

INTERNATIONAL DAY  
**17** FOR THE **ERADICATION**  
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**ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH  
LOCAL & NATIONAL STRATEGIES**

**SPAIN**

**POVERTY WATCH  
2025**



EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK



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**EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK**



# POVERTY WATCH 2025



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**The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)** is a European Platform of Social Entities that work to combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in the European Union member countries. EAPN seeks to empower people experiencing poverty and social exclusion to exercise their rights and responsibilities, break their isolation, and address their situations. Its main objective is to place these issues at the center of European Union political debates.

In Spain, the European Network for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion in Spain (EAPN-ES) is a horizontal, pluralistic, and independent organisation working to bring this objective to reality in Spain and influence public policies at the European, national, regional, and local levels. Currently, it consists of 19 regional networks and 22 national entities, all non-profit organisations sharing a common commitment: to fight against poverty and social exclusion. In total, EAPN-ES includes over eight thousand social entities throughout Spain.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

On 23 December 2024, the Government of Spain approved the **National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030**, thereby ensuring continuity with the first national strategic framework (2019–2023) and with the previous **National Plans for Social Inclusion** developed since 2001. The new Strategy is built upon the evaluation of its predecessor, which was profoundly shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2024–2030 Strategy is conceived as a **renewed political and institutional impetus** to strengthen Spain's social protection system, enhance the coherence of public policies, and prevent the reproduction of poverty through an integrated, territorial and intersectional approach. It aligns with the **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan** and with the **United Nations 2030 Agenda**, positioning poverty and inequality reduction as structural objectives of the welfare state.

Nine months after its approval, however, the Strategy faces a **complex social landscape**. According to the “XV The State of Poverty in Spain” by the European Anti-Poverty Network Spain (EAPN-ES), **12.5 million people in Spain** (25.8% of the population) are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, **and 8.4% live in severe poverty**, with incomes below €644 per month. Moreover, **child poverty affects 2.7 million** children and adolescents—the highest rate in the European Union—and women continue to represent the majority face of precariousness: **6.6 million** women live at risk of poverty and exclusion.

This situation unfolds in a broader European context in which the fight against poverty, the rising cost of living and the housing crisis have returned to the centre of the political agenda. In her 2025 State of the Union address, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, reaffirmed the launch of a **European Anti-Poverty Strategy**, alongside initiatives such as the Affordable Housing Plan and new cost-of-living support packages, emphasising that the shared objective must be to **eradicate poverty in Europe by 2050**. This renewed European momentum reflects a growing recognition of the structural nature of poverty and of the need for more ambitious, binding and properly resourced policies.

In line with this European shift, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 represents an opportunity to move forward in accordance with European commitments and to reinforce the role of the welfare state in the face of current social and economic challenges. However, its success will depend on effective implementation, adequate resourcing, and the capacity to translate its stated principles into concrete measures. Additionally, the **meaningful participation of people experiencing poverty**—formally recognised as a transversal pillar—remains one of the outstanding challenges and an essential condition for the Strategy to fulfil its transformative purpose.

The Poverty Watch 2025 of EAPN Spain is framed within this context as a tool for citizen-led monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy. Its objective is to analyse how the Strategy's development process has unfolded, which actors have participated, which governance mechanisms have been activated, and, above all, to what extent its priorities respond to the **realities and demands expressed by those directly affected**.

Throughout the report, the current situation of poverty in Spain will be examined alongside the content and structure of the National Strategy, its development and participation process, and its degree of alignment with the experiences gathered in discussion groups and participatory spaces involving people with lived experience of poverty through EAPN-ES. From an analytical perspective, the document seeks to provide diagnostic elements and reflections that contribute to reinforcing a rights-based approach, advancing effective participation mechanisms, and supporting the implementation of a more sustainable and effective strategic framework. Ultimately, this Poverty Watch 2025 aims to remind us that no anti-poverty strategy will be effective unless it places people at the centre of public action. Prevention and inclusion will only be possible if policies listen to, recognise and co-design solutions with those who experience the consequences of inequality every day.





# THE SITUATION OF POVERTY IN SPAIN

## 2. THE SITUATION OF POVERTY IN SPAIN

To understand the extent to which the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 can respond to current challenges, it is necessary to begin with a clear reading of the reality it aims to transform. This section provides an overview of the main data on poverty and social exclusion in Spain, with the objective of contextualising the priorities of the new strategic framework and offering evidence to help assess its scope and relevance.

The analysis is structured around the most relevant available indicators, starting with the AROPE indicator and its components—poverty rate, severe material and social deprivation, and low work intensity—and continuing with some of its most concerning manifestations, such as child poverty, severe poverty, gender inequalities, and limited access to basic rights such as housing. Together, these indicators offer an updated picture of the country, allowing for the identification of those social groups most affected and the areas where public intervention is most urgently needed.

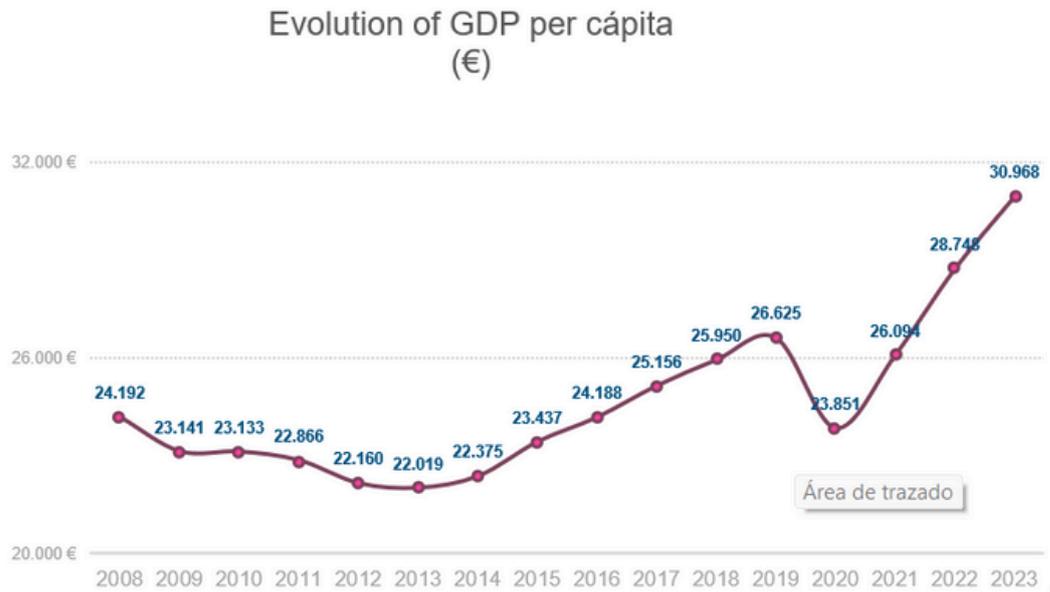
This analysis seeks to provide an empirical foundation that facilitates a better interpretation of the context in which the National Strategy is being implemented, and to assess whether its instruments are adapted to the real needs of people living in situations of poverty and exclusion in Spain.

### 2.1. Socioeconomic Context: Overview and Recent Conditioning Factors

The recent evolution of poverty and social exclusion in Spain must be understood within a socioeconomic context still shaped by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent global macroeconomic dynamics. The 2020 health crisis triggered a historic drop in GDP (–11.3%, the largest decline within the European Union), with widespread impacts on employment and living conditions. Unlike previous crises, such as the 2008 recession, the policy response was more decisive at both national and European levels, with the activation of significant social protection instruments (benefits, furlough schemes) and unprecedented public investment through the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

These interventions helped mitigate the deterioration of social indicators during the most critical years of the pandemic. From 2021 onwards—and more clearly in 2022 and 2023—the Spanish economy began showing consistent signs of recovery, supported by the normalisation of activity, improvements in employment, and the boost provided by European funds. As shown in the report, GDP per capita rose from €23,851 in 2020—its lowest point due to the pandemic—to **€30,968 in 2023, the highest value recorded to date.**

Chart 1: GDP per capita



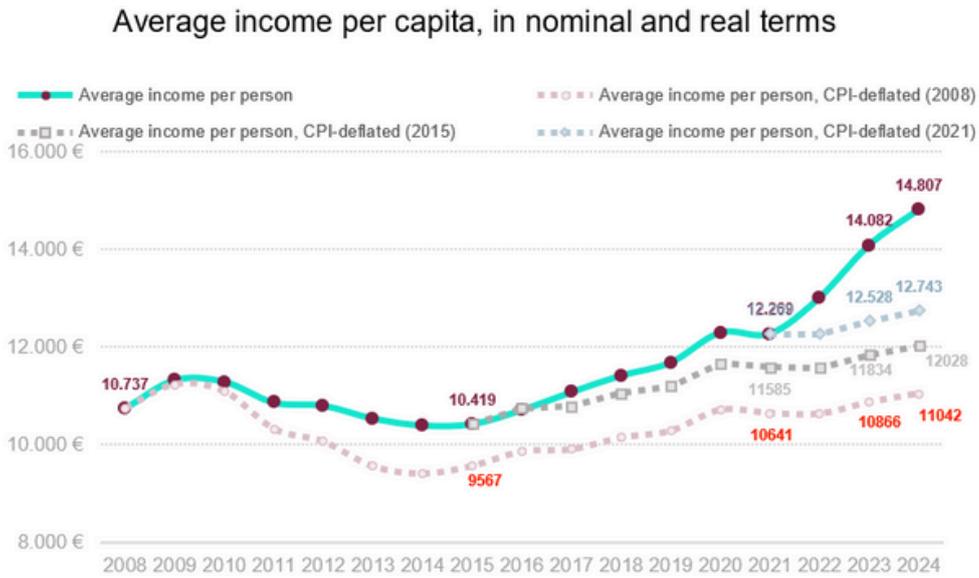
Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

Parallel to this, the unemployment rate has also evolved significantly. After peaking at 26.9% in 2013 during the financial crisis, unemployment followed a downward trend, with temporary increases such as the one recorded in 2021 (16.1%) after the pandemic shock. Since then, the indicator has continued to decline, reaching 10.5% in the third quarter of 2025, the lowest figure in the past fifteen years. This trajectory partly reflects the recovery of the labour market and the progressive normalisation of economic activity.

Improvements in macroeconomic indicators have also been reflected in income trends. In 2024, average household income per person reached €14,807, representing an increase of 5.1% compared with the previous year and 20.7% compared with 2021. At first glance, this may seem to confirm a robust and widespread economic recovery. However, when adjusted for the rising cost of living—i.e., analysed in real terms—the improvement is far more limited: since 2021, purchasing power has increased by only 3.9%, and compared with 2008, the real cumulative increase amounts to just €305. In other words, nominal income has grown, but much of that improvement has been offset by the sustained rise in prices of basic goods and services. This gap between nominal and real income demonstrates that economic growth has **not necessarily translated into a proportional strengthening of households' material well-being.**



Chart 2: Trends in average income per capita, in nominal and real terms



Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

This divergence is closely linked to the evolution of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the country's main inflation indicator. The sustained increase in the CPI in recent years reflects a generalised rise in the cost of living, which has reduced households' real purchasing power, even in the context of rising nominal incomes.

After a period of relative stability, inflation surged in 2021 and peaked in mid-2022 at 10.8%, driven by international factors such as the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, rising food prices, and disruptions in global supply chains. While 2023 and 2024 show a gradual moderation—around 3% year-on-year—**the cumulative effects have significantly eroded purchasing power, particularly for lower-income households**, which allocate a higher share of their budgets to essential goods.

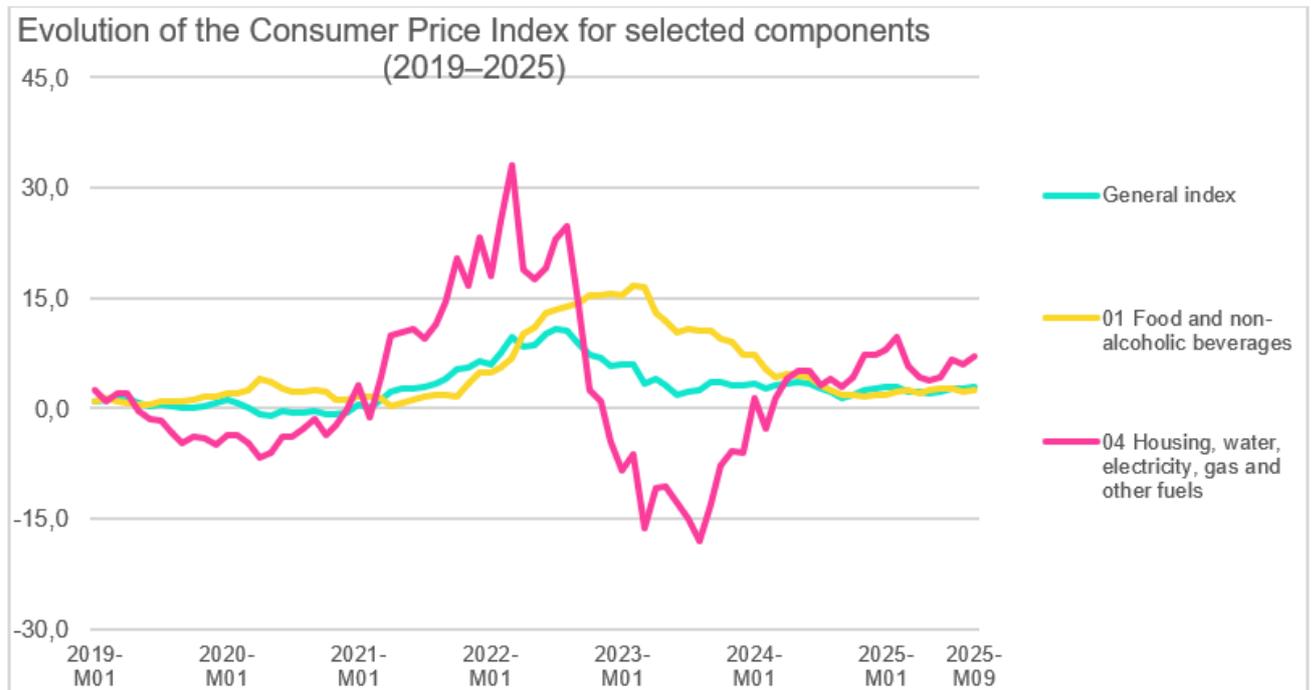
To better understand the scope of recent inflation, it is necessary to analyze the evolution of its main components. Not all prices have followed the same trajectory, and those linked to basic necessities have experienced greater pressures in recent years (2021–2024).

A breakdown of CPI components reveals that the most substantial increases between 2021 and 2024 were concentrated in two essential categories:

**1. Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels**, which reached annual increases above 33% in 2022

**2. Food and non-alcoholic beverages**, which recorded an increase of 16.6%, immediately affecting households' day-to-day consumption.

Chart 3: Evolution of the consumer Price Index by selected components



Source: Prepared by the author, based on INE data.

These increases are particularly concerning because they affect non-substitutable goods and form the basis of households' minimum living standards. For lower-income households, the relative weight of these items in their budget is considerably higher, which exposes them more intensely to inflationary pressures. Unlike households with greater purchasing power, which have more flexibility to reorganise their consumption or absorb price increases, vulnerable households have limited room for manoeuvre. In this context, inflation in basic goods not only raises the cost of living but can also undermine economic security and restrict access to decent living conditions, potentially exacerbating pre-existing inequalities.

Furthermore, the analysis of the chart reveals significant **volatility** in the energy and housing components, with sharp increases followed by marked drops. This instability introduces an additional dimension of uncertainty that complicates financial planning for families. In contrast, the rise in food prices has been more sustained, creating constant pressure on household budgets. This inflationary phenomenon, therefore, has a clearly regressive nature. It is not just about how much prices have risen, but which prices have risen and who is most intensely affected.

This scenario highlights the importance of having robust **public policies that act as a safety net** against price shocks, especially in strategic sectors such as energy and food. Measures such as the social safety net, targeted support for vulnerable groups, and price regulation mechanisms have been essential in containing the most regressive effects of inflation and cushioning its impact on households with less capacity to adjust.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, multiple initiatives have been implemented in this regard: the creation of the Minimum Living Income (IMV), the revaluation of pensions, the increase of the Minimum Interprofessional Wage (SMI), the reduction of VAT on certain essential goods, and energy social vouchers are just some of the measures that have helped strengthen the welfare state and prevent a further deterioration of living conditions. In fact, as highlighted in the 'XV Report on the State of Poverty,' without the set of public transfers, including pensions, the poverty rate in Spain in 2024 would have been more than double, affecting over 11 million additional people.

However, despite these advances, the country is still far from meeting the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda. In 2024, the number of people living in poverty or social exclusion should have been **reduced by 2.8 million**, but current figures show a significant gap compared to this target. This gap is not solely due to cyclical factors such as inflation, but also to deeper structural limitations. Although social protection instruments have improved in coverage, **challenges remain in terms of adequacy, targeting, and territorial coordination.**

In this regard, the data presented provides a partial view focused on macroeconomic and aggregate variables. To understand the real impact of this recent evolution—and, above all, its **level of social justice**—it is essential to analyse its translation in terms of **poverty, exclusion, and inequality**. Only through a people-centred perspective is it possible to identify which groups have benefited most from this period of growth and which, on the contrary, remain vulnerable or have fallen further behind.

