



**Contribution to the
*UN Special Rapporteur on
Extreme Poverty and Human Rights***



Plataforma de Infancia

The Spanish Children's Rights Coalition (known as Plataforma de Infancia), founded in 1997, is an alliance of 67 not-for-profit, plural, democratic, and politically and religiously independent organizations that work to achieve a full implementation of the rights of children and adolescents, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://plataformadeinfancia.org/>



Background and context

Spain is the fifth-largest economy in the European Union. However, our country has **the fifth highest children at risk of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE) rate of the European Union.**

Having children in Spain is a poverty and vulnerability driving factor, as households with children are the most affected by poverty and children are one of the poorest social groups.

Unfortunately, child poverty in Spain is not a new issue emerging as a consequence of the last economic crisis. **Child poverty in our country is a structural issue** and it has remained with very high rates even in times of economic prosperity (28,6% in 2007¹), although in times of crisis it has been aggravated due to the lack of household income and public budget reductions that affected to the access to basic services.

However, some emerging positive developments have taken place in the past months in Spain. In June 2018, a new public institution was created under the Presidency Ministry, the **High Commissioner for the Fight against Child Poverty**². The High Commissioner's objective is to establish instruments for measuring, monitoring and evaluating public policies aimed at combating child poverty as well as analysing the status of the Spanish child protection system in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international commitments. Also, Spain's new 2019-

¹ <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

² <https://www.comisionadopobrezainfantil.gob.es/>



2023 **National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight Against Poverty** and social exclusion was approved in March 2019³. This Strategy provides operational objectives, measures and actions for the inclusion of society as a whole in Spain. **A specific chapter on child poverty is included in the document.** Finally, it is important to mention the launch of a new Universal Social Card system by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security aimed at making the social benefits system more transparent and allowing for better targeting of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

While these positive developments are welcomed and promising, these policies and actions are not accompanied by sufficient or specific measures for implementation nor contain commitments for the future.

One of the main challenges is **the lack of capacity of social transfers to reduce child poverty because of the low levels and poor targeting of social spending for families with children.** In this respect, it should be noted that the European Commission in its Country Specific Recommendations⁴ called on Spain to *“provide effective support and improve support for families”*.



Data and statistics

Child poverty is on the decrease in Spain, dropping from **35,8% in 2014 to 29,5% in 2018 (AROPE)**⁵. However, Spain continues to be highlighted at the European level for its high child poverty rate, higher than European Union average (24,9%), and the need for investing in children and families continues. Almost 2,5 million of children in Spain are at risk of poverty or social exclusion according to the last available figures of Eurostat and 6,5% of children is affected by several material deprivation.

³ <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/Paginas/enlaces/220319-enlaceestrategia.aspx>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2019-european-semester-country-specific-recommendation-commission-recommendation-spain_en.pdf

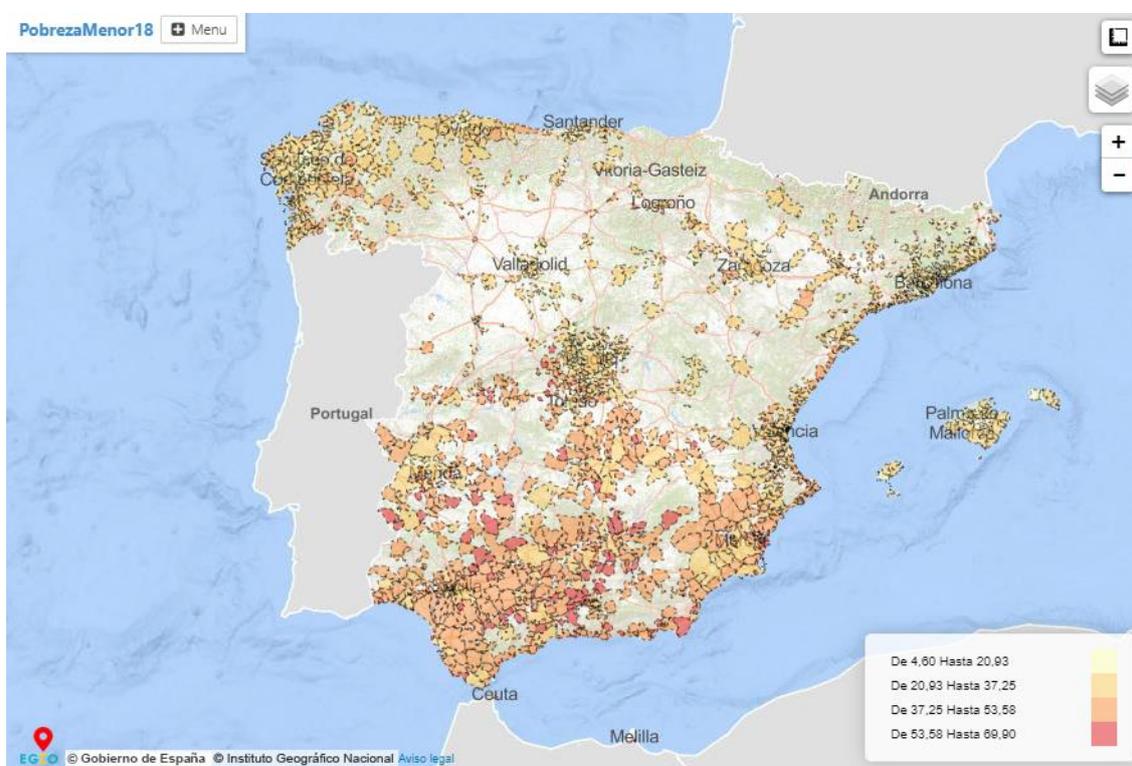
⁵ Eurostat. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex



