Adolescencia** (Childhood and Adolescence Plan) (Ayuntamiento de Murcia, 2019; Región de Murcia, 2019). Through this programme, families with children with disabilities can move to more accessible homes. There is also a programme that allows maintenance and repairs in public housing to keep them in good shape, and resources are available to address energy poverty and cover energy supplies for families with children. The region's **Programa PARES** is designed to support deprived households in substandard housing with a cross-cutting strategy that spans social

integration, housing and labour integration (Asociación Habito Murcia, 2018). The main indicators for both of these programmes are the numbers of assisted families or children. Through Murcia's **Act nº 268/2019**, a grant is also issued to improve the conditions of vulnerable families with a special emphasis on housing: rent payments, energy and small appliances, among other things.

The **Autonomous City of Ceuta** developed its **Plan de Inclusión Social de Ceuta 2012-2015** (Social Inclusion Plan 2012-2015), which used a cross-cutting approach and took into account other existing local plans. Within this Plan, general objective 5.4 focused on access to housing for people in a situation of or at risk of exclusion. Within this, specific objective 5.4.1. targeted the development of alternative accommodation measures for people in a situation of or at risk of exclusion, including the development of centres for the protection and reception of unaccompanied children from a migrant background and the promotion of housing for young people, with a special focus on youth with disabilities. Specifically, the measure for the development of centres for the protection and reception of unaccompanied children from a migrant background was implemented and developed with NGOs including the Red Cross or Mensajeros por la Paz, among others.

The **City of Madrid** has launched its **IV Plan local de Infancia y Adolescencia de Madrid (2020-23)**, but this does not include any item on access to decent housing (Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2020). Indeed, child poverty and social exclusion is not included in its main priorities of participation, education, sports and a healthy urban environment. While the responsibility for child protection is regional, the city deals with the population at risk. In the case of child poverty and social exclusion the emphasis is on prevention of homelessness or severe housing deprivation, yet there is still a wide distribution of responsibility among several departments: Direction General Inclusion (dealing with immigration and homelessness); Direction General Equality (dealing with the Roma population); and Direction General Childhood. There is little coordination with the Social Service department of the Regional Government. The main device is SAER (Housing Emergency Counselling Service).

As noted in Section 4.1, Madrid also has one of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Europe: Cañada Real, which is a shanty town of several square kilometres on the edge of the city that has 1,641 registered dwellers (but the actual number of people living there is thought to be around 4,000), living in a mix of formal, informal and slum housing. A range of programmes operated by the third sector (with or without public support) in Cañada Real focus in particular on child poverty and take a cross-cutting approach to their well-being.

Finally, **Catalonia, Navarre** and the **Basque Country** have perhaps the most **thorough approaches to child poverty and social exclusion in general**: approaches that include access to decent housing explicitly in their interventions. These are outlined in more detail in the following section as examples of good practice.

5.2. Examples of good practices

Several good practices have emerged from the variety of policies described in the previous section. We have identified the following, according to our analysis on the way in which they are integrated with other policies at the regional level; the methodology envisioned and implemented for the evaluation of the programmes and their impact; or the way in which they address specific target groups.

Catalonia is a good example of an AC that has made efforts to ensure the **multilevel integration of housing policies, with an emphasis on child poverty and social exclusion**. This region has aimed to integrate housing policies across different levels of governance. It is also the region that places the greatest emphasis on child poverty and social exclusion in a series of regional programmes that address housing inadequacy. As we have shown in the mapping exercise included in the previous section, policies to address housing inadequacy in Spain rarely consider children as specific targets, and the policies mobilized in Catalonia can be seen as example of good practice in access to decent housing measures because they are effective in bringing key policy areas together.

For example, under the **Llei de Drets i Oportunitats a la Infància a Catalunya** (Childhood Rights and Opportunities Act), the Generalitat de Catalunya has a normative framework in place to tackle child poverty and social exclusion that, among other things, grants the right of evicted families with children to be sheltered by the public administration through a network of social housing apartments. The programme also provides material, social and health support. As well as considering the implementation of specific housing measures for children, the Act adopts a holistic vision and approach to children's well-being.

Another example of good practice from **Catalonia** is the **Sostre 360º** programme, which aims to grant continuity to tutored children after 18 with an emphasis on housing. In addition, the **Servei d'Intervenció Socioeducativa (SIS)** is a network of social centres that provides social and psychological support to families, specifically those with housing problems. These two programmes are designed, funded (from 40 per cent to 100 per cent) and partly implemented by the AC in collaboration with municipalities. One common challenge to their implementation, however, is the fact that some municipalities refuse to implement them as they are reluctant to declare and accept the need for such interventions.

These programmes at the regional level are complemented with initiatives at local level. **Barcelona**, for example, has implemented a fund, **Fondo de Infancia 0-16**, that consists of monthly payments to vulnerable families to cover household costs (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2017). Despite its budget of €13.5 million, its impact on access to decent housing through **the alleviation of household overburdens is complex when it comes to cities with high rent prices**. This is a common challenge for similar programmes in Catalonia and elsewhere.

The Basque Country provides a particularly interesting example of **coordination, complementarity and intersection between programmes and policies**. This can be seen in the intersection and complementarity between the **IV Plan Interinstitucional de Apoyo a las Familias de la Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi 2018-2022** (Gobierno Vasco, 2018b), **Plan Director de Vivienda 2018- 2020** (Gobierno Vasco, 2018a) and the **Plan municipal de infancia y adolescencia de Bilbao, (2018-2021)** (Ayuntamiento de Bilbao, 2018). The methodologies envisioned to monitor and follow-up on their implementation and impact are also examples of good practice.

The **IV Plan Interinstitucional de Apoyo a las Familias de la Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi (2018-2022)** is framed within the Basque Pact for Families and Children and envisions the participation of multiple regional institutional actors. This joint effort has resulted in a cross-sectoral Plan that includes an explicit commitment to multidisciplinary, given the multidimensional nature of the matters that affect various areas of public policy, including housing. Although these initiatives would benefit from the improved identification of the

needs of specific target groups, such as large or single-parent families, or children with disabilities, they do include actions to ensure enhanced protection for children and adolescents. For example, performance indicators for access to housing (Obj. 2) are quantitative in nature, and include indicators related to children such as the number of single-parent or large families that have access to public housing, the number of families with children exempted from the general procedure for awarding public housing, or the average amount of the benefit and total expenditure corresponding to the programme. A total of around €1.8 million has been allocated to this Plan.