The following section will specifically address the evolution of the AROPE indicator and its three components, exploring how macroeconomic improvements have—or have not—translated into household living conditions, and what effects they have had on the most vulnerable groups. This analysis will also make it possible to assess the alignment and effectiveness of the current National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty, as well as to guide future intervention priorities. All of this aims to strengthen the territorial coordination of policies, improve their targeting capacity toward the most vulnerable groups, and make decisive progress toward fulfilling the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

## 2.2. AROPE Rate (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion)

The AROPE indicator (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion) is the main indicator used at the European level to measure the risk of poverty and social exclusion. It is composed of three sub-indicators: the at-risk-of-poverty rate, severe material and social deprivation (SMSD), and low work intensity rate in the household (LWIR). Its evolution constitutes a key benchmark for assessing the effectiveness of social policies, the resilience of the welfare model, and progress towards the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda. Monitoring the AROPE indicator allows not only for an analysis of the number of people affected, but also for an assessment of trends in relation to national and international poverty reduction targets.

In 2024, 25.8% of the population residing in Spain—approximately 12.5 million people—were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This figure represents a slight improvement compared to the previous year (-0.7 percentage points) and constitutes the lowest rate recorded since the methodological reform of 2014. This reduction is largely explained by a **general improvement across the three components** of the AROPE indicator, as well as by economic factors related to growth in average incomes. While this trend suggests a partial recovery following the increases associated with the pandemic and the inflationary crisis, the aggregate figure continues to reflect a high level of structural incidence. The indicator remains well above pre-Great Recession levels, highlighting the persistence of underlying structural conditions that continue to limit the reach of social well-being for large segments of the population.

An analysis of AROPE trends in relation to international commitments reveals a concerning gap between observed progress and established targets. The graph “AROPE and deviation from the target” (Graph 4) illustrates the distance between the actual evolution of the indicator and the trajectory required to meet Target 1.2 of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for at least halving the proportion of people living in poverty or social exclusion. In Spain’s case, this would require a reduction from 28.6% in 2015 to 14.3% by 2030. However, the most recent data show that only one third of the required progress has been achieved. **The pace of decline observed to date is insufficient to meet the international commitment within the remaining timeframe, leaving 2.8 million more people at risk of poverty than would be expected under the nationally defined target.**

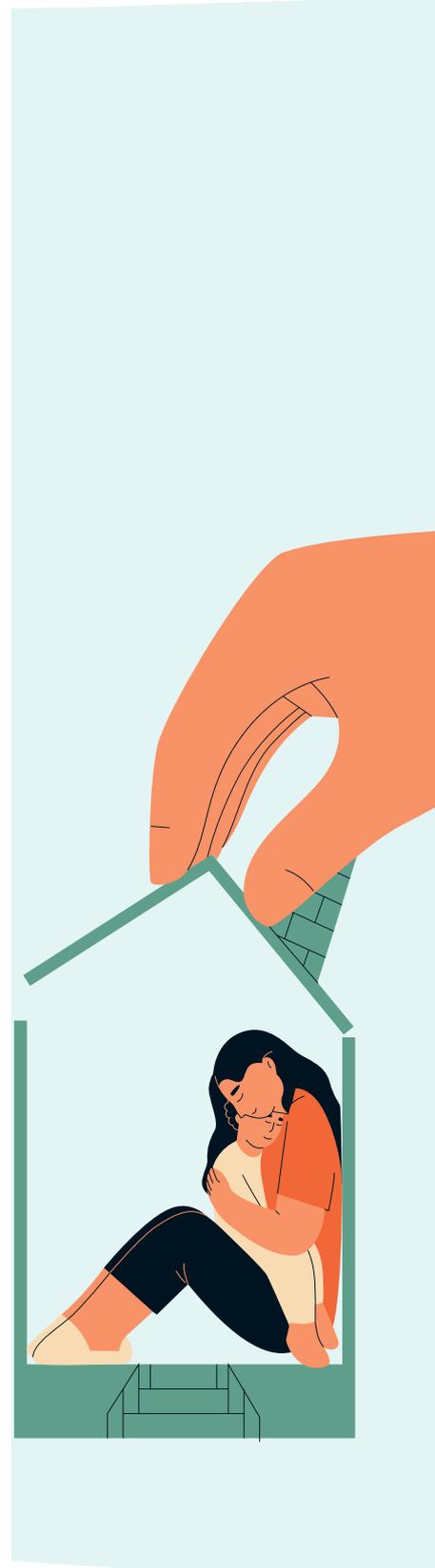
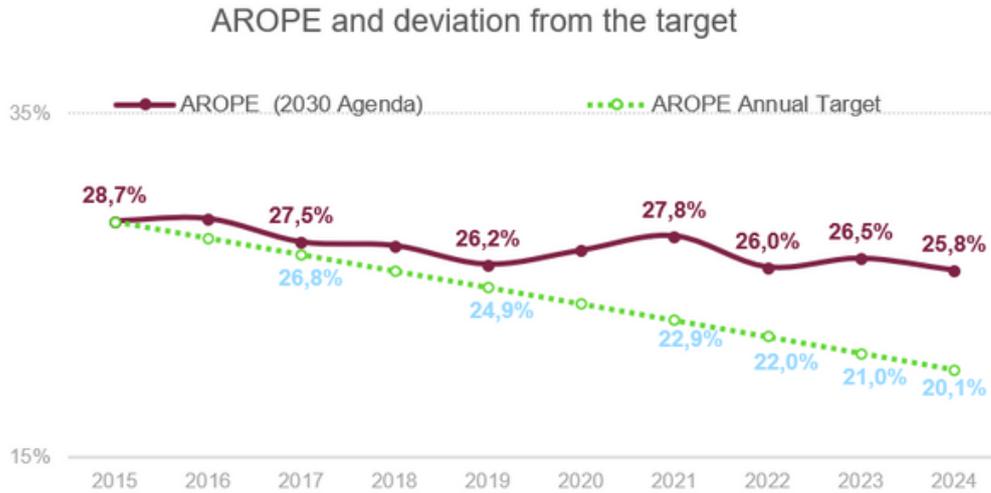


Chart 4: Evolution of the AROPE indicator and deviation from the 2030 Agenda Target



Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

The analysis of the time series reveals a complex trajectory. Between 2015 and 2019, AROPE declined steadily, before rising again in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2022 onwards, the indicator resumed a downward trend, albeit at a moderate pace. The improvement recorded in 2024 may therefore be interpreted as an incipient recovery, still constrained by structural factors and the accumulated effects of recent crises. The recovery has been neither linear nor homogeneous, pointing to a partial resilience of the social protection system and the persistence of deep-rooted inequalities.

A more disaggregated analysis further reveals that **territorial disparities** remain a structural feature of poverty and social exclusion in Spain. Regional AROPE rates range from a low of 14.8% in the Basque Country to a high of 35.6% in Andalusia, reflecting a geographic pattern that reproduces long-standing inequalities between northern and southern regions. This territorial gradient suggests unequal capacity among autonomous communities to deploy effective social policies and/or significant differences in regional socioeconomic structures. In the absence of coordinated intervention and governance mechanisms, these gaps risk persisting or even widening.

From a comparative perspective, **Spain's relative position within the European Union remains a cause for concern.** With a rate 4.8 percentage points above the EU average (21%), Spain ranks as the fourth Member State with the highest proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This situation underscores the need to intensify national efforts and to align public policies more effectively with the standards and priorities set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

From the evaluative perspective adopted in this Poverty Watch 2025, the AROPE indicator provides a first approximation of both the scope and the limitations of current policies. Although progress has been made, **the pace remains insufficient**, and the data invite closer examination of whether economic recovery has translated into tangible improvements for the most vulnerable social groups. The following sections analyse each of the three components of the AROPE indicator—the at-risk-of-poverty rate, severe material and social deprivation (SMSD), and low work intensity in the household (LWI)—in order to provide a more detailed understanding of the internal dynamics of the indicator, its explanatory factors, and its implications for the targeting and territorial articulation of social policies.

### 2.2.1. At-risk-of-poverty rate

The at-risk-of-poverty rate—one of the three components of the AROPE indicator—measures the **proportion of people living in households whose equivalised disposable income falls below 60% of the national median**. As an indicator of relative poverty, it reflects income distribution inequalities and allows for an assessment of the extent to which a significant share of the population lacks sufficient resources to participate fully in the country's economic and social life.

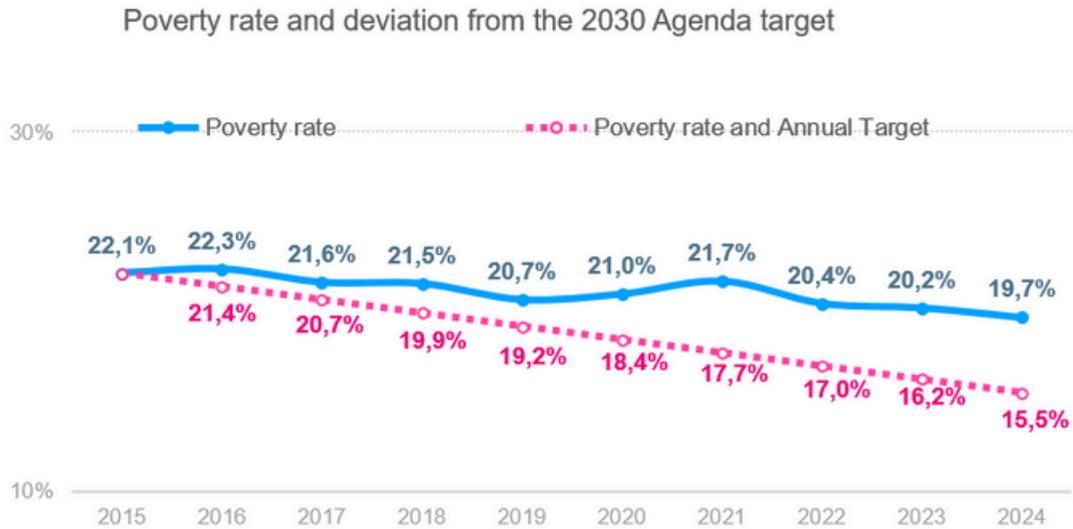
In 2024, the at-risk-of-poverty rate in Spain stood at 19.7% of the resident population, representing approximately 9.6 million people. This figure marks a reduction of half a percentage point compared to 2023 and **constitutes the lowest value recorded in the historical series** under the current methodology. It also represents the first return to levels comparable to those observed prior to the Great Recession: in 2008, the rate stood at 19.8%, indicating that more than fifteen years were required to recover this statistical threshold.

This recent improvement is largely explained by nominal income growth. In 2024, average income per consumption unit increased by more than 5% compared to the previous year, a rise exceeding the annual CPI, which helped partially offset the cumulative effects of inflation.

However, an examination of the historical trend shows that this improvement follows a decade of slow and uneven progress. Between 2014 and 2019, the at-risk-of-poverty rate declined gradually, but this trend was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to significant increases in 2020 (21.0%) and 2021 (21.7%). From 2022 onwards, the indicator has resumed a downward trajectory, although at a moderate pace and still constrained by persistent structural factors.

The gap between the current value and the strategic objectives remains significant. As shown in Graph 5, the effective reduction path remains above the trajectory required to meet Target 1.2 of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to halve the proportion of people living in poverty by the end of the decade. In 2024, the intermediate target would correspond to a rate of 15.5%, implying a **deviation of 4.2 percentage points** from the observed value.

Chart 5: Evolution of the poverty rate and deviation from the 2030 Agenda target



Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

It is also important to note that the at-risk-of-poverty rate is calculated using a relative threshold, meaning that it **varies annually in line with changes in the national median income**. When the median income increases—even due to a generalised rise in incomes—the poverty threshold also rises. As a result, individuals or households may be classified as poor despite experiencing no deterioration in their absolute income, simply because the threshold has increased. Conversely, individuals may statistically exit poverty without a real improvement in their living conditions if the threshold decreases.

For this reason, some analyses complement the standard indicator with anchored poverty rates, which fix the poverty threshold to a reference year in order to assess changes in real terms. In 2024, the poverty rate anchored to 2008 stood at 18.5%, confirming that there has been a genuine improvement in the real incomes of the most vulnerable households compared to that year. However, the rate anchored to 2015 reached 13.9%, suggesting that although progress has been made, **incomes among households near the poverty threshold have grown at a slower pace than those of the population as a whole**. In other words, economic growth has disproportionately benefited middle- and higher-income groups, widening the relative gap faced by lower-income households.

In summary, the recent evolution of the at-risk-of-poverty rate reflects a statistically significant improvement, supported by nominal income growth and the impact of various economic and social support measures. Nevertheless, the remaining distance to international commitments, together with the methodological limitations inherent to a relative income-based indicator, highlight the continued need to strengthen social protection and redistribution systems. Ensuring that improvements are sustained and effectively reach households in situations of greater vulnerability remains a central challenge for public policy within the 2030 Agenda horizon.

### 2.2.2. Severe Material and Social Deprivation (SMSD)

Severe Material and Social Deprivation (SMSD) constitutes the second component of the AROPE indicator and provides a direct measure of the most acute forms of deprivation experienced by individuals and households in their daily lives. Introduced in 2021 as a replacement for the former indicator of severe material deprivation, SMSD broadens its scope to capture not only economic hardship but also limitations affecting full social participation. Its analytical value lies in its ability to **reflect living conditions that go beyond monetary income**, thus approximating a multidimensional understanding of poverty.

From a methodological standpoint, the indicator is calculated on the basis of 13 deprivation items—seven at household level and six at individual level—covering needs considered essential for a dignified standard of living. A person is classified as experiencing severe material and social deprivation when they cannot afford at least seven of these items. These include the ability to cope with unexpected expenses, keep the home adequately warm, consume protein regularly, pay housing-related expenses on time, or afford one week of annual holiday away from home.

In 2024, **8.3% of the population residing in Spain**—approximately 4 million people—were living in a situation of severe material and social deprivation. This figure represents an improvement of **0.7 percentage points** compared to the previous year (9.0%), corresponding to more than 350,000 people exiting this situation. The year-on-year decline suggests a partial easing of the pressures generated by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly following the sharp rise in energy prices and inflation observed between 2021 and 2023.

Despite this relative improvement, the indicator remains at elevated levels and above the thresholds compatible with the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In 2024, the SMSD rate **exceeded by 3.2 percentage points the reference value** that would be required to meet Target 1.2, which calls for a proportional reduction in poverty and social exclusion.

A disaggregated analysis of SMSD in 2024 reveals differentiated patterns across the individual deprivation items. While the aggregate indicator shows moderate improvement, the specific results point to more complex dynamics, where partial progress coexists with persistent and concerning vulnerabilities.

First, **the inability to cope with unexpected expenses** remains the most widespread deprivation item, affecting **35.9% of the population**, equivalent to more than **17 million people**. Although this rate has declined (–1.3 percentage points compared to 2023), it continues to signal widespread economic fragility. Difficulties in dealing with unforeseen costs—such as household repairs, uncovered healthcare expenses or education-related needs—act as a **transversal indicator of financial insecurity**, undermining both household autonomy and planning capacity. The scale of this issue suggests that a significant share of the population lives without an effective safety net and in a situation of constant exposure to risk.

Secondly, the item relating to **arrears in housing-related payments or instalment purchases** is particularly concerning, as it worsened in 2024, affecting 14.2% of the population (nearly 7 million people). This is the only component of the indicator that shows a clear deterioration, indicating that financial stress linked to housing costs and household debt is not only persisting but intensifying. This increase occurs in a context shaped by cumulative price rises in recent years—especially in housing, utilities and food—which have compressed the economic margins of vulnerable households. The inability to meet structural expenses such as rent, mortgage payments or recurring bills is a critical symptom of latent housing exclusion and can lead to severe consequences, including over-indebtedness, residential instability and loss of housing.

Overall, the recent evolution of SMSD reflects **a partial but not consolidated improvement**, characterised by the coexistence of recovery signals and pockets of persistent fragility. While the decline in the aggregate indicator is a positive development, its limited magnitude and the worsening of key dimensions—particularly those related to housing affordability and basic financial solvency—**call for close monitoring and more targeted policies**. Ensuring sustainable access to essential goods, strengthening households' financial resilience, and decisively addressing housing insecurity must remain central priorities in any strategy aimed at eradicating severe poverty and advancing towards full social inclusion.

### 2.2.3. Low Work Intensity Rate in the Household (LWIR)

Low Work Intensity Rate in the Household (LWIR) constitutes the third component of the AROPE indicator and reflects a critical dimension of the risk of social exclusion associated with limited participation in the labour market. Its analytical relevance lies in its capacity to identify situations in which access to employment—and, consequently, to a regular source of labour income—is insufficient at household level, beyond the employment status of individual members.

From a methodological perspective, the LWIR indicator measures the proportion of people aged 0 to 64 living in households where working-age adults (18–64 years, with specific exceptions) worked less than 20% of their total work potential during the reference year. This is a particularly restrictive threshold, capturing only the most severe cases of labour market detachment. Its inclusion in the AROPE framework allows for the identification of households that are highly dependent on non-labour income or that maintain a very weak connection to employment.

In 2024, 8.0% of the population aged 0–64 lived in households with low work intensity. This figure represents an improvement of 0.4 percentage points compared to the previous year and **marks the lowest value recorded** since before 2010. The sustained downward trend observed since 2021 points to a genuine improvement in household-level labour market attachment, potentially linked to the consolidation of employment support and job stabilisation measures implemented in recent years. Unlike the other components of the AROPE indicator, LWIR **shows a particularly favourable position in relation to the 2030 Agenda**. In 2024, its rate stands 2.8 percentage points below the proportional reference value required to achieve Target 1.2 on poverty and social exclusion reduction. This makes LWIR the only AROPE component

currently ahead of schedule in terms of meeting the international commitment, reinforcing its value as an indicator of progress in socio-labour inclusion.