The Spanish Government estimates that around 700.000 children in Spain are suffering severe poverty⁶. Plataforma de Infancia is specially concern about high rates vulnerable groups at risk of poverty in Spain:

- 89% of Roma children are at risk of poverty⁷
- 50% of single parent families are at risk of poverty⁸
- 56% of migrants at risk of poverty and social exclusion⁹

Child poverty maps reveal concentrations of extreme poverty in areas relatively rich that would otherwise go unnoticed. High Commissioner for the Fight Against Child Poverty has released an [interactive map](#) on Child Poverty showing most affected areas and regions of the country:



Spain Child Poverty map - Spanish High Commissioner for the Fight Against Child Poverty

⁶ <https://www.europapress.es/epsocial/infancia/noticia-700000-menores-estan-situacion-pobreza-severa-espana-20190115192441.html>

⁷ <https://www.gitanos.org/actualidad/prensa/comunicados/129487.html.es>

⁸ https://www.eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/noticias/1568715221_estudio-familias-monoparentales.pdf

⁹ https://www.eapn.es/estadodepobreza/ARCHIVO/documentos/Informe_AROPE_2018_EL_CONTEXTO_NACIONAL.pdf



Child poverty factors in Spain: a weak social protection system

Social protection system in Spain is highly ineffective, the investment is very low and the targets are not met. The level of investment in children in Spain has not been high enough to offset the negative impact of the severe economic and social crisis, as expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Spain¹⁰.

Social transfers are not reducing poverty rates for families as effectively as they could, and Spain continues to have one of the lowest family benefits system in the EU in terms of quantity and coverage. Spain is one latest countries of the EU ranking in terms of child protection investment. While the EU average is 2,4% of the Gross Domestic Product, Spain only invest 1,3% of its gross GDP. 5,3% of social expenses in Spain are focused in family and childhood policies compared to 8,4% in the EU. While EU countries like Austria reduces child poverty 24 points using social protection mechanisms, Spain only reduces 6,3 points using these mechanisms.

Regarding childcare allowances, a 341€ contribution per child under 18 years old per year is established in Spain¹¹ (588€ in case of extremely poor households). This allowance has been recently increased from 291 € by the Spanish Law *Real Decreto-Ley 8/2019* of social protection. This increase of the allowance came into force in the 1st April 2019 and, according to the Spanish Government forecasts childcare allowances will benefit 1,3 million of children¹². The criteria to be beneficiary of this allowance is established in a threshold income of 12.313,00 € per year.

Plataforma de Infancia welcomed the initiative but expressed that this measure will not be enough and **further and progressive increases would be urgently needed**.

More details on the Spanish childcare benefits system are available [here](#)

¹⁰ <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrCAqhKb7yhsvTvWdCiXbcdHJgod%2F48UvVLFjvw69pQaqdk3icKuqRzUXTou9Jkdgy7484z0GiSTkXAAbmzZQRDft4dHK6kwj%2B88PsBa5U52YlaA437rBzH>

¹¹ <http://www.seg-social.es/wps/portal/wss/internet/Trabajadores/PrestacionesPensionesTrabajadores/10967>

¹² <https://www.comisionadopobrezainfantil.gob.es/es/600-millones-de-euros-adicionales-para-la-inversi%C3%B3n-en-infancia>



Impact of child poverty in Spain

Child poverty in Spain daily affects the **development and opportunities of almost two and a half million of children**, and is conditioning their future. 80% of children at risk of poverty will suffer the same circumstances in their adult life¹³.

In the last years, there has been a negative impact of cuts in public investment on child protection, particularly regarding children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations, including children from low-income families and Roma children.

Living under risk of poverty and social exclusion in Spain affects the fulfillment of the rights of children: an adequate standard of living, health, education, leisure and recreational activities and it can also be a barrier to the full enjoy these rights on equal terms. Poverty has a great impact on the health of children, largely due to differences in food and nutrition. An increasing number of children in Spain are suffering the consequences of poor diets and a food system. According to Unicef Comité Español¹⁴, 35% of children between 8 and 16 years old are overweight in Spain.