As noted, this plan is aligned to the **Plan Director de Vivienda 2018-2020**. This Plan aims to act directly and indirectly on the housing market to **improve the residential situation in general and, in particular, to foster access to people in disadvantaged groups** who are affected by, for example, eviction, energy poverty or homelessness. The Plan proposes major actions to promote the emancipation of youth through access to public housing, and to respond to the housing needs of groups such as large or single-parent families. The reservation of housing is foreseen for young people and other priority groups, such as single-parent families (p. 171). This plan is also related explicitly to the **Estrategia Vasca con el Pueblo Gitano, 2017-2020** (Gobierno Vasco, 2019). It also targets people with physical and mental disabilities (Action Line 4.2) and is aligned with the **Regional Government's Plan Regional de Inmigración** and the **VI Plan por la Igualdad entre Hombres y Mujeres**.

The evaluation of the **Plan Director de Vivienda** is conducted through annual evaluation reports and a final evaluation report. One distinctive feature of this evaluation is the **combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators** used to monitor its implementation and impact. In addition to standard indicators, surveys obtain data on satisfaction levels and gauge the perceptions of different stakeholders on the implemented programmes in particular and on housing policies in general. We consider that it is important to include such qualitative indicators on the implementation of housing policies directed at children because this enriches the data that are generally available to measure housing inadequacy. At present, these tend to be quantitative in nature and are not, as we have seen, disaggregated to capture specific information on children, including those who are the most vulnerable.

Participatory, flexible and adaptable methodologies are needed to measure the implementation and impact of programmes. One example is Pamplona's **Plan Municipal de Infancia y Adolescencia 2018-2022**, which has been conceived with a global vision that includes housing targets implemented by local governments and is directed towards children and youth (Ayuntamiento de Pamplona, 2018). The Plan stands out as an example of good practice for its methodological approach to the measurement of its implementation and impact on children and teenagers. It is evaluated through a continuous and systematic process of reflection and through participatory and flexible evaluation. As in our previous example, this approach combines both quantitative and qualitative indicators. In terms of the governance of the Plan, its global perspective incorporates different policy areas into a complex governance structure, but it is overseen and monitored by the Área de Acción Social of the Regional government, which provides the necessary promotion and coordination elements.

Finally, the **Basque Country** provides a second example of an interesting methodological approach to the measurement of implementation and impact: the **Instrumento para la valoración de la gravedad de las situaciones de riesgo y desamparo en los Servicios Sociales Municipales y Territoriales de Atención y Protección a la Infancia y adolescencia en la Comunidad Autónoma de Euskadi (BALORA)**. This Instrument was approved under the Basque Government Decree 230/2011, of 8 November, proposing an interesting approach to the

evaluation of situations housing vulnerability, specifically for the protection of children and adolescents within the AC. The instrument categorizes vulnerability related to housing as part of 'neglect vulnerability' to include the following: neglect of physical needs (including the hygienic stability and habitability conditions of the home); and neglect of security needs (including physical security of the home and risk prevention). It also includes specific situations that constitute serious risk or helplessness:

“situations in which, regardless of whether or not there is any of the previously mentioned types of lack of protection, there are a series of extreme circumstances that imply a serious danger to life or basic integrity of the child or adolescent, not existing sufficient elements of control in the environment.”

The target groups for BALORA include unaccompanied children from a migrant background and it considers other factors to assess the child's need for support, such as their maturity or the presence of emotional problems or physical and intellectual limitations. To do so, the instrument establishes criteria that must be adapted to the presence and severity of limitations that affect the autonomy and development of the specific child or adolescent. We consider **the flexibility and adaptability of the criteria and indicators** presented by this instrument as an example of good practice as it could result in policies that are tailored to the circumstances of vulnerable children and that are adapted to their needs.

In terms of indicators, this instrument establishes **indicators that are specific for each age group** and considers the specific needs of smaller clusters of children and adolescents. This is an interesting methodological approach because it makes it possible to tackle the limitations that face children of all ages and that also apply to their housing needs. For each of these age groups, the model identifies specific and differentiated indicators that are grouped into: physical needs, safety, emotional needs, social needs, and cognitive needs. **Specific conditions and indicators for housing are measured**, including:

- the hygienic conditions of the house: any serious lack of hygiene, which includes the accumulation of organic and decomposed waste, which is associated with the presence of insects, parasites and / or rodents
- housing habitability conditions: the minimum conditions of stability, security, space and habitability.

5.3. Key factors: benchmarks and suggested initiatives to develop the ECG in Spain

First, we propose **key benchmarks** to monitor progress in access to decent housing in Spain, associated with three housing dimensions. We then propose a series of policy initiatives and programmes.

Public housing expenditure (as percentage of GDP)

To improve the residential well-being of the population, and in particular of children, greater public expenditure on housing is essential. According to Eurostat, this stood at 0.4 per cent of GDP in Spain in 2019. The objective would be to surpass the EU28⁵⁶ average for 2019 of 0.6 per cent by 2030.

⁵⁶ Prior to the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union on 31 January, 2020.

Housing affordability

This is probably the most important and challenging issue for housing, with Spain having some of the most unaffordable housing in the EU. The promotion of access to affordable housing for vulnerable households with children requires measures to bring Spain's weight of social rental housing closer to the average for the EU, particularly in stressed rental areas. It is estimated that just 2 per cent of Spain's housing stock consists of social housing in comparison an average of 8 per cent for the EU (8 per cent).⁵⁷ A larger stock of affordable housing would help to counteract the prices set mainly by the free market, making housing more affordable for vulnerable households with children.

At the same time, the percentage of children living in overburdened homes must be reduced to align with the EU28 average of 9 per cent in 2019 by 2030. To improve housing affordability, it is also advisable to reduce the percentage of households with children that have arrears on their mortgage or rents, utility bills or hire purchase (10.5 per cent in 2019) to approach the levels seen in better-off EU countries such as Germany (4.9 per cent in 2019). Similarly, measures are needed to reduce the percentage of children who are at-risk-of-poverty after housing costs are deducted (36.7 per cent in 2019). This should be reduced to the levels seen in better-off EU countries, such as Portugal, of 30 per cent in 2019, by 2030.

Housing habitability

To improve housing habitability and reduce children's risks of energy poverty, Spain should lower the percentage of children living in households that cannot maintain a suitable temperature (7.7 per cent in 2019) to at least or below the EU28 average (6.8 per cent in 2019) by 2030.

Institutional care

Institutional care is a type of residential care for large groups of children. In Spain, the rate of children in formal alternative care (209 per 100,000 in 2019) is lower than in other EU countries. There is no detailed information on this indicator, but it would be interesting to know the average value for the EU countries as a whole.

Severe housing deprivation

Finally, and given that Spain presented better figures than the EU28 in 2019 in terms of the percentage of children facing severe housing deprivation (3.1 per cent versus 5.8 per cent, respectively), it is recommended that the country aims to improve these levels to those seen in the better-off EU countries such as Ireland (1.9 per cent in 2019) by 2030.