The positive evolution of the LWI indicator in 2024 can be understood in the context of a sustained recovery of the labour market, characterised by increasing employment rates and a significant reduction in unemployment in recent years. Policies such as the increase in the statutory minimum wage, labour market reforms aimed at promoting employment stability, the strengthening of public employment services, and activation programmes targeting groups with low employability have contributed to greater labour market participation. This trajectory is not only positive in quantitative terms but also offers valuable lessons regarding the effectiveness of combining economic growth with inclusive labour policies. The fact that LWI is the only AROPE component aligned with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of analysing its underlying drivers in greater depth and transferring these lessons to other aspects of poverty measurement. Identifying which policy elements are replicable or scalable may prove critical for advancing towards a sustained reduction in poverty and social exclusion.

### 2.3. Intensity of Poverty

Following the analysis of the overall evolution of poverty and social exclusion through the AROPE indicator and its components, it is necessary to address a less visible but equally critical dimension: the depth or intensity of poverty. This section focuses on indicators that reflect the distance from the poverty threshold and the concentration of the most severe situations of deprivation.

#### 2.3.1 Poverty Gap

The poverty gap is a fundamental tool for capturing the degree of deprivation experienced by individuals living below the poverty threshold. It makes it possible to assess not only how many people are affected by poverty, but also **how far they are from escaping it**.

In 2024, the poverty gap stood at 27.9% of the poverty threshold, equivalent to an average annual shortfall of €3,237 per person living in poverty. This figure represents a significant setback compared to the progress achieved in 2023 and returns the indicator to levels observed in 2022. Thus, while the overall poverty rate recorded a slight improvement, the intensity of deprivation among those remaining below the threshold has worsened. The simultaneous reduction in the number of people in poverty and the increase in their average distance from the threshold points to a growing segmentation of poverty, whereby **the most excluded profiles lag behind general improvements**.

Historically, the poverty gap has proven to be highly sensitive to economic crises. Between 2010 and 2015—during the height of the Great Recession—it increased by more than seven percentage points, reaching a peak of 33.8%. The subsequent reduction was slow and only accelerated between 2021 and 2023, coinciding with the expansion of social protection measures during the pandemic. This pattern suggests that social policies can have a substantial mitigating effect on the intensity of poverty, but **that sustained progress requires continuity and structural ambition**.

Disaggregated analysis by social group reveals concerning dynamics. **Children and adolescents** present the highest poverty gap (32.0%) and consistently show a structural difference compared to the overall population, confirming the persistence of child poverty as a deeper and more resistant phenomenon. **The working-age population (18–64 years)** is the group experiencing the greatest deterioration in 2024 (+1.8 percentage points), possibly reflecting labour market insertion difficulties and the lagged effects of the cost-of-living crisis. Although the **gender gap** remains relatively limited (a difference of 0.8 percentage points), **women continue to face a higher risk of poverty becoming entrenched**, as this indicator overlaps with higher incidence rates.

From the perspective of the 2030 Agenda, the recent evolution of the poverty gap poses a major challenge. Target 1.2 requires not only reducing the number of people living in poverty, but also making progress towards eliminating its most severe forms. The widening of the poverty gap indicates that **current policies are not fully effective in improving the living conditions of those at the very bottom of the income distribution**. This group, increasingly distant from the sufficiency threshold, faces greater barriers to exiting poverty and requires responses that combine adequate income support with structural inclusion policies.

Consequently, the systematic monitoring of the poverty gap is essential to ensure that anti-poverty strategies are not only effective in aggregate terms, but also **fair, equitable and responsive to the realities of those experiencing the greatest levels of exclusion**. Overcoming poverty cannot be measured solely by its prevalence, but also by the depth of the transformation achieved in the lives of the most vulnerable people.

### 2.3.2. Severe Poverty

Severe poverty is used to measure the intensity of poverty in Spain and identifies the population living with extremely low incomes, defined as those below 40% of the national median income per consumption unit. Its relevance lies in its ability to capture the most structural and persistent core of economic deprivation, where public or private support networks are insufficient and pathways out of poverty are particularly constrained.

In 2024, the severe poverty rate stood at **8.4% of the population**, equivalent to **more than 4 million people**. This figure remained broadly stable (a slight increase of 0.1 percentage points) compared to the previous year, contrasting with the declining trend observed in the overall poverty rate. The persistence of the most acute forms of poverty reflects the limited capacity of the income and social protection system to reach households facing the greatest disadvantage and highlights the risk of poverty becoming entrenched, with serious implications for social cohesion and the principle of leaving no one behind.

The operational severe poverty threshold—€7,723 per year or €644 per month per consumption unit—marks a line of profound exclusion. A typical household with two adults and two children living under this threshold would have a total monthly income of €1,352, or **€338 per person**, an amount clearly insufficient to guarantee minimally dignified living conditions. At this income level, access to adequate housing, balanced nutrition or social participation is severely constrained.

The stabilisation of the indicator in 2024 reveals a disconnect between the extent and the intensity of poverty. While the total number of people below the poverty threshold declined, the proportion of those experiencing the most severe forms of deprivation did not decrease and **remains anchored at critical levels**. This pattern is reinforced by the simultaneous increase in the poverty gap, indicating **that those who remain poor are increasingly distant from escaping poverty**.

From a historical perspective, the severe poverty rate peaked during the Great Recession (11.2% in 2015) and has since followed a path of partial improvement. The most significant decline occurred in 2022, supported by the deployment of extraordinary social protection measures. However, recent data point to a loss of momentum: in 2024, the rate remains 0.6 percentage points above the proportional path required to meet Target 1.2 of the 2030 Agenda, calling into question the feasibility of achieving international commitments on the reduction of severe poverty.

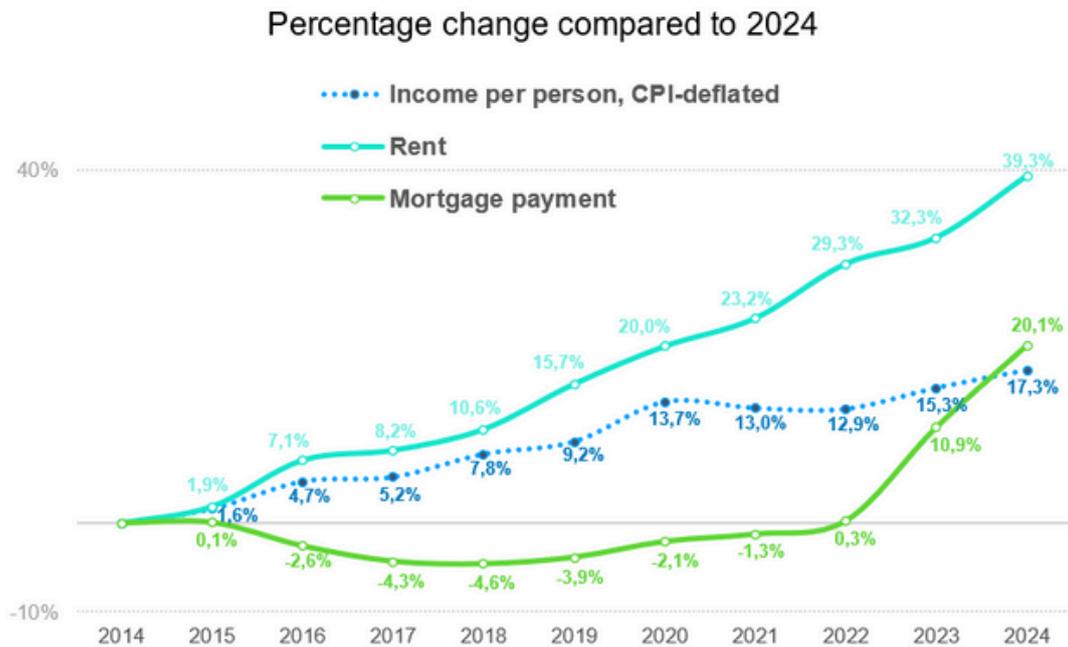
Disaggregated analysis identifies **groups facing particularly high levels of structural vulnerability**. Children present the highest severe poverty rate (14.1%) and are the only age group for which the indicator increased in 2024. This figure exceeds that of the working-age population (7.7%) by more than six percentage points and that of older people (5.6%) by nearly nine points. Particularly high rates are also observed among single-parent households (21.4%), large families (23.8%), and non-EU foreign nationals (24.0%). These results confirm a pattern already identified in the analysis of overall poverty: **the same groups that are systematically exposed to higher poverty risks are also those experiencing its most severe manifestations**, underscoring the persistence of structural inequalities that transcend economic cycles and require sustained, targeted policy interventions.

## 2.4. Housing and Poverty

Access to adequate housing constitutes a central dimension of well-being and a necessary condition for the effective exercise of fundamental rights. However, in the Spanish context, the residential system has ceased to function as a factor of social protection and has progressively become a mechanism of structural exclusion. Rather than ensuring stability and dignity, housing has increasingly become a driver of persistent impoverishment for broad segments of the population, with particularly severe impacts on the most vulnerable households.

This phenomenon is not merely cyclical, but reflects a structural transformation of the residential model. Since 2008, there has been a clear shift from homeownership towards renting, driven not only by housing market dynamics but also by the growing commodification of access to housing. While in 2008, 80.2% of the population lived in owner-occupied housing, by 2024 this figure had fallen to 73.7%. Over the same period, the share of the population living in rented accommodation increased from 14.3% to 21.0%, a trend closely associated with sustained price increases. Indeed, since 2014, average rental prices have risen by 39.3%, far outpacing the growth of real household incomes adjusted for inflation (17.3%). This divergence has exceeded the purchasing capacity of many households and has generated new forms of housing-related precariousness.

Chart 6: Percentage change in housing prices compared with real household income



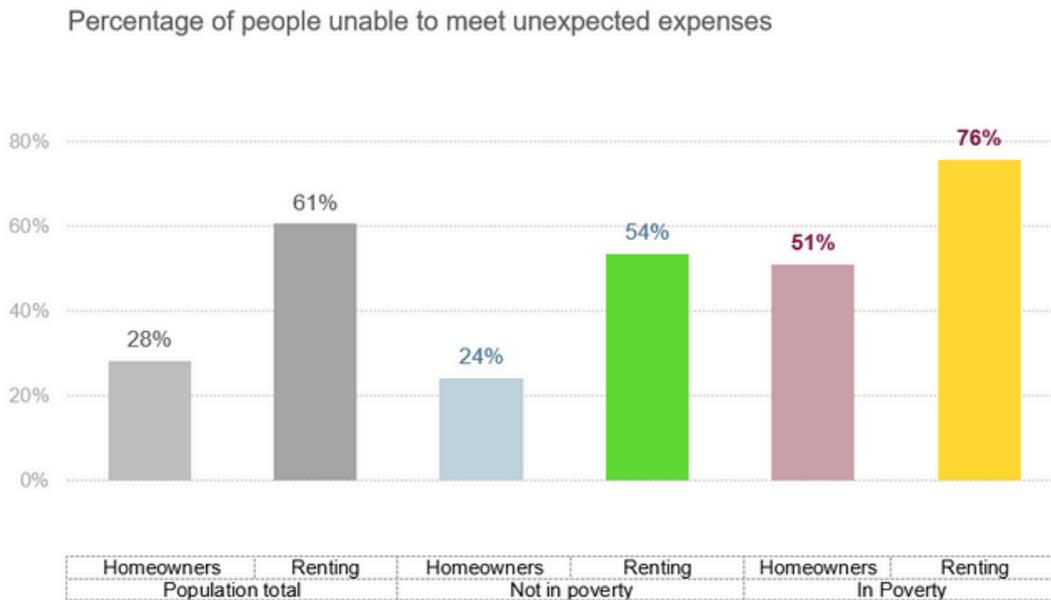
Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

This imbalance **has particularly severe consequences for people living in poverty. 28.4% of people experiencing poverty** live in market-priced rental housing, almost double the proportion observed among the rest of the population (14.9%). At the same time, only 55.7% of people in poverty live in owner-occupied housing, compared to 78.1% among those not at risk of poverty. This distribution reveals a regressive pattern: households with fewer resources are more likely to rely on more expensive and insecure housing arrangements, characterised by higher monthly payments and greater exposure to market fluctuations. In this context, the rental sector operates as a mechanism of inverse redistribution, amplifying inequality and eroding the savings capacity of lower-income households.

The financial effort required to secure and maintain housing has thus become a structural barrier to exiting poverty. **In 2024, people living in poverty devoted, on average, 35.5% of their income to housing costs.** Among those renting at market prices, this share rose to 54.4%. These levels far exceed the commonly accepted affordability thresholds (30–40%) used by international organisations. Moreover, 30.0% of people in poverty spent more than 40% of their income on housing, compared to just 2.4% of the rest of the population. As a result, disposable income is severely constrained: after paying rent, the average monthly income per person fell to €333, an amount insufficient to adequately cover other basic needs such as food, transport or education.

The consequences of this excessive housing cost burden are reflected in a general deterioration of living conditions. **In 2024, 76.8% of people in poverty who rent reported difficulties in making ends meet**, and 75.8% were unable to cope with unexpected expenses. In addition, 22.2% experienced arrears in rent or mortgage payments, a situation affecting 6.9 million people across the total population and posing serious risks to residential stability. High housing costs also contribute to energy poverty: 20.2% of people in poverty were unable to keep their homes adequately warm, and 22.3% experienced arrears in utility payments. Furthermore, 16.3% of people in poverty lived in overcrowded dwellings, more than double the rate observed among the rest of the population (7.5%).

Chart 7: Percentage of people unable to meet unexpected expenses



Beyond quantitative indicators, housing exclusion is compounded by discriminatory barriers. 14.4% of people in poverty who attempted to access housing in the past five years reported having experienced discrimination, twice the proportion observed among the rest of the population. In most cases, discrimination was based on factors related to aporophobia (income level, employment status, appearance) or on ethnic and national origin. These barriers not only hinder access to adequate housing but also reinforce stigma and social exclusion.

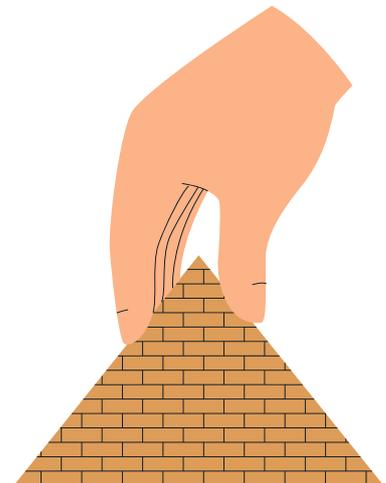
In this context, public housing policies continue to play a limited role. Housing-specific benefits reached only 2.2% of the total population in 2024, and just 4.4% of people living in poverty. Their median annual amount—€1,200—is clearly insufficient to offset the levels of housing cost overburden identified. The energy social bonus, as a targeted response to energy poverty, reached 23.2% of people in poverty, indicating a greater capacity for impact, but also highlighting the scale of the underlying structural problem.

In summary, the analysis of housing demonstrates that residential access not only reflects existing inequalities but actively amplifies and entrenches them. Housing is not merely an indicator of quality of life, but a structural determinant of social exclusion. Its disproportionate weight in household budgets turns the housing market into a poverty trap from which it is extremely difficult to escape. Addressing this challenge requires an ambitious reorientation of public policy: moving towards a residential system that functions as a guarantee of rights, rather than as a mechanism of social exclusion. Housing must cease to be a privilege and become, in practice, a public good that is accessible, affordable and secure for the entire population.

### 3. STRATEGIC AREAS AND PRIORITY GROUPS FOR INTERVENTION

The analytical review of the data available for 2024 offers a complex yet clear reading: Spain has recorded moderate progress in key indicators of poverty and social exclusion, with a downward trend in the AROPE rate and in its three components—monetary poverty, severe material and social deprivation (SMSD), and low work intensity rate in the household (LWIR). This positive evolution, which partially reverses the cumulative effects of the crises of the past decade, highlights the capacity of public policies, the labour market and the income system to mitigate vulnerability in certain contexts. However, current levels remain well above the thresholds required to meet the 2030 Agenda, particularly with regard to **poverty intensity indicators and the reduction of structural inequalities**.

The progress observed cannot be interpreted as a consolidated structural improvement, but rather as a **partial stabilisation** that should be understood as a window of political opportunity. The improvement in indicators such as LWI—already below the trajectory required by the 2030 Agenda—demonstrates that well-designed and sustained policy measures can deliver measurable impacts. It is therefore essential to **extract lessons** from those areas where progress has been achieved and to transfer their underlying logic to domains where gaps persist or are even widening.



### 3.1. Main Areas of Action

Based on the cross-cutting analysis of the data, four strategic areas are identified as requiring priority intervention in order to advance towards the prevention, reduction and eradication of poverty in Spain. These interrelated areas should constitute the pillars of a comprehensive, rights-based public policy framework oriented towards impact:

#### 1. Strengthening Income Guarantees across the Life Cycle

Social transfers remain the most effective redistributive mechanism: in 2024, they reduced the poverty rate from 42.6% to 19.7%. This transformative effect must be consolidated through a national income guarantee system that is adequate, territorially coordinated and adapted to the profiles facing the highest levels of exclusion.

