

Spain



Each year, the ESN European Semester Group follows the European Commission's cycle of policy coordination with EU Member States known as the European Semester and produces a report based on a questionnaire completed by public social services authorities on the social situation in European countries with a particular focus on social services. This country profile identifies the most important common challenges facing social services as reported by ESN members in Austria, related to three principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and makes recommendations for the 2023 European Semester. The full report, with cross-country analysis of all the participating countries is available [here](#).

1. Children's services

1.1. Key issues

Most children and young people, supported by child protection services, are placed in facilities rather than with families. Moreover, young people placed in facilities, receive very little support in their transition to adulthood or they are supported depending on the region where they live.

Child poverty is acknowledged officially as one of the Spanish government's main challenges. Despite a commitment from all government bodies and authorities to address this, the measures put in place have had little impact so far. There are significant deficiencies in the child protection system and other relevant social services support programmes for vulnerable children, which the recently approved law to fight violence against children intend to address. Coordination among national and regional levels both vertical (between state, regional and local mechanisms) and horizontal (between the different systems involved: social services, health, justice, etc.) remains crucial. Dealing with the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children is also another challenge across the country.

Spain has submitted its [national action plan](#) outlining the existing and planned national and subnational policy measures, which aim to improve access of children in need to the set of key services covered by the European Child Guarantee.

1.2. Recommendations

With the national action plan and the funds allocated to the plan the Spanish Government provides the basis for a radical reduction on child poverty and social exclusion, with specific measures and relevant funding for early education. This framework must now be adopted at a regional level and integrated with social services and education.

The plan also includes relevant funds to access quality family and community-based alternative care for children. However, support for young people leaving care in their transition to adulthood and support for children's mental health and emotional wellbeing should also be guaranteed within this action plan.

2. Long-term care

2.1. Key issues

Greater demand and fewer resources because of demographic ageing means that services are no longer sustainable. Most dependent older people live in care facilities or at home but do not receive the support they need, hence this support falls on their families or informal carers.

Despite the fact that this is a priority for all public administration levels, there is a lack of coordination between health and social care. There should be a comprehensive policy and legal framework for an individualised support plan that allows the person to stay at home as they grow older.

Quality of care is also perceived as a challenge; there is need for standardised indicators that ensure a minimum and common level of quality in support provided for older people.

2.2. Recommendations

The Spanish Government should adopt a legal and policy framework which regulates the permanent review, guarantee the protection of the rights of older persons, including a specific person, who ensures their rights. Furthermore, the legal and policy framework should clearly regulate the role of caregivers (both formal and informal) and support the development of an advanced model of care for dependent older people, promoting their personal autonomy.

3. Support for homeless people

3.1. Key issues

Spain had a national strategy for homeless people in 2015-2020, and has recently submitted a draft law for the right to housing, which favours access to housing at affordable prices, protects against situations of vulnerability and combats real estate speculation.

Nevertheless, there is great difficulty to track the number of people experiencing homelessness or housing exclusion in Spain, since there is still little data to measure indicators. However, housing is becoming a clear driver of social exclusion, and ultimately there is an increase in people experiencing homelessness. Currently three main challenges have been identified: lack of affordable housing, a reactive versus proactive approach when addressing housing exclusion, and lack of coordination between housing and social services.

Support is currently the responsibility of different administrations and NGOs, which creates an unstable network with inequity in access across Spain.

3.2. Recommendations

A well-defined and coordinated action plan that harmonises the different existing resources and benefits should be implemented. The former national strategy should be evaluated and a continuity plan developed, moving from a model of homelessness management to a housing-led approach, as well as increasing the availability of social housing. Possible measures could include: giving housing preference to families at risk of vulnerability; improve interdepartmental coordination between local, regional and national administrations and with justice for eviction and court proceedings; and strengthen protection mechanisms for tenants and mortgages.



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