⁵⁷<https://www.oecd.org/els/family/PH4-2-Social-rental-housing-stock.pdf>. See also Moreno Fuentes et al., 2021.

Table 5.1. Spain's targets for housing (primary indicators)

Indicator	Current EU28 ⁵⁸	Current Spain	Target 2030
Severe housing deprivation	5.8% (2019)	5.7% (2020) Single-parent households: 5.9% (2020)	2.9%
Energy poverty - adequate temperature	6.8% (2019)	7.7% (2019) Households at risk of poverty: 13.5% (2019)	3.8%
Housing cost overburden	9% (2019)	11% (2019) Single-parent households: 33.1% (2019) In the first decile: 56.4% (2019)	5.5%
Fostering of children and adolescents in alternative care	-	55% (2019) Children (0-17) in alternative care per 100k population <18 years: 511 (2019) Children (0-17) in residential care per 100k population <18 years: 279 (2019) Children (0-17) in formal foster care per 100k population <18 years: 232 (2019)	2.7%

In terms of the **legislative framework** and **policy initiatives and programmes**, we propose the following measures.

Legislative framework

- In the event of eviction, provide a decent housing alternative by law to vulnerable households with children beyond strictly emergency solutions, such as hostels or temporary shelters.
- Define stronger regulations on rental housing conditions and contracts to prevent abusive or discriminatory situations, especially for vulnerable families with children.
- Develop the compulsory and systematic gathering of data on the composition of evicted households, paying particular attention to families with children. This should include not only the description of household members, but also an evaluation of the social and individual risks that the household and each of its members might confront.

⁵⁸ Prior to the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union in on 31 December, 2020.

- Set minimum standards in the built environment with an emphasis on public spaces and parks, including staff to activate and mediate within them (following the model of Wien or Berlin).
- Define, standardize and incorporate access to decent housing concepts and indicators in public policy design, implementation and evaluation as a cross-cutting realm of public policy (spanning the social, housing, culture and health sectors and more).
- Develop tools to detect and intervene in relation to access to decent housing in areas that span territories and administrations, as in the case of deprived families with high residential mobility as a result of their labour instability and lack of networks.

Programmes and policies to tackle children's poverty and social exclusion

- Increase the provision of affordable housing through:
 - the greater promotion of social rental housing to reduce the serious affordability problems facing the most vulnerable households with children
 - raising taxes on vacant homes or encourage homeowners to invest in rental housing through tax incentives
 - controlling or regulating rental prices in stressed areas: this could be short-term while other measures are taken to reinforce the stock of existing social rental housing
 - increasing the percentage of affordable housing in private promotions.
- Promote and expand housing allowances for vulnerable families with children to guarantee their access to housing and deal with their housing expenses.
- Prevent and address child homelessness through programmes inspired by the model of Housing First.⁵⁹

Measures related to COVID-19

Given the severity of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the employment and economic situation of households in Spain, it would be advisable to extend and promote the following measures, paying attention to vulnerable families with children, particularly those affected by lower incomes or unemployment.

- Extend the deferral of rent payments.
- Introduce six-month lease extensions to avoid increases in the rental price.
- Adopt moratoria on the payment of mortgages.
- Grant microcredits for rental payments and estate financial support for vulnerable families with children.
- Reinforce the temporary suspension of evictions for vulnerable tenants.
- Suspend service disconnections of energy, gas and water due to non-payment.

Data production

- **A more complete set of variables and data needs to be made available to approach child poverty and social exclusion from a comprehensive residential perspective.** As noted, the main source of information for the analysis of the proposed indicators (see

⁵⁹ Housing First is an internationally evidence-based approach, which uses independent, stable housing as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness (<https://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/>).

below) is the Survey on Living Conditions (Encuesta de Condiciones de Vida – ECV) for three reasons:

- it collects data on a considerable number of relevant variables in the field of housing that can be applied to the analysis of child poverty and social exclusion
 - it makes it possible to obtain not only an overview about housing and childhood but also a more in-depth analysis focused on relevant variables (housing tenure, type of household, poverty rates, etc.) and target groups (children of migrant origins or children in potentially precarious family situations, including single parent and large families)
 - it enables the updating of the data year by year to generate a longitudinal view on the residential processes that affect children and international comparisons at the level of the EU with the EU-SILC. However, despite its value, there are key issues that the ECV does not address. It is directed to private households and does not address the analysis of homeless children or children living in alternative care (institutions or foster homes). It does not include variables for the study of children with a disability or children from a minority racial or ethnic background. And it does not allow a regional or local analysis, given that it is a sample collected at the national level). **An extension of the questionnaire is, therefore, recommended.**
- Other dimensions on the housing conditions of, for example, children in alternative residential care or those who are homeless are little explored and more statistical information on these dimensions is needed. For this purpose, the Observatorio de la Infancia may consider adding new variables to those that already exist.

Other issues

- Housing expenses shape the disposable income of households in Spain. It is vital, therefore, to measure child poverty and social exclusion in a way that takes into account the impact of housing expenses on income.
- It is time to generate a public and political debate about the life consequences of child poverty and social exclusion in relation to housing for children and adolescents.

Table 5.2. Proposed indicators

N°	Goal	Indicator	Definition	Source	Current periodicity	Importance of indicator	Use of indicator	Type of indicator	Spain (latest data)	Target
1	By 2030, halve the percentage of children and adolescents in households with severe housing deprivation to approach the best-positioned countries at European level (Finland: 1.3%; Netherlands: 2%)	Severe housing deprivation	Percentage of households with children who reside in an overcrowded household and also have deprivation in at least one of the following: leaky roof, no bathtub/shower and no indoor toilet, or a dwelling considered too dark	ECV	Annually	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation	Process	5.7% (2020) Single-parent households: 5.9% (2020)	2.9%
2	By 2030, halve the percentage of children and adolescents in households unable to maintain an adequate temperature to approach the best-positioned country at European level (Norway: 2.3%)	Energy poverty - adequate temperature	Percentage of children in households unable to maintain an adequate temperature	ECV	Annually	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation	Process	7.7% (2019) Households at risk of poverty: 13.5% (2019)	3.8%
3	By 2030, halve the percentage of children and adolescents in households overburdened by housing costs, and close the gap with the best-positioned country in Europe (Finland: 1.7%)	Housing cost overburden	Percentage of children in households where total housing costs account for more than 40% of total disposable household income	ECV	Annually	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation	Result	11% (2019) Single-parent households: 33.1% (2019) In the first decile: 56.4% (2019)	5.5%