Strengthening the Minimum Living Income (IMV), improving its coordination with regional minimum income schemes, simplifying administrative requirements, and expanding coverage to groups that remain underrepresented—such as young people, migrants or non-standard household arrangements—are key steps towards a more inclusive and resilient system.

#### 2. Guaranteeing the Right to Housing and Housing Retention

Housing has become a central driver of vulnerability: people living in poverty devote, on average, 35.5% of their income to housing costs, rising to 54.4% among households renting at market prices. This structural pressure erodes households' ability to meet other basic needs and perpetuates exclusion dynamics.

An ambitious housing policy must include the expansion of the social rental housing stock, income-based rent regulation, the reform of the energy social bonus to include essential services, and the sustainable rehabilitation of the housing stock. Protection against evictions without adequate housing alternatives must also be guaranteed.

#### 3. Strengthening Public Services and Promoting Quality Employment

Employment growth and nominal income increases have not translated into a proportional reduction in poverty or inequality. This disconnect indicates that the challenge is not only access to employment, but also job quality. Addressing involuntary part-time work, precarious employment, low wages and informality requires active labour market policies focused on the most affected groups.

At the same time, a comprehensive strengthening of public education, health care, digital inclusion and social services is required. Universal accessibility, administrative simplification (one-stop shops), inclusive digitalisation and effective coverage should guide the modernisation of the welfare state.

#### 4. Combating Discrimination and Inequality

Intersectional inequality requires a structured response. Certain groups—such as women, migrants, single-parent households and persons with disabilities—continue to face multiple and overlapping barriers that hinder access to rights and resources. Reversing this situation requires the integration of intersectional approaches into public policy design, combining universal measures with targeted interventions to ensure an equitable distribution of opportunities.

Finally, a decisive public agenda against aporophobia and systemic discrimination must be promoted through specific protocols within public services, awareness-raising campaigns, and legislation aimed at guaranteeing equal treatment in access to housing, employment, health care and education. The fight against inequality will only be effective if addressed from a comprehensive perspective that links territorial cohesion, fiscal justice and the guarantee of rights for all.

### 3.2. Priority Groups for Intervention

The evolution of poverty and social exclusion indicators in 2024 has not been uniform across all population groups. While general improvements are observed in the AROPE rate and in some of its components, a disaggregated analysis reveals **persistent patterns of vulnerability** that disproportionately affect specific groups. These structural inequalities require a targeted political response, informed by evidence and guided by the principles of equity, intersectionality and non-discrimination.

Identifying **priority groups for intervention** is a key exercise to maximise the redistributive impact of public policies. This approach goes beyond addressing those groups with the highest poverty rates and seeks to anticipate processes of prolonged exclusion and prevent the entrenchment of inequality. It is consistent with international human rights frameworks and with the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda, particularly the principle of leaving no one behind.

Based on the empirical analysis of AROPE rates by social group, three broad categories of strategic intervention can be identified:

#### 1. Groups in an alarming situation or showing recent deterioration- requiring urgent intervention

##### 1.1 Children and young people

**People under the age of 18** continue to be the group with the highest AROPE rate, and they also experienced a slight deterioration in 2024 (+0.1 percentage points), despite overall improvements at population level. Spain records **the highest child poverty rate in the European Union** (29.2% in 2024). Children also lead poverty rates based on income and display high levels of material deprivation, although the latter has declined slightly. **In addition, young people aged 25 to 29** show the most negative year-on-year evolution, with an increase of 0.7 percentage points in their AROPE rate. This situation reflects a structural fragility affecting both dependent life stages and the transition to adulthood, and calls for decisive intervention through policies such as the Child Guarantee, support for youth emancipation, and strengthened youth employment measures.

##### 1.2 Women

The gender gap remains systematic across all components of the AROPE indicator. Women display higher rates of monetary poverty, material and social deprivation, and low work intensity, with some of these gaps widening in 2024. Overrepresentation is particularly pronounced in contexts of single parenthood, unemployment and labour market precarity. The persistence of these disparities confirms the need to adopt a robust intersectional approach in public policies, capable of simultaneously recognising and addressing the multiple forms of discrimination affecting women in situations of vulnerability.

### 1.3 Persons with disabilities

Disability remains **closely associated with poverty and social exclusion**. The AROPE rate among persons with disabilities (32.9%) is consistently higher than that observed among the rest of the population (22.1%). **They experience twice the rate of severe material and social deprivation** (13.1%) compared to people without disabilities (6.3%). The impact is particularly severe among the **working-age population** (16–64 years), where the AROPE rate reaches 40.7%.

## 2. Historically vulnerable groups showing improvement but remaining at critical levels- requiring sustained reinforcement

### 2.1 Single-parent households

Despite recording the largest year-on-year improvement among household types (-2.4 percentage points), single-parent households remain the group with the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion. Predominantly headed by women, these households combine multiple vulnerability factors and must therefore continue to be prioritised in terms of structural support and targeted intervention.

### 2.2 Unemployed persons

This group continues to present the highest levels of exclusion, but with significant improvements in 2024: a reduction of 3 percentage points in the AROPE rate and 1.2 percentage points in severe material and social deprivation. These results suggest that employment activation policies and strengthened income protection may be generating positive impacts, although they remain insufficient to achieve full inclusion.

### 2.3 Migrant population and people of non-EU origin

Nationality remains a persistent **vulnerability factor**. **More than half of the non-EU population lives in poverty and/or social exclusion** (AROPE rate of 54.1% in 2024), **more than double** that observed among Spanish nationals. Migrant and non-EU populations continue to face the highest poverty and exclusion rates, yet they also recorded the largest year-on-year reduction (-2.9 percentage points), reaching their lowest level since 2014. This progress may signal an incipient improvement in socio-economic integration, which must be consolidated through inclusive reception policies, access to rights, and anti-discrimination measures.

## 3. Groups consolidating progress and showing resilience- requiring continuity of effective policies

### 3.1 People aged 65 and over

For the second consecutive year, this group experienced a reduction in its AROPE rate, which now stands at 19.5%. This improvement appears to be linked to pension indexation and the maintenance

of a relatively robust protection system for older persons. Nevertheless, ensuring the sustainability and universality of this system remains essential, particularly in the context of demographic transition.

### 3.2. People with basic levels of education

Although historically exhibiting higher poverty rates, significant improvements are observed across most indicators in 2024. This outcome may reflect the positive impact of redistributive policies and minimum income revaluations. However, this group remains vulnerable to adverse socioeconomic shocks and must therefore continue to be a focus of inclusion strategies.

This analysis demonstrates that improvements in aggregate indicators mask significant disparities between social groups. Identifying these patterns not only enables more effective targeting of interventions but also allows policymakers to learn from contexts in which policies appear to be working. Ensuring that progress reaches those most in need requires strengthening mechanisms of equity, intersectionality and participation in public policy design.

Groups in an alarming situation or showing recent deterioration	Children and young people
	Women
	Persons with disabilities
Historically vulnerable groups remaining at critical levels	Single-parent households
	Unemployed persons
	Migrant population and people of non-Eu origin
	Unemployed persons
Groups consolidating progress and showing resilience	People aged 65 and over
	People with basic levels of education

## 4. THE ROLE OF THE STATE

### 4.1. The redistributive Function of the State within the Horizon of the National Strategy

The welfare state plays a fundamental role in **guaranteeing social rights, mitigating inequalities and promoting social cohesion**. Its function is not limited to responding to life-cycle risks—such as unemployment, illness or old age—but extends to the design of structural mechanisms aimed at preventing poverty and fostering inclusive and sustainable development. Assessing its protective capacity is essential in order to understand the scope of public commitments and to guide institutional action towards more effective outcomes.

Within this framework, public intervention acts as the primary tool for correcting market failures and managing the social effects of economic cycles. Through policies such as cash transfers, progressive taxation and the provision of universal public services, the State helps to secure basic living conditions and to redistribute resources more equitably. This approach is consistent with the international commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, which highlights the need to strengthen public protection systems in order to build more resilient and equitable societies.

The structural benefits of the welfare state are well documented in both academic literature and normative frameworks. These include the provision of economic security against life-cycle risks, the reduction of socioeconomic gaps through redistributive mechanisms, and universal access to key services such as health care, education and care services. In addition, public expenditure plays a stabilising role during economic downturns and has the capacity to generate employment in sectors linked to collective well-being, such as long-term care and community services.

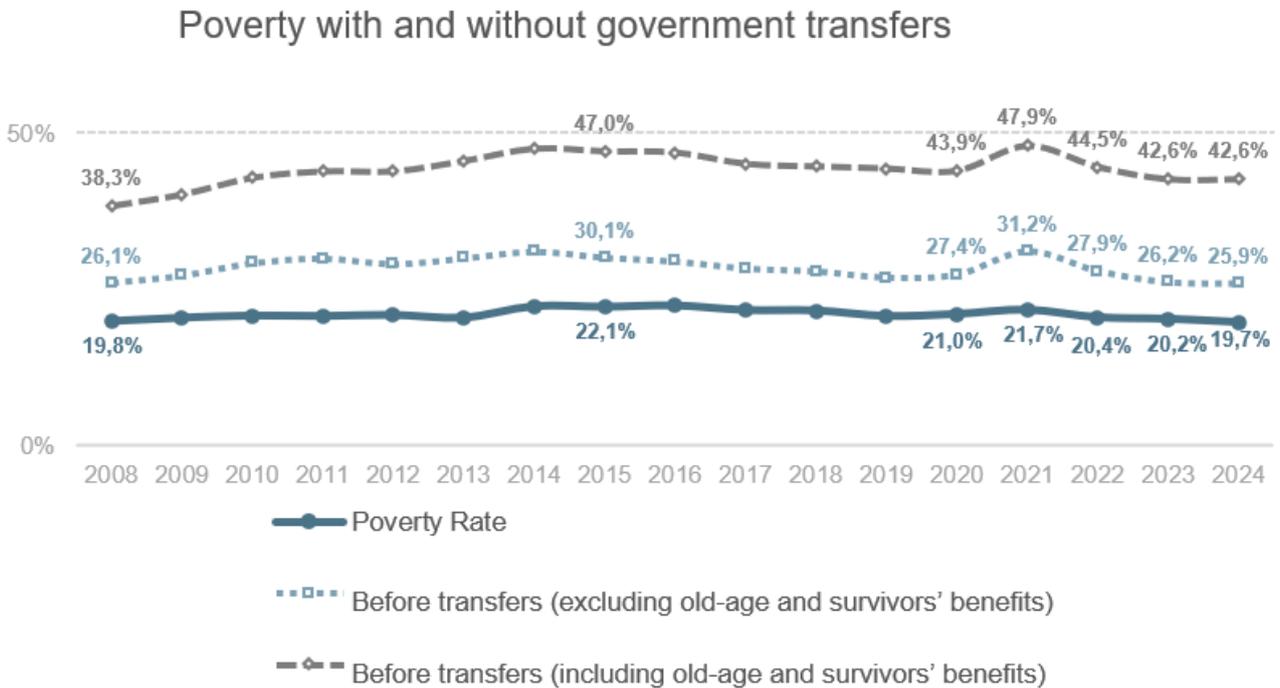
In the Spanish case, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty 2024–2030 explicitly incorporates the role of the State as the **backbone of a rights-based inclusion model**. The Strategy identifies poverty prevention, the guarantee of adequate income and universal access to essential goods and services as core priorities. Analysing the current evolution and limits of the State's protective capacity therefore allows not only for an assessment of existing policies, but also for the identification of areas where improvements are required to maximise their impact on social cohesion and poverty reduction objectives.

#### 4.2. Effectiveness of State Transfers in 2024

The analysis of the most recent indicators makes it possible to assess the extent to which State action contributed to reducing poverty and inequality in 2024, as well as to examine its evolution compared to previous years. This assessment is crucial for estimating the real reach of social protection policies and for guiding improvement efforts within the framework of the National Strategy 2024–2030.

First, the data show that public transfers as a whole, including pensions, reduced the poverty rate from 42.6% to 19.7%, preventing 11.1 million people from falling into monetary poverty. When old-age and survivors' pensions are excluded, cash transfers alone reduced the poverty rate by 6.3 percentage points, enabling more than 3 million people to exit poverty. In terms of severe poverty, State intervention prevented 5.4% of the population—around 2.6 million people—from entering situations of extreme deprivation.

Chart 8: Poverty with and without government transfers



Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

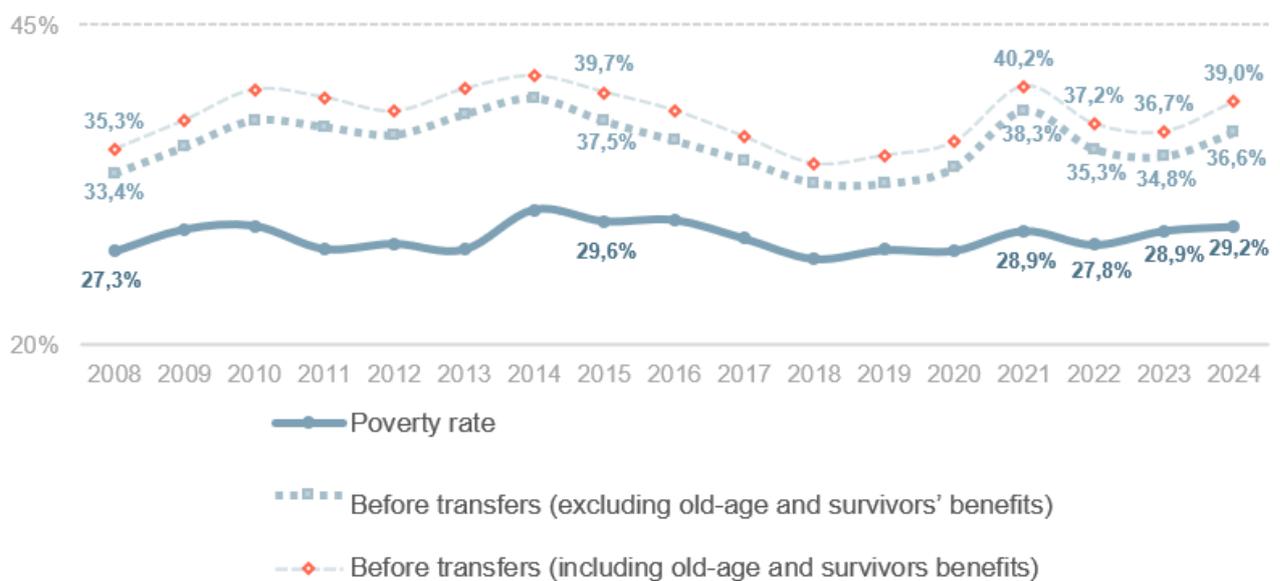
In relation to inequality, public transfers also had a significant mitigating effect. In 2024, total transfers reduced the Gini coefficient by 14.1 points, while non-contributory transfers and other benefits (excluding pensions) accounted for a reduction of 3.4 points. These results confirm a **slight improvement compared to the previous year**, although still below the levels reached during the period 2020–2022, which was characterised by extraordinary social protection measures linked to the pandemic.

Despite these advances, the protective effectiveness of the Spanish system remains limited in comparison with other EU Member States. Spain starts from a pre-transfer poverty rate of 25.9%, similar to countries such as France (25.9%), Ireland (26.1%) or Italy (25.1%). However, after State intervention, Spain's poverty rate only falls to 19.7%, representing a reduction of 6.2 percentage points (-23.9%). This effect is significantly lower than that observed in Ireland, where transfers reduce poverty by 13.8 points (-52.9%), or in France, with a reduction of 10.1 points (-38.8%). The EU average reduction stands at 8.5 percentage points.

This comparatively weaker redistributive impact points to structural shortcomings in Spain's non-contributory benefits system, both in terms of coverage and adequacy, and underscores the need to **strengthen its capacity to protect the most vulnerable groups**. While other countries succeed in halving poverty through public intervention, the reduction achieved in Spain is more limited, placing it below the EU average in terms of protective effectiveness.

A similar pattern is observed with respect to **child poverty**. In 2024, the child poverty rate in Spain stood at 29.2%, well above the national average. Analysis of child poverty with and without transfers shows that, in the absence of any cash benefits, the rate would have reached 39.0%, and that if only contributory pensions were maintained, it would stand at 36.6%. State intervention through non-pension transfers reduced child poverty by 7.4 percentage points, preventing more than 590,000 children and adolescents from living in poverty. While this impact is greater than in 2023 (5.9 points), it remains modest by European standards.

Chart 9: Child poverty with and without government transfers



Source: 15th Report on the State of Poverty - 2025, EAPN-ES

Indeed, in relative terms, Spain is the country that reduces child poverty the least in the EU: only 20.2%, compared to an EU average of 41.9%. This low redistributive effectiveness highlights structural weaknesses in the design of child-related benefits and reinforces the need to strengthen both their coverage and adequacy. While general social policies have an indirect positive effect on households with children, their capacity to reverse child poverty remains clearly insufficient. Strengthening transfers targeted at families with dependent children must therefore be a priority if a more equitable and effective protection model is to be achieved.

### 4.3. Balance of Protective Capacity and Challenges for the National Strategy

Overall, the available data indicate a partial improvement in the State's protective capacity in 2024, although this improvement remains insufficient to reverse the structural inequalities that persistently affect the most vulnerable households. Public action succeeded in containing poverty in a complex environment, modestly reinforcing its redistributive role. Specifically, non-pension transfers reduced poverty by 6.3 percentage points, an improvement compared to 2023 (+0.3 p.p.) and a relief for more than 3 million people. This containment was also reflected in reduced inequality: the Gini coefficient reached its lowest level of the period (31.2), with a 14.1-point reduction attributable to total transfers, while the S80/S20 ratio declined to 5.4, also its lowest recorded level.