Education and child poverty in Spain

Education is one of the most powerful tools to fight against poverty, however, education system in Spain is not only being unable to reverse social inequalities, but it is also contributing to increase these inequalities. Education in Spain does not offer the same opportunities to all children and it is important to highlight that the impact of socioeconomic level has on educational results of children has grown by 24% from 2003 to 2012. Academic failure and school dropout are focused on most economic disadvantaged children in Spain:

- The school dropout rate is one of the main concerns in Spain, being extremely high (17,9%) comparing to other EU countries.

¹³ Fundación Foessa.

¹⁴

https://www.unicef.es/sites/unicef.es/files/comunicacion/Malnutricion_obesidad_infantil_y_derechos_de_la_infancia_en_Espana.pdf



- The school dropout rate of the lowest income quintile is 28.9%, which is 27 percentage points higher than the highest quintile (1.6%)¹⁵.
- School failure rates disproportionately affect Roma students (6 out of 10).

The low levels of financing of education system in Spain does not guarantee the right to a quality education to all children, being those who are in a worst economic situation, who suffer most the lack of investment:

- Spain invests in scholarships 0.17% of GDP, whereas the European average is 0.44%, and they are not focused on most vulnerable children (25% of students in the lowest income quintile, despite meeting financial requirements, do not receive scholarships)¹⁶.
- Children from poorer families do not have general access to 0-3 education (26.3% of schooling), and it is mostly the middle and upper classes that enter this stage of education (62.5% of schooling)¹⁷.

As good practices in Spain, PROA¹⁸ plan and VECA¹⁹ program should be mentioned. The first one is public plan implemented in 2014 by the Spanish government in close coordination with the Spanish regions aimed at promoting primary and secondary education through support, reinforcement and other specific actions. The second one, VECA, is a program to promote the rights to food, leisure and culture of children during school holidays.



Recommendations

- **Increase in investment** dedicated to children to reach the European average rate of investment (2.4%). Spain currently stands at 1.3% of GDP in childhood investment according to Eurostat;

¹⁵ Salido y Martínez, 2018, "Equidad, igualdad de oportunidades y educación", en "3er Informe sobre la Desigualdad en España", Fundación Alternativas

¹⁶ Informe Becas para que nadie se quede atrás". 2018 Save the Children

¹⁷ Informe Donde todo empieza. 2019. Save the Children.

¹⁸ <http://redined.mecd.gob.es/xmlui/handle/11162/66442>

¹⁹ <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodem Ministros/Paginas/enlaces/210619-enlace-veca.aspx>



- A **State Pact for Children** that guarantee the progressive increase in investment dedicated to children to reach the European average and will ensure no regressivity in a context of economic crisis;
- A **childcare allowance of 1.200 euros per year for each child** -under 18 years- conditioned to an income limit based on official poverty thresholds should be implemented. This measure would be done through the current non-contributory childcare allowance for children and its amount should be updated regularly. This benefit should be compatible with the current benefit for children with a +33% recognized disability and other social and educational assistance measures for children in Spain. This mechanism would benefit around 2,5 million of child and should reduce child poverty risk rates by 18% and severe child poverty rates by 30%, having a considerable impact on adult poverty figures as well.
- A **progressive increase of available places in the public offer for early childhood education**. Spain should reach the European standards by 2022 and increase schooling among most vulnerable families. Cooperation between the State and the regions needs to be reinforced to jointly finance the creation of 70.000 public places in nursery schools. These schools should be free for families with fewer resources.
- **Investment in scholarships and study grants should be expanded** to reach the European average of 0.44% GDP in 2022, especially in the compulsory and post-compulsory non-university stages. The concession criteria need to be reviewed so that students below the poverty threshold are entitled to the maximum amounts and this amounts are sufficient to cover educational costs.



Sources of information

- [Donde todo empieza. Save The Children 2019](#)



- [Mapa de la Pobreza Infantil en España. ACPI](#)
- [FSG Estudio sobre la población gitana en relación al empleo y la pobreza 2019](#)
- [VIII Informe FOESSA. 2019](#)
- [El Estado de la Pobreza. EAPN. 2018](#)
- [El Coste de la Crianza Save The Children 2018](#)
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- [Boletín sobre Vulnerabilidad Social. Infancia. Cruz Roja Española 2016](#)
- [Infancia, pobreza y crisis económica. Sara Ayllón. Obra Social la Caixa 2015](#)
- [Políticas públicas para reducir la pobreza infantil en España UNICEF 2014](#)
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- [Educo: Los otros niños de la llave](#)
- [Aldeas Infantiles SOS: Infancia en riesgo en España](#)
- [Aldeas Infantiles SOS: El cuidado infantil en datos](#)