4	By 2030, halve the proportion of children and adolescents in residential care out of the total living in alternative care	Fostering of children and adolescents in alternative care	Percentage of children in residential care out of the total number of children in alternative care as of 31 December	Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, Statistical Bulletin on Child Protection Measures	Annually	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation	Result	55% (2019) Children (0-17) in alternative care per 100k population <18 years: 511 (2019) Children (0-17) in residential care per 100k population <18 years: 279 (2019) Children (0-17) in formal foster care per 100k population <18 years: 232 (2019)	2.7%
5	By 2030, reduce the proportion of households with children in poverty with arrears to the national average (17.1%)	Arrears	Percentage of households with children with arrears on mortgage or rents, utility bills or hire purchase	ECV	Annually	Secondary	Monitoring	Process	National average: 17.1% (2020) Households in poverty: 37.2% Single-parent household: 20.3% Single-parent household in poverty: 33%	17.1%
6	By 2030, reduce the age of youths leaving their	Leaving the nest	Estimated average age of young people leaving the parental household	ECV	Annually	Secondary	Evaluation	Result	29.8 years (2020)	26.4 years

	parental household to the EU average (26.4)									
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Notes: Current results broken down by ACs should be interpreted with caution, given their small sample size. Therefore, sample sizes should be increased to allow disaggregation at the AC level, when pertinent, and to identify all six target groups: homeless children or children experiencing severe housing deprivation; children with disabilities; children with mental health issues; children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, particularly Roma; children in alternative (especially institutional) care; and children in precarious family situations. The case of Catalonia, in collaboration with the CIS, provides a good and viable example of how sample size could be increased at the regional level if ACs contribute the necessary time and resources. Data on all indicators should be collected – as a minimum – for all target groups. It should be possible to disaggregate all the indicators by age, household type, sex, income quintile. These indicators (and the ones mentioned in the other policy areas covered in this report) are being proposed for the monitoring and evaluation of the ECG. However, they may also have the added benefit of improving the availability of much-needed disaggregated data around child poverty and social exclusion (mainly on targeted groups, and regarding the sample size in the ACs).

5.4. Concluding remarks

Access to decent housing is a political and policy issue that remains under-developed in Spain's public policy realm. There is, however, more awareness of and emphasis on this area on the part of the third sector, and particularly on the part of the big organizations that generate research, while designing and implementing programmes in this policy area as well as.

While most AC links child deprivation and housing, the focus is not so much on the impact of access to decent housing and its consequences for child deprivation, but on access housing programmes of different types. Access to decent housing from the perspective of child poverty and social exclusion perspective is a cross-cutting variable that merges both housing and poverty issues. There is a need to frame them more specifically in relation to child poverty and social exclusion through integrated approaches.

Various policy realms need to be scrutinized and targeted to detect and tackle child poverty, notably: energy poverty, household poverty, rural vulnerable households with migrant families, Roma community, unaccompanied children, and families with children disabilities, vulnerable large families and single-parent families.

Policies should aim to prevent difficulties in accessing decent housing and intervene where there is a declared risk (evictions, energy poverty, etc.). Prevention requires ambitious public housing policies, rent-control schemes in consolidated urban fabrics (i.e. city centres) or active programmes for young adults over the age of 18. Interventions in cases of declared risk should include both transfers to cover energy cuts and other emergencies; but also legal instruments to delay and ameliorate the impact of, for example, evictions.

Most implementation scenarios position the ACs as responsible for both leadership and budgets, with different degrees of involvement of local authorities based on size of municipalities and their levels of poverty and social exclusion. Some municipalities, mainly for political reasons, have been reluctant to recognize or acknowledge the need for resources from the regional governments to tackle local poverty.

Pedagogical efforts are often required to introduce new programmes in this policy domain. Evaluation and performance indicators are not always present or available, which is not uncommon in other policy areas. Budgeting can also be difficult to break down, given that child poverty and social exclusion in relation to housing is often one minor item among many others. It is clear, therefore, that child poverty and access to decent housing need to be defined much more specifically as subjects for political and public policy.

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ANNEX 1. COMPLEMENTARY INDICATORS TO FOLLOW UP ON THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN SPAIN

Indicator	Source(s)	Periodicity	Level of data (national/regional/ local)	Last available year	Next expected data	Level of disaggrega- tion available (when appropriat e)	Potential difficulty in accessing data	Way to overcome difficulty	Importance of indicator (primary/ secondary)	Use of indicator (monitoring and/or evaluation)
Relative income poverty										
At-risk-of-poverty - High (below 40%)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
At-risk-of-poverty - Severe (below 25%)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Anchored poverty (equivalized disposable income calculated in the standard way for the base year and adjusted for inflation)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Evaluation
Persistent poverty (relatively low income both in the current year and at least two out of the three preceding years)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Primary	Evaluation

Regional child poverty (measured by both national and regional median income)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation (sub-national inequalities)
Absolute child poverty										
Child material deprivation Inability to access 3 of a list of 9 basic goods and services	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Primary	Monitoring
Child-specific material deprivation (inability to access 5 or more from a list of 18 personal, household and child-specific indicators.	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Persistent material deprivation (inability to pay for those items in the current year and at least two out of the preceding three years)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Primary	Evaluation
Multidimensional income/asset/work based poverty: AROPE										
Urban, peri-urban and rural child poverty and AROPE (density of local administrative units)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Primary	Monitoring

Risk of child poverty and AROPE after public transfers	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National (and Catalonia since 2016)	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Primary	Evaluation
Multidimensional poverty - UNICEF's MODA indicators⁶⁰										
Access to information: Internet, radio, TV, PC at home – (Q 33.1, 33.2 y 33.3)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Access to information: Has a mobile phone – (Q 33.1)	ECV	Since 2004 (annually)	National	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Clothing: Some new clothes; does not have different shoes for different purposes; two pair of shoes (Q96 – individual questionnaire)	ECV	Since 2013 (annually)	National	2020 (data collected on third quarter 2020 - income data 2019)	2021 (available around July 2021)	See Note	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Access to basic goods and services (radio, TV, bicycle, car, computer, Internet connection, mobile)	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)	2011	National (and for 10 other EU member states)	2011	-	By gender and age	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring

⁶⁰ General indicators are mentioned in this Table, while the rest of indicators included in the UNICEF's Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) are included in each of the specific policy areas covered in this deep-dive report.