However, this relative improvement does not conceal the structural limitations of the Spanish social protection model. Despite starting from pre-transfer poverty levels similar to those of Ireland or France, the redistributive impact of public intervention remains substantially weaker. This gap reflects deficits in coverage, adequacy and targeting of non-contributory benefits.

The persistence of severe poverty at 8.4% and the increase in the poverty gap to 27.9% of the poverty threshold reinforce this diagnosis, showing that improvements do not reach households in the most extreme situations. This is compounded by the system's limited capacity to reduce child poverty, which stood at 29.2% in 2024. Although transfers prevented more than 590,000 children from falling into poverty (a reduction of 7.4 percentage points), Spain's relative effectiveness remains the lowest in the EU, compared to an EU average of 41.9%.

These findings underscore the need to move towards a **more robust social protection architecture**, combining adequate income support with accessible, high-quality public services. In this regard, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty 2024–2030 constitutes a key instrument for driving structural change. Its effective implementation must focus on closing the identified gaps, strengthening social investment based on equity criteria, and prioritising actions aimed at groups facing the greatest levels of vulnerability. Only through such an approach will it be possible to consolidate a welfare model that is more effective, equitable and aligned with international commitments on social inclusion and sustainable development.

**THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE  
PREVENTION AND FIGHT AGAINST  
POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION  
2024-2030**



## 5. THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE PREVENTION AND FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION 2024–2030

Having examined the outcomes achieved in terms of poverty and inequality reduction during 2024, it is now appropriate to focus on the strategic framework that will guide inclusion policies in the coming years. In this regard, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 constitutes the State's principal planning instrument for addressing, in an integrated and sustained manner, the multiple dimensions of poverty and social exclusion in Spain.

The purpose of this section is to provide a structured examination of the content of the Strategy, with particular attention to its priority axes of intervention, its conceptual approach, and the mechanisms envisaged for monitoring and governance. First, the scope and priorities of the Strategy are analysed, including its strategic objectives, the operational definition of poverty and social exclusion, the main public policy areas addressed, and its territorial and intersectional approach. The section then reviews the indicator system designed to assess progress, together with its limitations and areas for improvement. Subsequently, the governance and participation mechanisms established to ensure coordinated and effective implementation are examined. Finally, the temporal horizon of the Strategy is considered, along with the elements intended to guarantee its sustainability beyond the current political cycle. This analysis makes it possible to assess the degree of ambition and coherence of the Strategy in relation to the challenges identified in the preceding diagnostic section and to the international commitments assumed by the State in the field of social rights and inclusive development

### 5.1. Context of Development

The current National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 was approved on 23 December 2024 and represents the main State-level framework for addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty in Spain in an integrated manner. This new Strategy replaces the first National Strategy (2019–2023), which itself built upon the successive National Action Plans for Social Inclusion implemented since 2001. Its adoption marks a new cycle of medium-term strategic planning, aligned with the State's international commitments within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The formulation and implementation of the previous strategy were shaped by the exceptional context created by the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered both the sequencing and the original orientation of the planned measures. The rollout of operational plans with active participation and stable governance mechanisms was constrained, and a large part of the strategy ultimately served as a framework for emergency policies aimed at mitigating the social and economic effects of the health crisis. Despite these constraints, numerous actions envisaged in the original framework were implemented.

The new strategy is based on an explicit assessment of the results achieved between 2019 and 2023. It includes an evaluation of the measures implemented, as well as a legislative and programmatic analysis structured around the four overarching objectives of the previous phase. In addition, it incorporates an updated diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion in Spain, drawing on trends in the main indicators over the most recent cycle. This diagnosis serves a dual purpose: it makes it possible to assess the degree of implementation of the previous strategy and provides an empirical basis for identifying the challenges and priorities that will guide planning through to 2030.

### 5.1.1. Methodological approach to the development of the Strategy

The development of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 was carried out through a **structured process of technical work, administrative coordination, and external consultations**, led by the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and the 2030 Agenda. The methodological approach adopted responds to the need to produce a document that integrates contributions from different institutional levels and involved social actors, taking into account the decentralized nature of social policies and the distribution of competences among public administrations.

The process began with the **preparation of an updated diagnosis** of the situation of poverty and social exclusion in Spain, based on available statistical information, previous studies, and sectoral analyses. This diagnosis made it possible to identify trends, territorial inequalities, and particularly affected groups, serving as a reference point for defining initial priorities. On this basis, a **preliminary structure of the Strategy** was developed, organized around thematic axes and operational objectives, which functioned as a framework document for subsequent consultations.

This initial outline was presented in **technical review meetings** with representatives of ministries, autonomous communities, local authorities, and Third Sector organizations. These meetings made it possible to gather observations on the relevance of the proposed axes, their coherence with existing policies, and their alignment with the competences of each administrative level. Subsequently, the Ministry circulated **structured consultation templates** to the participating actors, requesting detailed comments, identification of priorities, and proposals for improvement. The responses received were analyzed and systematized in order to produce a **provisional version of the document**, integrating the contributions deemed most relevant or feasible.

With the consolidated draft, a new review phase was carried out through **formal bodies for participation and inter-administrative cooperation**, allowing the proposal to be tested against existing coordination structures. In parallel, a **complementary consultation was conducted with social partners and experts**, aimed at incorporating additional technical perspectives from areas such as social services, employment, childhood, disability, youth, and community intervention. This phase made it possible to refine operational aspects and strengthen the coherence of the Strategy with other sectoral policies.

Finally, drawing on the full set of inputs received throughout the process, the Ministry prepared the **final proposal for the Strategy**, which was submitted to the Government for approval. Overall, this methodological approach combines technical analysis, inter-administrative review, and the participation of social actors, structuring a sequence of diagnosis, design, consultation, and revision aimed at integrating diverse perspectives into the definition of the strategic framework.

### 5.1.2. Strategic reference framework and alignment with public policies

The National Strategy for the Prevention and Combating of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 is embedded within a broad network of public policies with which it maintains direct links at the national, European, and international levels. Its content has been structured with a view to ensuring coherence with other strategic and regulatory instruments, as well as integrating cross-cutting approaches such as an intersectional perspective and targeted attention to particularly vulnerable groups.

#### Alignment with national frameworks and plans

The Strategy does not operate in isolation but is connected to other key initiatives at the state level with which it shares objectives and priorities. These include:

- Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan
- State Housing Plan
- National Strategy against Energy Poverty
- Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma People
- National Strategy against Homelessness
- Community-Based Care Strategy (Deinstitutionalization)

These strategies provide the sectoral scaffolding with which the Strategy is coordinated, promoting coherence, complementarity of actions, and efficiency in the use of public resources.

#### Intersectional approach and attention to vulnerable communities

A specific perspective is incorporated on the structural factors that exacerbate inequality and social exclusion, addressing the particular situations of certain population groups. This approach is reflected in the links with strategies and plans focused on specific groups, such as:

Linked Strategy	Population groups
<b>Action Plan for the European Child Guarantee (2022–2030)</b>	Vulnerable children
<b>3rd Strategic Plan for Equality between Women and Men (2022–2025)</b>	Women
<b>National Disability Strategy (2022–2030)</b>	People with disabilities
<b>Youth Strategy 2030</b>	Young people at risk of exclusion
<b>National Health System Mental Health Strategy (2022–2026)</b>	Mental health and addictions
<b>Strategy for Children and Adolescents (2023-2030)</b>	Child protection and development
<b>Strategy against Racism and Xenophobia</b>	Migrant and racialised population
<b>Spanish Urban Agenda</b>	Territorial cohesion and urban regeneration

These strategies establish a shared framework for action that reinforces institutional commitment to equity and inclusion, while allowing for the integration of specialised instruments tailored to each area of intervention.

### Alignment with European and international policy frameworks

At international level, the Strategy is aligned with the **United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, in particular with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are most directly relevant to its objectives:

- **SDG 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- **SDG 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.

At the European level, the Strategy is consistent with the principles of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, which provides the overarching policy framework for action in the fields of social inclusion, equal opportunities, access to essential services, and social protection. The strategic document explicitly refers to this framework as a guiding reference for the definition of its objectives and lines of action.

The Strategy also foresees coordination with the **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** 2021–2027, which represents the European Union’s main financial instrument for supporting structural reforms and investments in employment, education, training, and social inclusion policies. Part of the implementation of the Strategy is expected to be co-financed by the ESF+, in complementarity with other relevant plans, programmes, and funding mechanisms.

Overall, the Strategy is designed to embed national objectives within higher-level European and international policy frameworks, ensuring policy coherence, facilitating access to EU financial resources, and promoting the exchange of technical expertise and good practices among Member States and institutions.

### 5.1.3. Stakeholders involved in the development of the Strategy

As described in the previous section, the methodological approach underpinning the development of the Strategy combined a technical diagnostic phase with inter-administrative coordination and successive rounds of consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. These participatory processes involved both formal coordination bodies among public administrations and representative organisations from the Third Sector, as well as the social partners. The following graph provides a visual overview of the **governance and stakeholder map**, identifying the main bodies and actors involved throughout the process and highlighting those that contributed observations and proposals at the different stages of development.

Stakeholder category	Participating entities
<b>General State Administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interministerial Commission (40 directorates-general, 16 ministries)</li> <li>• Ministries with responsibilities in social protection</li> </ul>
<b>Autonomous Communities and Local Authorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous Communities</li> <li>• Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)</li> <li>• Standing Committee on Social Services of the Territorial Council</li> </ul>
<b>Advisory bodies of the Third Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Council of Social Action NGOs (Social Inclusion, Employment and Rural Working Group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third Sector Platform</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Specialised State Councils</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Council of the Roma People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Council for Children</li> <li>• State Youth Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>• National Disability Council</li> <li>• State Council for Older Persons</li> </ul>
<b>Social partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative trade unions and business organisations</li> </ul>
<b>Experts and specialised organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External experts consulted</li> <li>• Social sector organisations that provided technical input</li> </ul>
<b>Other actors invited to collaborate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional and local administrations within their areas of competence</li> <li>• Private sector</li> <li>• Organised civil society</li> </ul>

## 5.2. Scope and Priorities of the Strategy

### 5.2.1. Objectives and strategic challenges

The National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 sets out a set of objectives that define the overarching framework for public policy intervention in this field. While its formulation reflects a clear intention to address poverty through a comprehensive, rights-based approach, its effectiveness will depend on its operational implementation and on sustained commitment across the different levels of government. In this context, the Strategy establishes three overarching objectives that guide the full range of planned actions:

1. Action on **key policies** that have a direct impact on poverty reduction, the promotion of equity, and the improvement of well-being – including income, employment, education, health, and housing–.
2. **Palliative** intervention through effective responses that mitigate the effects of poverty and prevent its entrenchment, particularly among the most vulnerable population groups.
3. **Preventive** intervention through anticipatory policies aimed at addressing the risk factors that give rise to trajectories of social exclusion, ensuring rights and opportunities from early stages of life.

To this end, a framework is defined comprising four major strategic challenges – three of a vertical nature and one cross-cutting – which set out the intervention priorities for the 2024–2030 period. Each challenge is articulated into **12 strategic objectives**, further developed through **54 lines of action**, which serve as the core programmatic pillars structuring the overall set of interventions.

On the basis of these lines of action, the **specific measures** underpinning the practical implementation of the Strategy will be integrated. These measures will be developed by the competent ministries and bodies and will be subject to annual budgetary availability. Their implementation will be organised through operational monitoring plans, aimed at ensuring social investment that is consistent with the strategic objectives defined for the 2024–2030 period.



As set out in the National Strategy 2024–2030, these challenges are not conceived as separate or isolated areas, but as **interrelated fields of intervention**. The proposed approach is based on the premise that overcoming poverty and social exclusion requires simultaneous action to ensure basic material conditions – such as adequate income and access to decent housing – to promote equitable opportunities in key areas such as education, employment and health, and to strengthen institutional capacities to deliver comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable responses. Within this framework, the cross-cutting challenge plays a structuring role, by integrating mechanisms for governance, territorial cooperation, social participation and knowledge generation that are intended to permeate the Strategy as a whole.

On this basis, a more detailed description of each of the strategic challenges defined is set out below.

### STRATEGIC CHALLENGE 1: ENSURING RESOURCES

This first strategic challenge constitutes one of the core priorities of the National Strategy 2024–2030 and is based on the recognition that no process of inclusion is viable without first ensuring basic material conditions of existence. In this context, the challenge aims to guarantee effective access to key resources – in particular income and housing – with specific attention to groups most exposed to situations of severe poverty, homelessness or housing exclusion. It therefore represents an intervention that is essentially palliative in nature, while also incorporating significant preventive and structural elements aimed at reducing inequalities and supporting trajectories of autonomy and participation.

The challenge is structured around two complementary strategic objectives:

Objective	Purpose	Examples of lines of action
1.1. Income guarantee	Ensure that all people have sufficient income to meet their basic needs and live with dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review of the IPREM</li> <li>• Improvement of the minimum wage (SMI) and low wages</li> <li>• Reforms to the Minimum Living Income (IMV) to expand coverage and simplify management</li> </ul>
1.2. Guarantee of access to housing	Guarantee access to adequate, affordable and stable housing, especially for groups at higher risk of exclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental assistance for vulnerable households</li> <li>• Prevention of evictions with alternative housing solutions</li> <li>• Development of the Strategy against Homelessness</li> </ul>

## STRATEGIC CHALLENGE 2: SOCIAL INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

This second strategic challenge, as defined in the Strategy 2024–2030, encompasses active, prevention-oriented policies. Its objective is to improve opportunities for access to and retention in education, training and quality employment, particularly among people experiencing poverty or vulnerability. The focus is on addressing the factors that shape trajectories of social exclusion, by strengthening individual capacities and promoting participation in community life.

Within this framework, two strategic objectives are defined: ensuring equitable and inclusive education (2.1) and promoting access to lifelong learning and decent employment (2.2). Both objectives are operationalised through a set of lines of action aimed at reducing early school leaving, improving professional qualifications, facilitating labour market integration for groups facing particular barriers, and promoting fair and sustainable working conditions.

Objective	Purpose	Examples of lines of action
2.1. Equitable and inclusive education	Ensure access to quality education for all people, promoting equal opportunities and reducing inequalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of early childhood education provision (ages 1–2)</li> <li>• Strengthening the scholarship and study grant system</li> <li>• Reduction of early school <u>leaving</u></li> <li>• Improvement of basic and digital skills</li> </ul>
2.2. Training and quality employment	Promote decent and stable employment, adapted to <u>labour market</u> transformations, ensuring lifelong learning and access to employment for vulnerable groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives for inclusive hiring and promotion of social entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Improvement of career guidance and vocational training</li> </ul>

### STRATEGIC CHALLENGE 3: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND GUARANTEE OF THE WELFARE STATE

This third challenge integrates actions aimed at strengthening public social protection systems, with the objective of guaranteeing basic social rights and providing adequate support to individuals and families in situations of vulnerability. The initiatives focus on reinforcing universal access to healthcare, enhancing support for children and disadvantaged families, and advancing the quality, coverage and sustainability of social services and the long-term care system.

To this end, the Strategy sets out three main strategic objectives, each accompanied by a set of lines of action aimed at addressing current challenges and adapting to emerging social, demographic and territorial contexts.

Objective	Purpose	Examples of lines of action
3.1. Health	Ensure universal, equitable and high-quality access to healthcare services, with particular attention to groups in situations of greater vulnerability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the public healthcare system</li> <li>• Removing access barriers related to administrative or social status</li> <li>• Improving mental health care and training of healthcare staff</li> </ul>
3.2. Support for children and families	Support families in situations of vulnerability, especially those with children or adolescents in their care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring school meals and activities during holidays</li> <li>• Comprehensive care for migrant children and young people leaving care</li> <li>• Promotion of free, high-quality early intervention for all children, with stimulation and developmental support programmes</li> </ul>
3.3. Social services and long-term care	Improve and strengthen public social services and long-term care systems, ensuring their sustainability and adaptation to new challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of community-based care models</li> <li>• Adaptation of the SAAD to ageing, disability and depopulation</li> </ul>

### STRATEGIC CHALLENGE 4: DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKED WORKING

This fourth strategic challenge, of a cross-cutting nature, sets out the governance conditions required for the effective, equitable and evidence-based implementation of public policies under the Strategy 2024–2030. Its purpose is to strengthen mechanisms for institutional coordination, territorial cooperation, stakeholder participation and knowledge generation, which are essential to ensuring a comprehensive, coherent and context-sensitive approach that reflects the diversity of social realities.

In this area, the Strategy defines five strategic objectives aimed at optimising the management of the social protection system, strengthening inter-territorial and multi-level cooperation frameworks, expanding the participatory capacity of civil society, and improving the quality of information and innovation applied to inclusion policies.