	Roma Pilot Survey									
Roma children at risk of poverty (0-15 years old)	FRA Roma Pilot Survey	2011	National (and for 10 other EU member states)	2011	-	By gender and age	None	-	Primary	Monitoring
Budget indicators										
% of public spending on families and children (direct and indirect expenditure – UNICEF Methodology)	<i>Contabilidad nacional</i> , ESSPROS UNICEF	Annually	National	2020 2018	2021 2019	-	None	-	Primary	Monitoring
% of public spending on cash transfers to families and children	ESSPROS	Annually	National	2020	2021	-	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
% of public spending on policies against social exclusion	ESSPROS	Annually	National	2020	2021	-	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Amounts devoted to families and children of INSS budget	INSS	Annually	National	2020	2021	varies	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Other indicators										
Percentage of children in residential care out of the total	MSCBS	Annually	National	2018	-	By age, gender, migrant	None	-	Secondary	Evaluation

number of children in alternative care as of 31 December.						background , disability				
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Note: The ECV allows the disaggregation of data for three of the target groups: children facing severe housing deprivation, those from a migrant background, and those living in precarious family situations. However, it does not allow the disaggregation of data to cover children with a disability, children with a minority racial or ethnic background (particularly Roma), or children in alternative (especially institutional) care. Data can be disaggregated by ACs, but the sample size should be increased to ensure a significant and representative number of children.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Indicator	Source(s)	Periodicity	Level of data (national/ regional/ local)	Last available year	Next expected data	Level of disaggregation available (when appropriate)	Potential difficulty in accessing data	Way to overcome difficulty in accessing data	Importance of indicator (primary/ secondary)	Use of indicator (monitoring &/or evaluation)
General enrolment rates and access to services										
Enrolment in ECEC (0-6) by age: ACs with the HIGHEST and LOWEST rates	EU-SILC	Annually	Regional	2020	2021	By age and gender only	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Percentage of children enrolled in public centres relative to all those enrolled in first-cycle and second-cycle education: National-level and ACs with the HIGHEST and LOWEST rates	Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (EDUCAbase)	Annually	National, regional	2019-2020	2020- 2021	By age and gender only	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

Access and barriers to first-cycle (0-3) ECEC by income quintile	ECV, Módulo de Acceso a los Servicios	Periodically (new round foreseen for year 2024)	National	2016	2024	By income quintile	A new round will not be available until 2024	Data from EUROSTAT regarding barriers to childcare (main reasons for not using professional childcare services by age)	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Main type of childcare received by the youngest child by income quintile	ECV, Módulo de Acceso a los Servicios	Periodically but not totally predictable timing (new round foreseen for 2024)	National	2016	2024	By income quintile	A new round will not be available until 2024	Eurostat data on type of childcare	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Percentage of children <3 and 3-6 taken care of exclusively by their parents	Eurostat (EU-SILC) ILC_CAPARENTS indicator ⁶¹ ; ECV	Annually	National	2020	2021	By age group only	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation
Average time spent in formal childcare (children <3 and children 3-6)	Eurostat (EU-SILC) ILC_CAMNFORALL and ILC_CAMNFORG0 indicators ⁶² ; ECV	Annually	National	2020	2021	By age group only	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

⁶¹ ILC_CAPARENTS: Children cared only by their parents by age group (percentage within the population of each age group): EU-SILC survey.

⁶² ILC_CAMNFORALL: Average number of weekly hours of formal care by age group for children with or without formal care (EU-SILC survey); ILC_CAMNFORG0: Average number of weekly hours of formal care by age group for children with at least 1 hour of formal care (EU-SILC survey).

Enrolment of target groups										
Percentage of foreign-born children enrolled in ECEC	Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (Datos y cifras y EDUCAbase)	Annually	National, regional	2019-2020	2020-2021	By origin (foreign-born or native)	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Enrolment of children with disabilities in public, subsidized and private schools	Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, EDUCAbase	Annually	National, regional	2020	2021	By type of school	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Enrolment of Roma children in ECEC	FRA	Unknown	National	2011	Unknown	-	Extremely limited data available for this group	Personal interviews with entities working with this target group	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Percentage of children (0-3 and 3-6 years) in family-based alternative care	<i>Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, Boletín de datos estadísticos de medidas de protección a la infancia</i>	Annually	National	2019	2020	By age group	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

Other measures facilitating ECEC ⁶³										
Paid parental leave uptake (maternity, paternity)	<i>Seguridad Social</i>	Annually	National, regional	2019	2020	By AC	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Breastfeeding leave uptake	<i>Seguridad Social</i>	Annually	National, regional	2019	2020	By AC	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Part-time parental leave (reducción de jornada) uptake	<i>Seguridad Social</i>	Annually	National, regional	2019	2020	By AC	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Unpaid parental leave (excedencia) uptake	<i>Seguridad Social</i>	Annually	National, regional	2019	2020	By AC	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Percentage of men and women who work part-time for care reasons	<i>Instituto de las Mujeres</i>	Annually	National	2020	2021	-	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population by care responsibilities (for own or partner's children) and labour force status	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By labour force status	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring

⁶³ These are indirect indicators of ECEC. A comprehensive account of ECEC should include not only formal early childhood education and care but also measures that facilitate parental involvement in childrearing.

	work and family life) (lfso_18cresls); EPA									
Population by care responsibilities and educational attainment	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18cresed); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Secondary	Monitoring
Population with childcare responsibilities by use of childcare services and country of birth	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18cusecb); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By country of birth	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population with childcare responsibilities by use of childcare services and full-time/part-time work	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18cusefp); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By work intensity	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population not using childcare services by main reason	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18cobs); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	-	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Persons in employment with childcare responsibilities by effect on employment and educational attainment level	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18ceffed); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

Employees with care responsibilities by working time flexibility for care, educational attainment level and degree of urbanization	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18posedu); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment and degree of urbanization	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Employees with care responsibilities by working time flexibility for care and occupation	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18posei); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	-	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Employees with care responsibilities by flexibility for taking whole days off for care, educational attainment level and degree of urbanization	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18powtedu); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment and degree of urbanization	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Employees with care responsibilities by flexibility for taking whole days off for care and occupation	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18powti); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By occupation	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Persons in employment with care responsibilities by main obstacle at work for reconciliation and educational attainment	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18wobsed); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

Population by effects of childcare on employment and educational attainment level	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18twkcd); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population by effects of childcare on employment and country of birth	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18twkcb); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By country of birth	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population with work interruption for childcare by type of leave and educational attainment level	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18parlved); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Population with work interruption for childcare by duration of interruption and educational attainment level	EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey (module Reconciliation between work and family life) (lfso_18stlened); EPA	Periodically (latest data from 2018)	National	2018	Unknown	By educational attainment	None	-	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

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Indicator	Source(s)	Periodicity	Level of data (national/ regional/ local)	Last available year	Next expected data	Level of disaggregation available (when appropriate)	Potential difficulty in accessing data	Way to overcome difficulty in accessing data	Importance of indicator (primary/ secondary)	Use of indicator (monitoring and/or evaluation)
Educational performance, achievement, trajectories										
Underachievement in maths or science by socioeconomic status (SES) at 4th grade (10 years old)	TIMSS (Maths and Science, 10 yo)	4 years	National and some regional ⁶⁴	2019	2023	Children with precarious family situation/ migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring
Underachievement in reading by SES, at 4th grade (10 years old)	PIRLS (Literacy 10 yo)	5 years	National and some regional	2016	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring
Underachievement by SES, at 8th grade	PISA (15yo)	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring
Gap between 20% top economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) and 20% bottom ESCS in <u>low</u> performance	PISA (15yo)	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring

⁶⁴ Asturias, Ceuta, Castile and León, Catalonia, La Rioja, Madrid, Melilla.

Proportion of 15-year-olds below proficiency level 1 ('lowest performers') in the group of children below proficiency level 2 ('low performers')	PISA (15yo) severity of absolute disadvantage	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
Grade repetition by ESCS, origin, language at home	PISA (15yo)	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Suitability rate (<i>tasa de idoneidad</i>) before the end of compulsory education (<i>4to de ESO</i>)	Estadística de Enseñanzas no Universitarias	Annually	National and regional	2019	2020	None available	None		Secondary	Monitoring
Deprivation										
A suitable place to study/a desk to study at /a quiet place to study	PISA - 15 yo ECV 2-15 yo	PISA 3 years ECV 2014 (ah-hoc module)	National/ACs	2018 2014	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
% students with a computer at home that can be used for school work	PISA (students questionnaire)	3 years	National/ACs	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None	Obtain data for younger age groups	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
% students with a computer with a link to the Internet at home	PISA (students questionnaire)	3 years	National/ACs	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation

Books adequate for their age	ECV	ad-hoc module	National/ ACs	2014	2021?	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
Percentage of children (aged 0-18) living in households that find it very or moderately difficult to cover the costs of formal education (tuition fees, registration, exam fees, books, school trips, cost of canteen, etc.)	ECV (table ilc_ats07)	ad-hoc module	National, ACs, Urban/ Rural	2016	unknown	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None	Collect data more regularly	Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Not making (more) use of formal childcare services due to lack of affordability/accessibility (% of households with at least one child aged 12 or less) ⁶⁵	ECV	ad-hoc module	National, ACs, Urban/ Rural	2016	unknown	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None (but see potential quality issues)		Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation
Cost of Internet services by income quartile	ECV and DESI	Annually	National/ ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring

⁶⁵ Although it is important to collect data on out-of-school activities, there are some issues with the data in Spain. Specifically, data on formal childcare use are collected in the SILC (in Spain ECV). For the 6-12 age group, the variables to estimate formal childcare appear to reflect only school time. Only 6 per cent of children are recorded as using any other childcare services in 2019 (with 0 per cent registered in some regions). This seems unrealistic and suggests that the variables as currently worded are not capturing some of the most commonly used forms of formal childcare for primary aged children, such as '*extraescolares*', and participation in children groups (*esplais*, *caus*, and so on). Accordingly, we have excluded the variable here and would recommend revising the indicators.

Household leisure and cultural expenditure by income	EPF	Annually	ACs	2019	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
Household education expenditure by income and educational level	EPF	Annually	ACs	2019	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
School conditions										
'Low' school engagement (sense of belonging and participation) by ESCS, origin, school socioeconomic characteristics	PISA (students questionnaire)	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	Yes		Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation
% children with special educational needs in mainstream schools	MEYFP, EducaBase	Annually	National and regional	2021 (academic year 2019-2020)	2022	Type of disability	Data regularly published but with substantial variations between regions and years.		Primary	Monitoring
% of students with low sense of belonging at school	PISA	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring and evaluation

% students exposed to bullying by target group	PISA	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background/ Ethnic minority (FRA Survey)	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Index of shortage of material resources available in school (educational and physical infrastructure) by school characteristics (adv/disadv; rural/city; private/public)	PISA	3 years	National and regional	2018	2022	Child in precarious family/migrant background	Yes		Secondary	Monitoring
Public investment										
Free school meals coverage rate, by target groups and education level	Report/ Registers					Not available	Yes	Expert interviews	Primary	Evaluation
ACs investment in educational materials (textbook allowances, free textbooks, other)	MEYFP	Annually	ACs			Not available			Secondary	Evaluation
Total expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by source of funds (public/private)	OECD	Annually	National	2020		Not available	Yes		Primary	Evaluation

Public expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (by educational level), in public and subsidised centres	OECD, MEYFP	Annually	National, ACs			Not available			Secondary	Evaluation
Public expenditure on education by education level and programme orientation - as % of GDP	Eurostat/ MEYFP	Annually	National, ACs	2019	2021	Not available	Multiplicity of actors across levels		Secondary	Evaluation
Number of students receiving educational allowances by educational level	MEYFP	Annually	Nacional, ACs	2019	2021	Not available	None		Secondary	Evaluation

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Indicator	Source(s)	Periodicity	Level of data (national/ regional/ local)	Last available year	Next expected data	Level of disaggregation available (when appropriate)	Potential difficulty in accessing data	Way to overcome difficulty in accessing data	Importance of indicator (primary/ secondary)	Use of indicator (monitoring and/or evaluation)
Mental health										
Access to mental health services	ENSE	5 year	National	2017	2022		None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Oral Health										

Tooth brushing	ENSE (2-17)	5 years	National / ACs	2017	2022		None; micro data are available	Micro data available under email request (HBSC)	Primary	Monitoring
	HBSC (11-15)	4 years	National / ACs	2018	2022					
Unmet dental care needs	ECV (2017 ad-hoc module), ENSE	Ad-hoc module - Irregular ENSE - 5 year	National	2017	2022	Family in precarious situation/ single-parent households	None		Primary	Evaluation
Health status										
Infant mortality	INE	Annually	National / ACs						Secondary	Evaluation
Low birth weight (newborns weighing <2500 gr)	INE	Annually	Sub-regional (province)	2019	2020		None; data are available		Primary	Monitoring
Self-perceived health	HBSC (11-15)	4 years	National / ACs	2018	2022		None; micro data are available	Micro data available under email request (HBSC)	Secondary	Monitoring
Health behaviour										

Tobacco: second-hand smoke exposure	ENSE (2-17)	5 years	ACs	2017	2022		None; micro data is available		Secondary	Monitoring
Breastfeeding rates	ENSE (2-17)	5 years	ACs	2017	2022		None; micro data is available		Secondary	Monitoring

HOUSING

Indicator	Source	Periodicity	Level of data (national/ regional/ local)	Last available year	Next expected data	Level of disaggregation available (when appropriate)	Potential difficulty in accessing data	Way to overcome difficulty in accessing data	Importance of indicator (primary/ secondary)	Use of indicator (monitoring and/or evaluation)
% children living in leaky homes	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
% children living in homes without adequate light	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
% children living in homes without bath or shower	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation

% children living in homes without flushing toilet	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
% children in noisy homes	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
% children in homes with pollution	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
% children in vandalized homes	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Secondary	Monitoring
% children in overcrowded homes	ECV	Annually	ACs	2020	2021	Child in precarious family/migrant background	None		Primary	Monitoring and evaluation
Children in alternative residential care (institutions, small group homes, families)	Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad	Annually	ACs	2019	2020	Children in alternative care, disability, nationality	None		Primary	Monitoring and Evaluation