Objective	Purpose	Examples of lines of action
4.1. Improving system organisation and service coordination	Strengthen the articulation and efficiency of the overall system of benefits and services linked to social inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplification and digitalisation of procedures</li> <li>• Operational coordination between social services, employment, health and education</li> </ul>
4.2. Territorial cooperation	Promote collaboration between levels of government and territories to foster integrated and tailored responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-administrative agreements</li> <li>• Better coordination and complementarity of benefit systems</li> </ul>
4.3. Strengthening cooperation with the European Union	Align the Strategy with European priorities and optimise the use of EU funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation of people with lived experience of poverty in European processes</li> <li>• Improved implementation of funds such as ESF+</li> </ul>
4.4. Incentivising collaboration and participation of all key stakeholders	Promote the active involvement of citizens, the Third Sector, academia and other social actors in public policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging the participation of experts by experience</li> <li>• Collaboration with social organisations and local networks</li> <li>• Strengthening volunteering and civil dialogue</li> </ul>
4.5. Expanding information, knowledge, social innovation and transparency	Generate evidence to improve the design, monitoring and evaluation of inclusion-oriented public policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular impact evaluations</li> <li>• Promotion of social innovation</li> <li>• Improvement of information systems</li> </ul>

The strategic challenges and objectives described constitute the main lines of action defined by the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030. Their purpose is to move towards a sustained reduction of poverty and social exclusion in Spain through a comprehensive approach that combines material guarantees, investment in individual capacities, strengthening of the welfare state, and improvements in governance and coordination among stakeholders. Notably, the Strategy consolidates **participation** mechanisms – involving both people with lived experience of poverty and social organisations – which, while not new, acquire a more structural and cross-cutting role within this policy framework. The feasibility and impact of these proposals will ultimately depend on their operational development, sustained political commitment, and the effective allocation of resources. In a context in which available evidence points to persistently high levels of poverty, particularly among children and certain groups in situations of vulnerability, the effectiveness of the Strategy will depend on its ability to be translated into concrete measures, supported by sufficient resources and effectively coordinated across the different levels of public administration and the relevant stakeholders.

### 5.3. Indicator System and Monitoring Framework of the Strategy

Monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction policies require a robust and coherent indicator system capable of capturing the complexity of situations of vulnerability. In this regard, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 establishes a comprehensive measurement framework that combines quantitative and qualitative instruments to assess both trends in poverty and the effectiveness of public interventions. This section first presents the operational definition of poverty adopted by the Strategy – based on European measurement standards – and subsequently outlines the main indicators used to monitor progress, together with their limitations. The objective is to provide a structured overview of the scope and priorities of the indicator system, highlighting its capacity to capture different dimensions of inequality and its role in informing public policy.

#### 5.3.1. Definition of poverty and social exclusion adopted in the Strategy

The National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 adopts a definition of poverty aligned with European standards and based on widely established statistical indicators. As set out in Annex 3 (p. 201), the measurement of poverty and social exclusion is structured around the AROPE indicator (At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion), which integrates three core dimensions:

1. **At-risk-of-poverty rate**, calculated as the percentage of people whose income falls below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income.
2. **Severe material and social deprivation rate**, which identifies households experiencing significant shortages in goods, services and social participation.
3. **Very low work intensity in the household**, which measures the proportion of people living in households with very limited attachment to employment over the course of the year.

In addition to these three structural dimensions, the Strategy incorporates complementary indicators designed to capture the dynamic aspects of poverty:

- **At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers**, which makes it possible to assess the redistributive capacity of the social protection system and the actual impact of public benefits.
- **Anchored poverty**, following the Eurostat methodology, whereby the poverty threshold (60% of median income) is fixed in a reference year and subsequently updated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in order to observe developments in real terms.
- **Persistent poverty**, which identifies individuals who were at risk of poverty in the reference year and in at least two of the previous three years, thereby highlighting situations of structural rather than merely temporary vulnerability.

Taken together, this system of indicators allows poverty and social exclusion to be measured from multiple perspectives – both cross-sectional and longitudinal – and provides a common framework for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. Its use facilitates the identification of changes in living conditions and in the distribution of resources, as well as comparisons over time and across territorial contexts.

### 5.3.2. Indicators used to evaluate the Strategy

The National Strategy establishes a monitoring system that combines quantitative and qualitative indicators with the aim of regularly assessing trends in poverty, social exclusion and inequalities, as well as the actual reach and impact of the policies implemented. This system is primarily based on official statistical sources and is complemented by consultation processes involving key stakeholders.

#### 1. Quantitative Indicators

The quantitative core of the system is organised around five main areas reflecting the central dimensions of social exclusion: poverty and inequality, education, employment, housing and health. Rather than listing all the indicators included, their underlying logic can be summarised as follows:

- **Poverty and inequality:** The Strategy uses the main indicators harmonised at European level – AROPE, at-risk-of-poverty rate, severe material and social deprivation, and very low work intensity – together with inequality measures such as the Gini coefficient and the S80/S20 income quintile share ratio. It also includes indicators that make it possible to analyse the redistributive capacity of the State (poverty before and after social transfers), the real evolution of the poverty threshold (anchored poverty), and prolonged situations of vulnerability (persistent poverty).
- **Education and training:** Educational trajectories and inequalities are analysed through indicators measuring participation in lifelong learning, the qualification level of the adult population, early school leaving, and digital skills. These indicators make it possible to observe how educational inequality is linked to subsequent risks of poverty.
- **Employment:** The labour market is examined from multiple perspectives, including the employment rate, temporary employment, involuntary part-time work, long-term unemployment, and the prevalence of households without labour income. The gender employment gap is also included, given its structural impact on economic autonomy.
- **Housing:** This area captures both housing affordability and housing conditions. It includes measures such as housing cost overburden, energy poverty, evictions and the number of people experiencing homelessness. This is complemented by information on social housing and housing prices, which helps to explain structural market pressures.
- **Health, long-term care and disability:** To assess inequalities related to well-being and autonomy, indicators are used on self-perceived health status, the prevalence of mental health problems, long-term care needs, access to benefits and services, the situation of persons with disabilities, and other indicators related to morbidity and mortality.

Across all areas, the Strategy provides for systematic disaggregation by sex, age, nationality or country of birth, educational attainment, labour market status, household composition, degree of urbanisation, tenure status and disability. This level of disaggregation is essential to identify the groups facing the greatest disadvantages and to monitor the evolution of social gaps over time.

## 2. Qualitative Indicators

The qualitative component is designed to document progress and challenges that cannot be captured through statistical data alone. The Strategy consists of interviews, seminars and focus groups with institutional stakeholders and social organisations, with the aim of gathering insights on implementation, identifying barriers and capturing practical lessons learned. These inputs will be incorporated in particular into the final evaluation, alongside public expenditure analysis and the review of statistical trends.

### Recommendations and challenges related to the indicator system

Overall, the indicator framework established by the Strategy provides a broad basis for monitoring poverty and social exclusion across their various dimensions. However, its practical application requires close attention to a number of challenges that affect its analytical capacity. Among the most relevant are the methodological limitations of certain key indicators – such as AROPE and its components – which make it difficult to measure accurately the intensity and persistence of poverty. In addition, challenges remain in adequately capturing intersectional inequalities and specific situations affecting certain population groups, which calls for cautious interpretation of the data and for strengthening the availability of individual-level information.

These challenges are compounded by the need to improve the integration and updating of information systems, moving towards interoperable models that allow for closer coordination between the social, health and labour policy domains. More consistent and timely data are essential to rigorously assess the progress of the Strategy and to evaluate the extent to which its objectives are being achieved. Strengthening these elements would contribute to more precise monitoring and to more evidence-based decision-making.

## 5.4. Time Horizon and Sustainability

### 5.4.1. Duration, phases and implementation timetable

The National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030 establishes a seven-year time horizon, designed to provide stability and enable medium-term planning in a policy area characterised by structural dynamics and gradual social change. Its implementation is organised through annual Operational Implementation and Monitoring Plans, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs and the 2030 Agenda. These plans specify, for each year, the concrete measures to be implemented, the responsible bodies, and the corresponding budgetary allocations.

The timetable includes several milestones that structure the monitoring and evaluation process:

- **Annual evaluation**, based on the Operational Plans, to assess progress and adjust implementation.

- **Mid-term evaluation in 2028**, aimed at assessing the impact of the measures implemented during the 2024–2027 period and introducing any necessary reorientation.
- **Final evaluation** in the first quarter of 2031, following the conclusion of the Strategy's implementation period.
- **Launch of planning for the subsequent strategic cycle** during the second half of 2030.

This framework combines temporal stability with periodic review mechanisms that allow for gradual adjustments. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the timetable depends on the availability of up-to-date information, coordination with other public policy areas, and the actual capacity for institutional adaptation – factors that may vary depending on territorial and budgetary contexts.

#### 5.4.2. Safeguards for continuity beyond the political cycle

The continuity framework envisaged for the 2024–2030 period is underpinned by a set of institutional and financial mechanisms designed to provide stability to social inclusion policies, even in scenarios of political alternation. These mechanisms seek to ensure that the objectives of the strategic period are maintained over the medium term and that implementation does not depend exclusively on the immediate agenda of successive governments.

One of the central elements is **anchoring the Strategy in international and European commitments**, which place the fight against poverty within shared, multiannual strategic frameworks. The linkage to the 2030 Agenda and to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan introduces a horizon that extends beyond electoral cycles and requires continuity in reducing inequalities, improving protection systems and strengthening social rights. This supranational framing acts both as a stabiliser of priorities and as a common reference point that limits the scope for abrupt shifts in overall policy orientation.

This is complemented by **multiannual financial programming**, based on European funds such as the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the instruments of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan. Such financing arrangements require advance planning, the fulfilment of milestones and regular evaluation, thereby supporting the continuity of certain lines of action. In parallel, compliance with the budgetary stability principles established for the 2025–2027 period provides a fiscal framework within which measures must operate, reducing uncertainty regarding short-term budgetary effort.

Another relevant factor is **the role of territorial cooperation**, which enables regional and local authorities to participate in implementation through their own plans and capacities. Given that a significant share of competences related to social services lies at these levels of government, their involvement can help sustain certain measures even if priorities shift at central level. The existence of stable coordination bodies – such as the Territorial Council – facilitates technical continuity and ongoing dialogue between levels of government.

Despite these elements, the effective continuity of the strategic framework is also subject to certain constraints. The influence of changes in political orientation does not disappear entirely, particularly in

areas requiring regulatory reform, structural reinforcement of social expenditure or the expansion of programmes that are not yet fully consolidated. Similarly, reliance on European funding introduces a defined time horizon, which will require forward planning to sustain certain actions once funding periods come to an end. Finally, the voluntary nature of territorial participation means that levels of continuity may vary according to the priorities and capacities of each regional or local authority.

Overall, the set of mechanisms envisaged represents a significant effort to provide stability to the Strategy throughout its life cycle. While it is not possible to fully guarantee how implementation will evolve in contexts of political alternation or economic change, the design does incorporate tools aimed at minimising volatility, strengthening predictability and promoting sustained planning. As with similar strategic frameworks, the key challenge lies in the collective capacity to uphold these commitments over time and to adapt them to changing circumstances without losing their core orientation.

## 6. ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE QUANTITATIVE DIAGNOSIS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The quantitative diagnosis for 2024 places Spain in an intermediate position: moderate improvements are observed in the AROPE rate and its components, yet levels of poverty, intensity and inequality remain clearly above the desirable standards set out under the 2030 Agenda. The National Strategy 2024–2030 is explicitly built on this scenario and, in general terms, succeeds in reflecting in its strategic challenges and lines of action the main problem areas highlighted by the data. Nevertheless, a comparative reading suggests a nuanced outcome: there is a **reasonable degree of substantive coherence** between diagnosis and priorities, but also a significant margin of uncertainty regarding the **scale, depth and feasibility** of the responses envisaged.

In the area of **income guarantees**, alignment is clear. Available data show that public transfers reduce poverty from 42.6% to 19.7%, but also that their redistributive effect is relatively modest when compared with other Member States. The Strategy acknowledges this tension and incorporates as central pillars the improvement of the IPREM (Public Income Indicator for Multiple Effects), the strengthening of the minimum wage, the revision of minimum and non-contributory pensions, and, above all, the reform of the Minimum Income Scheme (Ingreso Mínimo Vital) and its coordination with regional minimum income schemes. In other words, the instruments identified by comparative literature and by the data themselves as key levers are present. However, the strategic document deliberately remains open on issues such as the adequacy of benefits, the pace of coverage expansion and the degree of administrative automation, placing much of the real ambition in subsequent phases of budgetary negotiation and regulatory development. In this respect, conceptual alignment is strong, but the capacity to converge towards higher European redistributive standards remains uncertain.

A similar situation arises in the field of **housing**, arguably the most acute vulnerability vector in the diagnosis: housing cost overburden exceeding 35% of income among poor households, over 50% among those renting at market prices, persistent energy poverty and the presence of homelessness. The Strategy responds by positioning guaranteed access to adequate housing as a specific objective under Challenge 1, with lines of action covering rent subsidies, eviction prevention, “Housing First” programmes, reinforcement of the social energy tariff and neighbourhood regeneration. From a public policy perspective, this represents a qualitative shift compared to more traditional approaches that relegated housing to a secondary role. However, the text does not yet specify key parameters such as the target size of the public rental housing stock, the degree of conditionality attached to support measures, or the mechanisms to address discrimination in the housing market. Once again, the direction appears appropriate, but the gap between the severity of the problem and the intensity of the response will depend on subsequent decisions that the Strategy only outlines.

In the areas of **employment, education and public services**, the interaction between data and strategy also yields a mixed picture. The diagnosis shows that job creation alone does not guarantee a proportional reduction in poverty, due to the prevalence of temporary employment, involuntary part-time work and low wages. Challenge 2 (Social investment in people) and part of Challenge 3 (Social protection and the welfare state) are explicitly oriented towards these issues: strengthening early childhood education and scholarships, reducing early school leaving, expanding vocational education and training, targeted active labour market policies, incentives for inclusive hiring, improvements in job quality and work-life balance measures. From a public policy standpoint, the design is consistent with the available evidence, combining preventive instruments (education and training) with corrective tools (employment policies and targeted support for specific groups). However, the Strategy maintains a relatively general formulation in areas such as reducing involuntary part-time work or effectively improving working conditions, where policy levers are constrained by broader economic and labour market policies that extend beyond the strict remit of social inclusion.

The analysis by **priority groups** reinforces this sense of formal coherence with nuances. The groups identified by the diagnosis as facing the highest levels of risk – children and young people, women, persons with disabilities, single-parent households and third-country nationals – are explicitly addressed both in the body of the Strategy and in the associated sectoral strategies (Child Guarantee, Gender Equality Plan, Disability Strategy, etc.). Several lines of action are specifically targeted at vulnerable children, care leavers, single-parent families and persons with disabilities, indicating a degree of operational translation of the intersectional approach. However, the dimension most clearly linked to discrimination – including aporophobia, structural racism or bias in access to housing and employment – continues to be addressed primarily as a cross-cutting principle, with less weight as a distinct policy field endowed with its own objectives, differentiated indicators and specific accountability mechanisms.

Finally, reflection on the **role of the State and governance** links directly to Challenge 4, which includes commitments on inter-administrative coordination, territorial cooperation, participation of the Third Sector and the development of information and evaluation systems. This emphasis on a more

integrated governance architecture is consistent with the problems revealed by the day-to-day practice of social policies: fragmentation, overlaps, access barriers and the absence of real-time information. It also introduces one of the most positively valued elements of the Strategy: the explicit recognition of **the role of social organisations and people with lived experience of poverty** in processes of design, monitoring and evaluation. The systematic incorporation of this **participation** – often marginal or sporadic in other strategic frameworks – represents a significant normative advance and an opportunity to develop policies that are more responsive to lived realities.

Overall, the National Strategy 2024–2030 demonstrates a notable degree of coherence with the empirical diagnosis: the major challenges identified in the data – income inadequacy, housing pressure, labour market precariousness, intersectional inequality and limitations of the welfare state – find a recognisable reflection in the strategic challenges and in a substantial share of the lines of action. At the same time, the correspondence between the scale of the problems and the intensity of the responses will need to be verified in practice, as implementation progresses and regulatory and budgetary commitments are specified. No clear disconnect between diagnosis and strategy is evident, but there remains a wide margin within which the real ambition of public policies will be decisive in defining their transformative potential.

However, a rigorous assessment of the coherence and relevance of the measures **cannot rely exclusively on what is captured by statistical indicators**. While indicators reflect general trends and enable aggregate monitoring, they do not always reveal how these dynamics are experienced at the individual level, nor the everyday barriers that prevent people from accessing rights, navigating support systems or sustaining stable life trajectories. For this reason, assessing whether the Strategy responds adequately to the country's needs requires the **incorporation of the perspective of those living in poverty themselves**. Their experience makes it possible to identify gaps that statistics do not capture, to highlight which measures work or fail in practice, and to qualify the interpretation of indicators with qualitative insights on access, treatment, waiting times, stigma and real-life impact. The following section explores this dimension in depth, presenting the perceptions, priorities and demands expressed by people experiencing poverty, which constitute an essential source for refining the scope of the proposed responses and ensuring that the Strategy effectively advances towards the objective of **leaving no one behind**.



# *PARTICIPATION PEOPLE IN POVERTY*

## 7. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPATION

### 7.1. Participation spaces within EAPN-ES

Participation constitutes one of the central pillars of EAPN-ES's work and is recognised as a dedicated strategic axis within the organisation. **Under Axis 3: Participation and Social Base**, EAPN-ES promotes the conscious, active and sustained involvement of people experiencing or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the spaces where policies affecting their daily lives are shaped. This approach is grounded in the premise that **combating poverty requires not only effective policies, but also the genuine incorporation of the voices of those who live these situations.**

Since its inception, EAPN-ES has developed a stable structure of participatory spaces – at national, regional and local levels – enabling people with lived experience of poverty to act as their own spokespersons, put forward proposals and contribute to social transformation from a recognised and legitimised position. The organisation understands participation as the creation of new social spaces, active presence in the public sphere, and direct involvement in advocacy, evaluation and policy design processes.

Over the years, EAPN-ES has consolidated a range of mechanisms that make this participation possible, **including national meetings, working groups, training spaces, needs laboratories, thematic workshops and structured consultation processes.** All of these provide differentiated opportunities for individuals to exercise their right to participate and to articulate collective demands in dialogue with public administrations, Third Sector organisations and other key stakeholders.

Within the framework of the Poverty Watch, these spaces acquire particular strategic value, as they constitute a fundamental basis for gathering diagnoses, experiences and priorities expressed directly by the people concerned, ensuring that analysis does not remain limited to statistical description but incorporates the lived dimension of poverty. The following section presents the main participatory spaces promoted by EAPN-ES that are linked to the issues addressed in this report.

#### 1. National Participation Meeting

The **National Participation Meeting** is one of EAPN-ES's most well-established annual participatory spaces and brings together around one hundred people with lived experience of poverty from all autonomous communities. Its purpose is to create a collective working environment in which participants can reflect, debate and put forward proposals for improving public policies, drawing on their direct knowledge of social exclusion.

The 18th edition, held in 2025, focused on the **social services system**, with particular attention to how to ensure more accessible, humane and person-centred provision. Through a series of structured sessions, group dynamics and dialogue spaces, the meeting generated a set of proposals that reflect the priorities identified by the participants themselves.

## 2. National Youth Activism Meeting

The **National Youth Activism Meeting** is another annual participatory space within EAPN-ES, specifically designed for young people aged 18 to 35 who are experiencing situations of vulnerability. This meeting combines internal working sessions with spaces for dialogue with policymakers, technical staff and social organisations.

The most recent edition focused on the right to adequate housing, one of the issues that most acutely affects young people. Over the course of three days, participants analysed barriers to access to housing, discussed the limitations of current policies and formulated proposals aimed at improving opportunities for youth emancipation. The meeting is conceived as a safe space in which young people facing greater difficulties can engage in direct advocacy and bring their priorities to the public agenda.

## 3. Participatory Workshop on Energy Poverty (Toledo, 2025)

In the context of the review of the National Strategy against Energy Poverty, EAPN-ES organised a **participatory workshop** in June 2025 in Toledo with people with lived experience of poverty from social organisations. The workshop brought together a group of participants with the aim of conducting an **in-depth analysis of existing measures**, understanding their practical implementation and identifying everyday barriers related to access to energy.

The session included individual and group dynamics, mapping of personal experiences and a participatory assessment of different policies (such as the social electricity tariff, housing rehabilitation, information and guidance measures, and the minimum vital energy supply). Its main purpose was to generate a situated diagnosis based on direct experience, enabling the identification of which measures work, which present difficulties, and what adjustments would be necessary to ensure more effective protection against energy poverty.

## 4. Focus Group on the National Strategy against Poverty

Finally, with the aim of informing the present Poverty Watch, EAPN-ES convened a **specific focus group** on the National Strategy 2024–2030. This space brought together people with lived experience of poverty who, through a guided dialogue, analysed the strategic lines of the Strategy, assessed their relevance, and discussed the extent to which they respond to the needs encountered in their daily lives.

## 8. MAIN NEEDS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY

The contributions gathered across the various participatory spaces promoted by EAPN-ES – the 18th National Participation Meeting, the National Youth Activism Meeting on the Right to Adequate Housing, the participatory workshop on energy poverty held in Toledo, and the specific focus group on the National Strategy – make it possible to outline a solid and nuanced picture of the main needs and challenges currently faced by people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

Although these voices are diverse in terms of age, background and life trajectories, their experiences converge around a widely shared diagnosis: poverty cannot be reduced to insufficient income alone, but is sustained by a web of structural barriers that constrain access to adequate housing, essential utilities, appropriate social support, clear and understandable information, and accessible administrative procedures. Likewise, these voices underline that the full exercise of rights depends not only on the economic resources available, but also on the way public policies are managed, coordinated and implemented at territorial level.

In this regard, the testimonies collected do not merely describe everyday problems; they also constitute a key input for assessing the relevance, ambition and transformative capacity of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2024–2030. The needs identified by people experiencing poverty themselves make it possible to assess whether the challenges, lines of action and commitments set out in the Strategy adequately reflect the social realities they are intended to address, and to identify where adjustments, reinforcements or a higher degree of specificity may be required to ensure impact.

The following section summarises these challenges by thematic area, drawing together the contributions from the different participatory spaces.

### 1. Barriers to effective access to rights and benefits

Across the different participatory spaces promoted by EAPN-ES throughout the year, it was possible to identify a set of barriers which, although manifested in diverse ways, share a common root: effective access to rights continues to be conditioned by a web of obstacles that complicate everyday interaction with public administrations and social support systems. These obstacles do not appear as isolated incidents, but rather as interdependent elements that shape the experience of those seeking to exercise rights that should, in principle, be universal. A comparative analysis of the meetings and workshops shows how these barriers intersect and give rise to a context in which vulnerability is reinforced not only by material circumstances, but also by the way institutional systems respond – or fail to respond – to these needs.

In numerous testimonies gathered during participation meetings with people experiencing poverty, particular emphasis is placed on the growing importance of ensuring **digital access** as an essential condition for interacting with public administrations. Digitalisation has advanced more rapidly than the conditions required for all individuals to benefit from it, and in many cases technology has become a filter that separates those who are able to manage administrative procedures autonomously from those who are forced to rely on third parties.

**“They ask you to send documentation by email – and what about older people?” (June, 2025)**

When digital platforms fully replace in-person services, the digital divide ceases to be merely a technological issue and becomes a factor that redefines access to rights themselves. For part of the population, the inability to obtain or use digital tools effectively translates into the inaccessibility of benefits, highlighting the need for compensatory policies and hybrid service delivery models capable of accommodating diverse user profiles.

This barrier is compounded by a perception widely shared across the different participatory spaces: **administrative procedures are characterised by their complexity, slow processing times and the proliferation of requirements** which, rather than fostering trust, are often experienced as obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

**“You call by phone, they put you on hold with music, you wait a long time and then you’re answered by a machine.” (June, 2025)**

**“You apply for benefits and they take as long as they want – and longer.” (October, 2025)**

A clear perception emerges that the current design of administrative procedures does not reflect the urgency or the fragility of the situations in which many people live. Excessive documentation requirements, repeated procedures and a lack of clarity regarding decision timelines generate a strain that is not only emotional but also material, as support arrives late, does not arrive at all, or arrives under conditions that no longer correspond to the initial need. Bureaucracy does not merely slow down processes; it introduces inequalities that particularly affect those who lack support networks capable of offsetting these shortcomings. Participants report that even when a right is formally recognised, its effective exercise remains conditioned by **prolonged delays** that are difficult to justify.

**“If we have support such as the Minimum Income Scheme, it shouldn’t take 23 months to receive it. I have a colleague who has been waiting 23 months for an already approved Minimum Vital Income – why?” (October, 2025)**

This concern is not raised as an isolated criticism, but rather as a collective reflection on the structural shortcomings that slow down administrative processes. In the words of another participant:

**“What is going on there? What is happening within the administration? There has to be a reason. Something is failing in the administration, something is failing along the chain for a person with an approved Minimum Income Scheme to wait 23 months to receive it. And that is what needs to be improved.” (October, 2025)**

These types of testimonies emphasise that the guarantee of rights does not depend solely on expanding benefits or easing eligibility criteria, but also on assuming institutional responsibility, identifying the points at which procedures become blocked, and addressing the shortcomings that prevent support from reaching people in a timely and effective manner.

**“The administration also makes mistakes, and it needs to be held accountable for them.” (October 2025)**

A third dimension, closely linked to the previous ones, relates to the system’s capacity to provide support that is adequate and responsive to rapidly changing realities. Participants point out that current coverage is insufficient to address certain profiles and that, in many cases, eligibility criteria do not adequately reflect the diversity of situations of vulnerability.

**“The social tariff is useless.” (June 2025)**

The lack of adaptability of support measures, combined with rigid eligibility criteria or classification systems that are insufficiently sensitive to the diversity of situations, contributes to what some participants describe as “intermittent” protection – fragile and unpredictable. This perception underscores the importance of reviewing regulatory frameworks from a more flexible perspective, one that allows for more proportionate responses to the real needs of those who depend on these benefits.

This perception is not limited to complex or long-term schemes; it also affects emergency and **basic assistance measures**, whose very purpose should be to provide a rapid and proportionate response to urgent situations. In several participatory spaces, participants warn that such support does not always arrive in time – or does not arrive at all – leaving out people who are already in extremely precarious circumstances.

**“Basic emergency assistance is being lost. There are many people living on the street who will remain on the street because they have no access to basic support – they have no way to stay afloat.” (October 2025)**

In parallel, several participants in the discussion groups underline the importance of information as a central element of access to rights. Having clear, accessible and up-to-date information becomes

a decisive condition for knowing which benefits exist, how to apply for them and within what timeframes they can be processed. However, the accounts collected show that such information does not always reach people in an appropriate manner, and that its absence forces many individuals to rely on informal networks or community services whose availability is uneven. In the field of housing, the lack of specialised advice exacerbates insecurity among young people, who enter a highly competitive market without sufficient guidance on requirements, contracts or guarantees. The lack of information therefore acts as a cross-cutting barrier that conditions all other processes.

Another significant barrier emerges when participants recount experiences of discrimination, both in the housing market and in access to public services. For those who took part in the Youth Activism Meeting, discrimination on the grounds of age and nationality is identified as a persistent factor limiting real opportunities to rent housing. Meanwhile, experiences shared during the 18th National Participation Meeting and the energy poverty workshop indicate that the absence of personalised support within social services can be perceived as a form of institutional discrimination. When service provision becomes standardised and fails to recognise the uniqueness of individual life trajectories, dynamics of invisibility are reinforced, particularly affecting those who are already in vulnerable situations.

Finally, several voices introduce a dimension that cuts across the entire analysis: **territorial inequalities**. The experiences of participants clearly show that access to benefits depends to a large extent on place of residence. Not all administrations have the same resources, the same levels of coordination or the same availability of in-person services. As a result, the same right may be accessible in one locality and virtually unattainable in another, introducing a form of structural inequality that deepens vulnerability and makes territory a critical determinant of access to rights.

**“Benefits should be provided at national level – not available in my town but not in yours.” (June, 2025)**

**“For example, there are grants to replace windows in homes in Madrid, but not in Castilla-La Mancha. Why? Why doesn’t Castilla-La Mancha have the right to allow its citizens to replace their windows? Why can some people improve their quality of life and others cannot?” (October, 2025)**

Taken together, the evidence gathered shows that barriers to access to rights cannot be understood as isolated elements. Each of them – the digital divide, bureaucracy, the limited adaptability of support measures, lack of information, discrimination and territorial inequalities – reinforces the others, creating a web that profoundly shapes the relationship between individuals and institutions. Comparative analysis of the participatory spaces highlights that these barriers not only limit the effectiveness of the social protection system, but also erode the trust of those who seek to access it. Understanding this interdependence is a fundamental step towards advancing models of rights protection that are more accessible, equitable and responsive to the diversity of existing realities.

## Barriers to effective access to rights and benefits

Category	Description
<b>Administrative bureaucracy and delays</b>	Excessive paperwork, cumulative requirements, unclear procedures, and benefits that arrive late or are not adapted to urgent needs.
<b>Insufficient coverage and adaptability of benefits</b>	Benefits that do not respond to the diversity of needs and rigid criteria that exclude real situations of vulnerability.
<b>Lack of information and guidance</b>	Lack of awareness of available benefits, access channels, requirements or specific measures (especially in housing and energy poverty).
<b>Institutional discrimination and discrimination in the housing market</b>	Non-personalised treatment in social services; discrimination based on age or nationality in access to housing; practices that reinforce exclusion.
<b>Territorial inequalities</b>	Significant differences between territories in processing times, availability of services and access to in-person support.

## 2. Impoverishment and rising cost of living

The contributions gathered across the different participatory spaces reveal a widely shared perception: the **rising cost of living** is having a direct and sustained impact on households' ability to meet basic needs. This phenomenon is described not as a temporary episode, but as a cumulative process that shapes everyday life, reduces financial margins and undermines any realistic prospect of stability.

Concerns about the **lack of quality employment, labour precariousness and insufficient wages** emerge repeatedly in participants' accounts. Many people point out that even when they are in employment, it is difficult to reach an income level that allows essential expenses to be covered. This situation is particularly evident in the **housing** sector, where **high rental prices** are perceived as clearly incompatible with current wage levels.

Difficulties in meeting these costs not only limit personal autonomy, but also delay processes of emancipation, increase dependence on family support and generate a persistent sense of economic insecurity.

The problem is not confined to housing. Participants also describe growing pressure resulting from rising prices in everyday goods and services, notably **energy, basic utilities, food and water**.

**“My husband gets sick in winter because we can’t afford to heat the house properly.” (June, 2025)**

The simultaneous increase in these costs, combined with **low wages** or the absence of stable income, creates daily pressure that forces households to reorganise priorities and cut back on essential expenses.

**“If the washing machine breaks down, I can’t replace it. I’m afraid of it breaking.” (June, 2025)**

In some cases, participants explicitly point to a **gap between household costs and wage levels**, placing many households in situations of vulnerability that persist over time.

**“We need jobs and higher wages – we can’t make it to the end of the month” (June, 2025)**

**“...just to pay for housing, €550; and then electricity, water... So what’s left for food if my salary doesn’t even reach €1,000?” (October, 2025)**

This reality shapes a scenario in which impoverishment is perceived as a progressive process. It is not only about having fewer resources, but about the growing difficulty of sustaining basic material conditions as the prices of essential goods continue to rise.

**“If I pay my bills, I can’t eat.” (June 2025)**

The combination of **unstable employment, high fixed costs and rising prices** creates an environment in which small financial margins disappear and everyday decisions – such as turning on the heating or paying the rent – become sources of constant concern.

Taken together, the testimonies show that these dynamics act as an **amplifier of inequalities**. As prices rise, those who already start from fragile positions see their capacity to cope further reduced, while the gap with those who enjoy greater economic stability widens. Participants describe this situation as a difficult circle to break: incomes do not increase, costs do, and institutional protection does not always succeed in offsetting these differences.

In this context, the **rising cost of living** emerges as a central factor in understanding current economic vulnerability. Beyond figures or indicators, the experiences shared make clear that access to essential goods has become more complex and that accumulated economic pressure shapes daily life, expectations and the real possibilities of leading a dignified life. From the perspective of participants, the guarantee of rights cannot be separated from households' effective capacity to meet the basic costs on which their well-being depends.

Impoverishment and rising cost of living	
Category	Description
<b>Labour precarity and insufficient wages</b>	Unstable employment, low wages and difficulty achieving income levels that cover essential expenses.
<b>Difficulty accessing housing</b>	High rental prices are incompatible with wage levels, limiting autonomy and hindering emancipation.
<b>Rising energy and utility costs</b>	Increased spending on electricity, water and heating, placing immediate pressure on household budgets.
<b>Increase in the price of basic goods</b>	Rising costs of food, transport and other essential expenses that form the basis of everyday life.
<b>Gap between household income and expenditure</b>	A growing disparity between wages and the cost of living, generating persistent economic vulnerability
<b>Progressive impoverishment</b>	Reduction in available disposable income, accumulation of financial strain and widening inequalities.

### 3. Structural deficit of adequate and affordable housing

Although housing already emerges as a central concern in the analysis of the rising cost of living, the contributions gathered across the participatory spaces show that it is an area with its own specific complexity that requires dedicated attention. Beyond the impact of rental prices on household budgets, participants identify a **structural deficit of adequate and affordable housing** that affects both the availability and the quality of the homes in which they live.

One of the issues that emerges most clearly is the lack of social housing. Participants state that the existing supply is clearly insufficient to meet demand, resulting in long waiting times and leaving out households which, despite meeting the eligibility criteria, are unable to find affordable alternatives in the market. The shortage of social housing pushes many families towards the private rental market, where high prices and access requirements further limit their options.

**“All people, under the Constitution and as a human right, have the right to adequate housing.” (October 2025)**

However, the testimonies reflect that this right is perceived as difficult to exercise in practice. The economic pressure is evident in statements such as the following, which express deep concern about the relationship between insufficient incomes and constantly rising housing prices.

**“High housing costs also push us deeper into extreme vulnerability every day.” (October, 2025)**

**“Housing is very expensive, and it’s true... you just can’t make ends meet.” (October, 2025)**

This limitation is compounded by concerns regarding the **habitability** of available housing. Participants frequently mention that a significant share of affordable housing stock is in **poor condition**, with problems such as damp, structural deterioration or a lack of basic safety and comfort standards. For people living with limited resources, this situation creates a double vulnerability: paying for housing that does not meet minimum standards while lacking viable options to move to better-quality accommodation.

The analysis of contributions also points to an **uneven geographical distribution** of affordable housing. Some participants note that the few affordable options available are often located **far from urban centres**, in areas with limited public transport and reduced access to essential services, employment opportunities or community resources. This physical distance generates additional costs and barriers that are not always taken into account when assessing housing accessibility.

Finally, **energy efficiency** emerges as a major concern. Participants identify that many affordable dwellings lack adequate insulation or are equipped with inefficient heating systems, significantly increasing monthly energy costs. This combination of **substandard housing and high utility bills** deepens household vulnerability and affects both physical well-being and economic stability. Energy performance is therefore not perceived as a purely technical issue, but as a central component of dignity and material security.