ANNEX 2. DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETENCIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS LEVELS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS IN THE POLICIES INCLUDED UNDER THE ECG IN SPAIN

	Decision	Implementation	Funding	Evaluation	Coordination
Income maintenance programmes					
Unemployment protection (benefits and subsidies)	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (active employment policies are the responsibility of the ACs).	Unemployment protection is funded mainly through social contributions (benefit) + taxes (subsidy). Central Government + Social Security	Social Security: SEPE The AIReF (Central Government) evaluated active employment policies in 2018	Sectorial Council of Employment and Labour Affairs
IMV	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for the implementation (Social Security) With the support of the ACs and local governments	IMV is funded by taxes, Central Government (Social Security)	The AIReF (Central Government) is in charge of evaluating this policy every year joined with 'Comisión de Seguimiento' (Central Government Monitoring Commission) (art 30 RDL 20/2020)	Central Government Monitoring Commission and Advisory Council ('Consejo Consultivo': AGE, AC, third-sector organizations, unions, business organizations and local authorities) (Art 31 RDL 20/2020) Territorial Council of Social Services and Dependency
Minimum income	ACs are responsible for regulation	ACs are responsible for implementation with local governments	ACs with their own resources	ACs	ACs
Dependent child allowances	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security, Central Government, Taxes	INSS	INSS
Allowance for each child under 18 y with a disability = or > 33% or over 18 y with a disability = or > 65%.	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security, Central Government, Taxes	INSS	INSS

Benefit for the birth or adoption of a child, in cases of large families, single-parent families and in cases of mothers or fathers with disabilities	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security, Central Government, Taxes	INSS	INSS
Benefit for multiple births or adoptions	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security, Central Government, Taxes	INSS	INSS
Contributory family allowance	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security, Central Government, Contributions	INSS	INSS
Early childhood education and care (ECEC)					
First- and second-cycle ECEC provision and related aids	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training responsible for overarching regulation and principles. ACs' Education Boards are responsible for regional regulation	ACs/municipalities decide on the configuration and management of their own regional/local ECEC services	Resources provided by national, regional, and local funding (taxes) as well as fees paid by families	National and regional evaluation institutions (<i>Alta Inspección del Estado, Inspección educativa de las Comunidades Autónomas, Instituto Nacional de Evaluación Educativa del MEFP, AC's evaluation agencies</i>)	Country State Inspection Authority (<i>Alta Inspección del Estado</i>), Education inspectorate (<i>Alta Inspección de Educación</i>), Sectoral Conference on Education
Early detection and intervention services for children with disabilities	ACs responsible for regulations (through Health and Educational Boards or Social Services)	ACs/municipalities decide on the configuration and management of their own regional/local services	Resources provided by national, regional, and local funding (taxes) as well as fees paid by families	Regional evaluation institutions depending on whether competencies fall on Health, Education or Social Services Departments	Regional-level coordination institutions. In the case of intervention provided in school centres, also Country State Inspection Authority (<i>Alta Inspección del Estado</i>), Education inspectorate (<i>Alta Inspección de Educación</i>), Sectoral Conference on Education

Birth and care-related leaves and benefits	Central Government is responsible for regulation (Social Security)	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Social Security)	Social Security	INSS	INSS
EDUCATION					
Compulsory schooling					
Compulsory and post-compulsory education	Central Government is responsible for regulating the right to education and the basic elements of the organization, coordination and financing of education establishments ACs legislate within the framework of the basic state regulation	ACs decide on the configuration and management of their Education Services. Central Government manages education in Ceuta and Melilla	Education is funded mainly through the resources provided by a mix of taxes assigned partially by the Central Government. Parents contribute monthly fees for private publicly funded education	National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE) (Ministry of Education) Some regions have sectoral or general Evaluation Agencies	Sectoral Conference of Education (Central Government/ACs) coordinates interventions alongside the National School Council
Rural education	ACs legislate based on national legislation	ACs	ACs	INEE ACs	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs with local administration
Itinerant students	ACs legislate	ACs	ACs	INEE ACs	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs with local administration
Scholarships/economic support					
Scholarships and income support for students with additional educational needs	Central Government is responsible for regulation	Central Government is responsible for implementation (Ministry of Education)	Central Government (Ministry of Education) ACs	Central Government (Ministry of Education) Some regions have sectoral or general Evaluation Agencies	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs)
Scholarships for education-related expenses (school meals, transport, accommodation)	ACs legislate Central Government is responsible for the regulation in Ceuta and	ACs, local Administrations and Central Government in Ceuta and Melilla	Central Government (Ministry of Education) in Ceuta and Melilla	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs and local administration

	Melilla and some big cities and municipalities (e.g. Barcelona)		Co-founding ACs and municipalities	Some regions have sectoral or general Evaluation Agencies	
Scholarships for educational materials (books, IT, others)	Central Government is responsible for basic regulation ACs legislate	ACs	Central Government (Ministry of Education) funds ACs ACs complement with their own budgets	Central Government (Ministry of Education) Some regions have sectoral or general evaluation agencies	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs
Reinforcement, extracurricular activities, educational leisure and sport					
PROA+	Central Government is responsible for the regulation	Central Government and some ACs. (Schools)	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs
ABA	Central Government is responsible for regulation	ACs	Central Government (Ministry of Education) found ACs	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Sectoral Conference on Education (Central Government/ACs); ACs
Language immersion programme (English)	Central Government is responsible for regulation	Central Government responsible for implementation (Ministry of Education)	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Central Government (Ministry of Education)	Ministry of Education
Economic support for extracurricular activities, educational leisure and sport	Local administrations (provinces, counties, municipalities)	Local administrations (Schools, NGOs).	Local administrations	Local administrations (rare)	Local administration
Transition to job or qualification					
Second-chance schools	Local administration	Local and ACs	E2O relies on public funding (e.g., through a call for proposals) and private funding (e.g., through private foundations). Resources vary	No evaluation. Share of good practices	Association of Schools of second Chance (Foundations), Local administration (Barcelona first municipal School of second chance)