Taken together, these contributions show that the housing problem cannot be reduced to market prices alone, but encompasses issues of **accessibility, quality, location and energy efficiency** that interact with one another. For participants, access to adequate housing is not merely a matter of affordability, but of having a safe, habitable and well-connected home that enables everyday life without additional burdens. The persistence of shortcomings in these areas highlights the need for policies that address the housing deficit through a comprehensive approach, strengthening both the supply of housing and the material conditions in which people live.

### Structural deficit of adequate and affordable housing

Category	Description
<b>Insufficient social housing</b>	Limited supply of social housing that fails to meet demand and leaves out households that meet eligibility requirements.
<b>Habitability problems</b>	Housing is in poor condition, with structural deficiencies or conditions that do not guarantee comfort or safety.
<b>Peripheral or disconnected location</b>	Affordable alternatives located far from cities, with reduced access to services, employment and public transport.
<b>Low energy efficiency</b>	Housing with inadequate insulation or inefficient heating systems, increasing energy expenditure and economic vulnerability.

## 9. ALIGNMENT BETWEEN IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND THE NATIONAL POVERTY STRATEGY

The comparative analysis between the needs expressed by people experiencing poverty and the strategic framework defined by the National Strategy 2024–2030 makes it possible to assess the extent to which institutional priorities respond to the real challenges identified in the participatory spaces. Although these two dimensions operate according to different logics – one rooted in lived experience and the other in public policy planning – their comparison reveals areas of convergence, points of tension and domains in which the strategic response requires greater depth or specificity. This exercise does not aim to assess the implementation of measures, but rather to examine the

correspondence between the problems identified and the lines of action envisaged, on the understanding that the effectiveness of public policies depends to a large extent on their capacity to engage with the social realities they seek to transform.

### Alignment between barriers to effective access to rights and the measures envisaged in the National Strategy 2024–2030

As outlined in the previous section, participants describe a set of obstacles that limit real access to rights and benefits. In light of these experiences, it is pertinent to examine the extent to which the National Strategy 2024–2030 incorporates measures capable of addressing these barriers and improving the practical conditions for the effective exercise of social rights.

With regard to **bureaucracy and administrative delays**, the testimonies collected point to processes characterised by excessive procedures, lengthy processing times, cumulative requirements and weak coordination between services. The Strategy acknowledges this problem, albeit unevenly. Challenge 1 includes the simplification of certain procedures, such as the management of the Minimum Vital Income (IMV), while Challenge 4 prioritises digitalisation, improved inter-administrative coordination and system rationalisation. However, the Strategy does not set out sufficiently specific mechanisms to reduce processing times, introduce greater flexibility in eligibility criteria or ensure a more urgent and needs-sensitive approach – aspects that participants identify as central. Alignment is therefore stronger at a conceptual level than at an operational one.

**Insufficient coverage and limited adaptability of benefits** emerge as among the most recurrent concerns. Many participants state that current criteria exclude people in real situations of vulnerability or that benefits fail to adapt to changing circumstances. Challenge 1 partially addresses these concerns through the revision of the IPREM (Public Income Indicator for Multiple Effects), improvements to the minimum wage and reforms to the IMV aimed at expanding coverage. Challenge 3 also focuses on strengthening social, health and long-term care support systems. Nevertheless, while the Strategy emphasises expanding system coverage, it devotes less attention to flexibility and adaptability as guiding principles. The needs identified suggest a challenge that cannot be addressed solely through broader coverage, but also requires the system to recognise non-linear life trajectories and respond to situations that fall outside standardised frameworks.

**The lack of accessible information and guidance** constitutes a cross-cutting barrier affecting all dimensions of access to rights. Participants describe difficulties in understanding procedures, identifying available benefits or interpreting eligibility requirements, particularly in sensitive areas such as housing and energy. The Strategy addresses this issue only partially: Challenge 3 refers to improved support and accompaniment, while Challenge 4 includes commitments to strengthen information systems and transparency. However, these measures focus more on internal system quality and administrative coordination than on ensuring clear, accessible and stable information for the public. The contrast between lived experiences and strategic provisions reveals a clear gap in the informational dimension of access to rights.

**Experiences of institutional discrimination and discrimination in access to housing** reflect a problem which, although diverse in nature, has direct effects on equality of access to benefits and resources. Young people report discrimination on the grounds of age and nationality in the rental market, while others describe impersonal institutional treatment perceived as unequal. The Strategy refers to the need to remove access barriers linked to origin or administrative status, particularly in healthcare, and proposes housing policies aimed at improving availability and affordability. However, it does not include specific measures to tackle discriminatory practices in the private housing market, nor does it develop instruments to guarantee genuinely personalised support within social services. In this area, the strategic response remains largely declarative.

**Territorial inequalities** in access to rights and benefits are among the barriers most clearly reflected in Challenge 4. Participants describe significant differences in processing times, availability of in-person services and levels of coordination depending on place of residence. The Strategy recognises this problem and proposes enhanced territorial cooperation, context-sensitive responses and improved multi-level coordination. While this alignment is significant, the Strategy does not yet introduce a system of minimum access standards to ensure that rights can be exercised under comparable conditions regardless of place of residence. It points in the right direction, but does not yet guarantee mechanisms capable of reducing entrenched territorial disparities.

Taken together, the comparison between identified barriers and the measures envisaged reveals a substantial degree of convergence at the level of general diagnosis. The Strategy recognises the main factors limiting effective access to rights and addresses issues such as bureaucracy, territorial inequality, coverage gaps and systemic shortcomings. However, the concrete measures proposed show uneven capacity to respond to the problems expressed by participants. Alignment is strong conceptually, but weaker operationally. Gaps remain in key areas such as personalised support, accessible information, combating discriminatory practices and the effective reduction of administrative complexity. As a result, while the strategic orientation broadly aligns with expressed needs, more ambitious regulatory development and implementation mechanisms will be required to address effectively the obstacles identified by people experiencing poverty.

### Alignment between the rising cost of living and the measures of the National Strategy 2024–2030

Contributions from the participatory spaces show that the rising cost of living is one of the factors most strongly shaping the daily lives of people experiencing poverty. The combination of insufficient wages, precarious employment, sustained increases in the prices of essential goods and rising housing costs creates a context of growing vulnerability that cannot be explained by income insufficiency alone, but by a persistent gap between what people earn and what they need to live with dignity. Described as a cumulative and prolonged process, this reality places many households in a position where financial margins disappear, everyday decisions become increasingly restrictive and material stability appears unattainable.

The National Strategy 2024–2030 explicitly recognises that ensuring sufficient resources is a prerequisite for preventing poverty and sustaining trajectories of autonomy. **Challenge 1**, focused on income guarantees and access to housing, includes measures that align significantly with participants' concerns: annual revision of the IPREM, reinforcement of the IMV, increases to the minimum wage and policies to expand the supply of affordable housing. At least at a programmatic level, these actions aim to reduce the gap between income and basic expenses by addressing structural economic insufficiency so many people refer to.

However, this conceptual alignment does not eliminate evident tensions. Participants' experiences highlight labour precariousness and income instability as key drivers of impoverishment. While **Challenge 2** promotes improved education, quality employment and reduced educational inequalities, the impact of these measures is necessarily gradual. By contrast, participants describe immediate economic pressure requiring faster responses, particularly in areas such as energy, basic utilities and food prices. Although the Strategy refers to these issues in general terms, it does not define concrete short-term instruments to mitigate their effects. As a result, while the diagnosis is coherent, the strategic response operates on a longer time horizon than the urgency expressed by participants.

The mismatch between wages and prices – one of the most frequently cited issues – is reflected in proposals to improve the minimum wage and strengthen the IMV. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these measures will depend on their ability to adapt to labour market developments and changes in the prices of essential goods. The Strategy does not yet establish mechanisms to ensure sufficiently agile and automatic updates of economic resources in line with cost-of-living changes, limiting its capacity to function as an effective safety net in inflationary contexts or under structural price increases.

Overall, the comparison between the needs expressed and the scheduled measures shows **clear alignment in terms of priorities** – particularly regarding income, housing and employment – but a **less precise correspondence in terms of intensity and speed of intervention**. The Strategy includes measures capable of mitigating the rising cost of living, but their effectiveness will depend on the depth of reforms, territorial implementation and adaptability to evolving economic conditions. Participants' experiences indicate that the cost of living now operates as a structural driver of impoverishment, and while the Strategy moves in the right direction, a stronger operational framework will be required to address the immediate and multidimensional nature of these economic pressures.

### Alignment between housing-related needs and the measures of the National Strategy 2024–2030

Although housing-related difficulties already appear in the analysis of general impoverishment, the frequency and specificity of testimonies gathered justify a dedicated assessment of this issue. Participants describe a scenario marked by a **structural deficit of adequate and affordable housing, shaped by three main factors: shortage of social housing**, lack of dwellings in adequate conditions of habitability, and absence of affordable alternatives outside major urban centres. These challenges are

compounded by issues related to energy efficiency and high housing maintenance costs, which further deepen vulnerability among low-income households.

The Strategy explicitly addresses these concerns under **Challenge 1**, which includes guaranteed access to housing as one of its two core pillars. Lines of action include rent subsidies, eviction prevention measures, the Strategy against Homelessness and the expansion of housing alternatives for at-risk groups. These proposals closely align with participants' testimonies highlighting the need to increase affordable housing supply and strengthen protection mechanisms against housing loss. There is therefore clear convergence in both diagnosis and general policy orientation.

However, the comparative analysis also highlights structural limitations to the scope of these measures. Participants describe a deep and persistent shortage of social housing that cannot be addressed solely through financial assistance or palliative measures. While the Strategy acknowledges this insufficiency, its transformative capacity will depend on sustained investment and effective coordination across levels of government to expand the public housing stock and improve its territorial distribution.

The scale of the problem – experienced as constant and worsening – exceeds the immediate action framework of the Strategy, which adopts a more incremental approach.

In terms of habitability and energy efficiency, testimonies point to poor housing conditions, difficulties in maintaining adequate indoor temperatures and high energy costs that directly affect material well-being. Although the Strategy refers to energy rehabilitation and efficiency improvements, these aspects do not occupy a central position in the strategic framework. Given that these issues disproportionately affect low-income households, their secondary treatment limits the Strategy's capacity to respond to this specific dimension of residential exclusion.

A further mismatch emerges in relation to housing availability in rural areas or outside major cities. Participants note that adequate housing is scarce or non-existent in many non-urban contexts, particularly affecting young people and low-income families. While the Strategy recognises the need for territorially adapted responses, it does not yet define concrete mechanisms to address housing shortages in rural areas, leaving a gap that risks reinforcing existing territorial inequalities.

Taken as a whole, the comparison reveals **significant coherence at the programmatic level**: the Strategy identifies housing as a central pillar and proposes measures aligned with the main problems identified. However, the scale of the structural deficit limits short-term responsiveness and creates tensions between the urgency of lived situations and the gradual nature of the proposed interventions. For participants, housing is not merely a material resource but a fundamental condition for stability, autonomy and inclusion; for the Strategy, it is a priority area, but one still constrained by policy frameworks and budgetary availability. As a result, while alignment between needs and responses is clear, it is not sufficient on its own to reverse the structural inequalities shaping access to housing.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

The combined analysis of the needs expressed across the different participatory spaces highlights a clear diagnosis: people experiencing poverty do not merely describe material deprivation or isolated shortcomings in access to rights, but rather a system that, in many cases, **fails to respond with the speed, coherence and sensitivity that their life trajectories require**. The proposals they put forward are neither abstract nor detached; they emerge from direct experience of navigating services, confronting complex administrative procedures and sustaining situations of economic and housing precarity over time.

First, participants strongly emphasise the need to **reduce administrative complexity** and ensure that support reaches people within reasonable timeframes. For them, delays in the processing of basic benefits – such as the Minimum Income Scheme or emergency assistance – are not a technical issue, but a factor that exacerbates situations of extreme vulnerability. They call for simpler procedures, hybrid channels (both digital and in-person), support in navigating administrative processes, and a review of internal workflows to identify and address procedural bottlenecks. From their perspective, guaranteeing rights also means guaranteeing timeliness, accessibility and institutional coherence.

Second, participants stress the need to **strengthen information provision and specialised guidance**, particularly in areas such as housing, energy and benefit administration. The lack of clear, accessible and stable information constitutes a significant barrier that generates insecurity and dependency, making it more difficult for people to exercise their rights autonomously. The proposals point to the establishment of accessible information points, community-based guidance teams and clearer, more consistent communication mechanisms across territories.

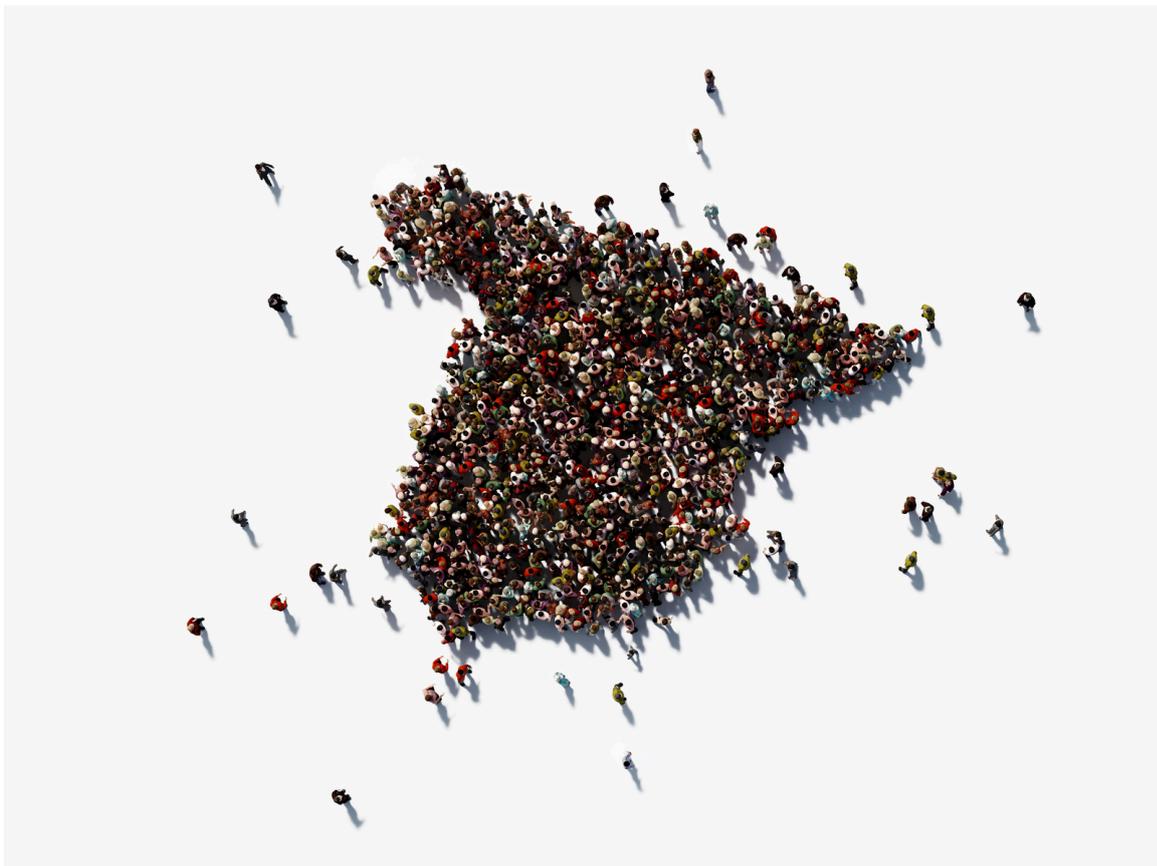
Another key area for improvement concerns the **real adequacy of support measures to the diversity of lived situations**. Participants call for less rigid eligibility criteria, greater flexibility to recognise non-linear life trajectories and an expansion of basic emergency assistance, which they consider essential in urgent situations. These improvements relate not only to the amount or type of benefit, but to the system's capacity to adapt to rapidly changing realities and to deliver proportionate responses.

In the field of housing, the proposals are particularly emphatic. Participants call for an **increase in social housing, affordable rents, effective measures to combat discrimination** and stronger efforts in rehabilitation and habitability. Housing is framed not merely as a material resource, but as the foundation upon which any life project depends. Participants insist that without stable and adequate housing, it is difficult to access employment, maintain good health or participate fully in community life.

Finally, there is a clear consensus on the need to **reduce territorial inequalities**. Differences in processing times, availability of resources or access to in-person services generate deep inequities.

that directly affect the exercise of rights. Participants propose moving towards minimum access standards across the entire territory, improving inter-administrative coordination and promoting intervention models that are more closely attuned to local contexts.

Taken together, the improvement proposals put forward by people experiencing poverty not only highlight where the system is failing, but also offer a clear roadmap for strengthening the guarantee of social rights. These proposals point towards a model of public policy that is more accessible, more flexible and more responsive to the diversity of life trajectories, in which effectiveness is measured not solely by the existence of benefits, but by the **real capacity of institutions to accompany, protect and respond**. Integrating these voices into the further development of the National Strategy therefore constitutes an essential condition for moving towards a system that is more just, more equal and more closely aligned with the social reality of the country.



# The European Network for the Fight Against Poverty and Social Exclusion in Spain (EAPN-ES) is made up of the following networks and entities:

## 19 regional networks:

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

## And 23 national entities:

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



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