			among E20 and also depending on the region		
HEALTH AND NUTRITION					
General	<p>Central Government is responsible for basic healthcare principles and coordination, pharmaceutical policy, and management of INGESA.⁶⁶</p> <p>ACs are responsible for health planning, public health, healthcare services management.</p> <p>Local councils are responsible for health and hygiene and cooperation in the management of public services</p>	Each AC has its own Health Service - the administrative and management body responsible for all the health centres, services, and facilities in any regional and intra-regional administration. Central Government manages healthcare in Ceuta and Melilla	Healthcare is a non-contributory benefit financed out of general taxation and included in the general budget of each AC. Two additional funds are: The Cohesion Fund, and the Savings Programme for Temporary Incapacity, both managed by the Central Government	Currently, the AIReF (Central Government) is evaluating different programmes. Some regions have sectoral or general evaluation agencies. Satisfaction with the healthcare system is evaluated by the health barometer (CIS). ⁶⁷ Key Indicators for the Spanish National Health System ⁶⁸ contain 247 indicators (a short list of 50) to assess the SNS and compare performance across ACs	Interterritorial council of SNS is responsible for coordinating, cooperating, and liaison among the Central Government and ACs public health administrations
Healthy child programme (<i>Programa del niño sano</i>)	ACs are responsible for this programme with slight differences in the vaccination plan	Nurses run this programme in primary care centres	ACs	No evaluation of its completion, use, or health data found	This programme is run by the primary care team under the general directorate of health in each AC, involving both nursing and primary care physicians
Spanish strategy for nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention (NAOS strategy)	Central Government launched the NAOS strategy through the Spanish Agency for Consumer Affairs, Food Safety and Nutrition in 2005 Ministry of Consumer Affairs/ Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Implementation requires the collaboration of many sectors (e.g., the NHS or Education in ACs, ACs, the Spanish Federation of Food and Drink Industries, etc.)	Funded by the Central Government	Central Government proposed creating an Obesity Observatory to evaluate and monitor the progress obtained. National Health Survey/ Private foundation (Gasol Foundation)	Standing Commission on Nutrition (Ministry of Consumer Affairs/ Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Agriculture/ Ministry of Education and ACs)

⁶⁶ National Health Management Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Gestión Sanitaria*).

⁶⁷ Most recent results (2019) are available at https://www.mscbs.gob.es/estadEstudios/estadisticas/BarometroSanitario/home_BS.htm.

⁶⁸ <http://inclasns.msssi.es/main.html>.

WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI)	Initiative promoted by the European Region of the WHO	The initiative implemented in Spain by the ALADINO study in collaboration with the Central Government and the ACs	Each country is responsible for securing funding for the data collection and analysis	Data are analysed both at the national level and by the surveillance initiative investigators team at WHO/Europe, which conducts standard cross-country analyses of the pooled dataset	Each country has an identified institute in charge of overall national coordination and management. WHO is responsible for preparing the protocols, international coordination of the initiative, analysis of data at the European level and facilitating investigators' meetings
Self-regulation Code of Food Advertising aimed at Children, Prevention of Obesity and Health (PAOS by its Spanish acronym)	Central Government signed the PAOS code (2012) to self-regulate the marketing (development, creation, and dissemination of advertising messages) of food and drinks products targeting children below the age of 15. Ministry of Consumer Affairs/ Ministry of Health	The control of compliance to the standards of the PAOS's Code corresponds primarily to AUTOCONTROL (Entity in charge of managing the self-regulatory advertising system in Spain)	Funded by the Central Government	Monitoring Commission established, made up of several representatives. Also, AUTOCONTROL appointed as the external organization to perform the monitoring	Monitoring Commission established, made up of several representatives
Anti-tobacco programmes	Central Government and Ministry of Health ACs have anti-smoking programmes	Central Government issued the Law to increase the protection of children (e.g., by expanding smoke-free locations) ACs	Central Government ACs (anti-smoking programmes)	There is no governmental organization to monitor the compliance of the legal provisions enacted in this law. ESTUDES (survey)	The legal provisions enacted in this law might be complemented and extended by further regulations imposed by ACs
National Plan against Drugs (PNSD)	Central Government created the PNSD (now in the Ministry of Health) in 1985 to evaluate, coordinate and boost policies to reduce substance abuse (tobacco, alcohol, etc.) among different public administrations in Spain	The PNSD constitutes a governmental agency that coordinates with regional and local governments and organizations, NGOs, scientific associations, and academic experts	Funded by the Central Government	Two specific commissions, one controlled by the Central Government, and the other constituted by a group of technicians representing ACs. ESTUDES (survey)	The PNSD is coordinated by the Health Ministry and the head directors of the Health Department of each AC
HOUSING					

General	Central Government suggests guidelines (Ministry of Public Works). ACs define strategies and anti-poverty programmes and housing policy	Implementation generally takes place at municipal level (some ACs have also <i>Comarcas</i> – Counties – with social services jurisdiction), or at provinces (<i>Diputaciones Provinciales</i>). Municipalities are supported by higher levels when they are too small	ACs are mainly in charge of funding (agreements with municipalities to fund different programmes). Small municipalities might receive 100% of funding. Same logic with intermediate administrative levels such as <i>Diputaciones Provinciales</i> or <i>Comarcas</i>	Most programmes are evaluated by ACs and municipal governments depending on the role of each have and the capacity of the municipality to develop an evaluation	ACs have different housing departments that are often coordinated with bodies to design, implement and evaluate programmes (mostly in Social Service, Family or Equality departments), providing housing units or resources by building or renting others
Social housing provision (general approach)	Central Government defines the main targets and requirements for housing and renewal: public land for social and affordable social housing. ACs and municipalities decide where, how and when to build social housing	ACs have the competency to implement programmes, and allocate funds to their own departments and to municipalities. Big municipalities have housing corporations that build social housing	ACs. Central Government releases public housing plans (4 years) where the budget is endowed for co-funding with the AC, and then with different schemes to municipalities. Central Government and Local governments have different co-funding scenarios depending on side and need		For all housing initiatives from the Central Government: Inter-ministerial Working Group on urgent measures on Housing. Different schemes in different ACs involve different departments of Housing, Welfare etc. and the same for ACs and municipalities
Integral attention services for children in alternative care	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, ACs responsible for regulations	Public and local entities for protection of children and adolescents at the regional level (ACs and municipalities)	National, regional, and local funding (taxes)	Childhood Observatory (Observatorio de la Infancia)	Central Government, Childhood Observatory (Observatorio de la Infancia), Sectoral Conference on Social Affairs; Interegional Comision of de General Directors for Children
Social housing provision (rent)	Ministry of Transportation, mobility and urban agenda, Plan 20,000 housing units (in 4/6 years)	ACs, Local governments,	Central Government receives €21 million. Subsidies to families with low income to rent social housing (350€/m ² for families < 3 rd IPREM; 300€/m ² for families < 4.5 th IPREM)	The ACs have to submit an annual evaluation report to the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda.	SEPES (Public Land State Agency)

Housing renewal	Ministry of Transportation, mobility and urban agenda 1,468 public housing units for rent (10,000 from 2017-2021)	ACs, Local governments,	€13.8 million transferred to AC from Ministry of Public Works	The ACs have to submit an annual evaluation report to the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda.	
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