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Transdisciplinary solutions to
cross sectoral disadvantage
in youth (YOUNG-IN)

WG5



Working paper series

Youth-oriented policies beyond ideal-typical welfare regimes in Europe:

Situation and initiatives from the perspective of youth transition regimes

Spain

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This WP series contributes to the main aims of YOUNG-IN and WG5 (Knowledge-based social investment policy for youth) by aiming to:

- 1) Describe today's situation of youth in our nine case countries based on characteristics perceived to be the most relevant by the literature of Youth Transition Regimes (YTR);
- 2) Give an overview of the main policy initiatives targeted at youth within key policy areas relevant for YTR.

This WP is structured as follows: Part I gives a harmonised comparative overview of the existing situation in the analysed nine countries in comparison with EU28 (the analyses cover period before Brexit, thus kept EU28 instead of EU27). Part II consists of nine chapters about youth-oriented policy initiatives in those countries in two recent decades across policy areas especially relevant for youth (education, labour market, social inclusion, participation and housing). Part III concludes with an executive summary that compares the countries' youth-oriented policy directions in the modified framework of YTR.

The structure and authorship of respective chapters are as follows (current chapter highlighted):

- ▶ Part I: A comparative introduction of situation of youth, Triin Lauri
- ▶ Part II: Country reports on youth oriented policies:
 - Youth-oriented policies in Bulgaria (BG), Veneta Krasteva
 - Youth-oriented policies in Switzerland (CH), Berihun Wagaw, Matthias Drilling, Semhar Negash
 - Youth-oriented policies in Estonia (EE), Anu Toots and Triin Lauri
 - **Youth-oriented policies in Spain (ES), Francisco Javier Moreno-Fuentes, Pau Marí-Klose**
 - Youth-oriented policies in Lithuania (LT), Daiva Skučienė, Natalija Mažeikienė
 - Youth-oriented policies in Latvia (LV), Anna Broka
 - Youth-oriented policies in Moldova (MD), Crismaru Mariana
 - Youth-oriented policies in Malta (MT), Sue Vella
 - Youth-oriented policies in Turkey (TR), Hande Barlin, Nilufer Korkmaz Yaylagul
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Brief Information on Spain

The Kingdom of Spain is the largest country in Southern Europe, located in the Iberian Peninsula, including two relatively large archipelagos (Canary and Balearic Islands). With more than 47 million inhabitants (among which around 5 million foreigners), it is a parliamentary democracy, with a profoundly decentralised institutional structure (with 17 Autonomous Regions and two Autonomous Cities), in many ways equated to a federal system. A member of the Eurozone since its creation, the Spanish economy is the 14th largest in the world and the 5th largest in the European Union. Spain's Human Development Index value for 2018 was 0.893, which put the country in the very high human development category, occupying the 25th position out of 189 countries and territories. It occupied the 18th position out of 167 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index in 2019, which qualifies the state as a full democracy.

The situation of the Spanish youth has been in the spotlight of the social and political agenda in the last decade. In this period, the socioeconomic position of the youth worsened severely due to the economic crisis (2009-2014). Young people have often expressed discontent about the social disadvantages they face and their hardships in the transition to adulthood. Generational conflicts between younger and older voters have been key to understanding Spanish politics and the evolution of the Spanish party system (Moreno and Marí-Klose, 2013). Beginning in 2014, new parties with a populist profile (both at the extreme left and the extreme right) have been able to attract significant support among younger voters, at the expense of traditional social-democratic and centre-right options.

Part II. Policy developments to address challenges affecting the youth

The process of fiscal consolidation implemented since 2010 had a significantly negative impact on the Spanish welfare state. The 2008-2014 economic and financial crises translated into a significant reduction of social expenditures, negatively affecting the coverage and quality of welfare programs. Between 2011 and 2013, the central government reduced spending on education by 34.6%, on healthcare by 9.6%, on job promotion by 48.5%, and on unemployment protection by 11.4%.¹ Additional cuts were made by autonomous regions (8.2% on education, 6.4% on healthcare, 18.5% on social protection, 7.9% on social services and social promotion, and 34% on job stimulation).² Among the most directly affected policies were those more closely associated with a philosophy of social investment. Those programs were sacrificed to respond to the increasing financial demands of automatic stabilizers:

¹ Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas. (2014) Presupuestos del Estado Consolidados. <http://goo.gl/vx8IAo>.

² Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas. (2014) Datos presupuestarios de las Comunidades Autónomas. <http://goo.gl/RAhVqB>.

contributory cash transfer benefits (notably unemployment and pensions), whose demand exploded due to the massive loss of jobs that occurred since 2007.³

The use of the basic concepts of the social investment model in the design and implementation of social policies is still quite weak in Spain. Socio-political actors have not included those concepts in their programs and agendas, and policy debates do not explicitly refer to this paradigm. Documents drafted by the Spanish government do not generally include references to the social investment model. Nevertheless, and without constituting the main structuring principle of welfare policy reforms, the logic of social investment guided (in an implicit manner) a series of social policy measures in recent years.

The slow exit from the crisis so far has not equated to an improvement in living conditions for the most vulnerable groups, often households composed of young people suffering in-work poverty. The measures approved in the II National Strategic Plan on Children and Adolescence 2013-2016 were geared towards promoting support policies for families in care, education, comprehensive development of children, and work-family balance. In 2018 the incoming government created a new High Commissioner Office to Combat Child Poverty, reporting directly to the government President Office. The main task of the new office has been to coordinate programmes aiming to fight against poverty among minors in Spain.⁴

2.1. Education policy beyond the lower secondary level

The reform with the greatest impact on education spending was approved in 2012 by Royal Decree 14/2012. Its impact on fiscal consolidation during 2012-2013 amounted to €4,630 million (2014 NRP). The cutbacks and measures approved continue to be in force. This reform implied an increase in the number of pupils per class, longer hours for teachers, an extension of the periods for temporary substitution of teaching, and increased university fees. Investment in educational facilities was reduced by 55% between 2009 and 2015, and it is currently 12% lower than the levels of the 2000s (BBVA, 2015).

2.1.1. Policies against school drop-out, low achievement & NEET

Three chronic problems persist in the Spanish education system: Early School Leaving (ESL), the misalignment of education and training to the needs of the labour market, and limited education performance (Benedicto et al., 2017).

A plan was approved to reduce ESL in the period 2014-2020⁵. Education gaps and skills mismatches have been reduced only partially. As noted in the 2017 Council recommendation for Spain, the employability of persons with tertiary education must improve: according to Eurostat data⁶, the employment rate of recent graduates (aged 20-34) has increased by 3.6

³ More than 3.3 million jobs were lost since 2007 (approximately 16% of the total employment existing at the beginning of the crisis). Spanish Labour Force Survey (2014), Instituto Nacional de Estadística.

⁴ Royal Decree 419/2018, of 18th June, art. 10. <https://goo.gl/U3PzCT>

⁵ Plan for the reduction of ESL, <http://goo.gl/JE4Cqt>.

⁶ Eurostat Database, EU-LFS data, <https://goo.gl/DwpTDy> 7.

percentage points between 2015 (68.7%) and 2016 (72.3%), but remains low and clearly below the EU28 average (82.8% in 2016).

In December 2020, the new leftist coalition government approved a new education law (LOMLOE) with the explicit goal of improving equity and preventing early school drop-out. The fight against school segregation of lower income students was identified for the first time as a major cause of educational disadvantage, and new measures were undertaken to prevent cream-skimming practices in charter schools. The new budget for 2021 includes a significant increase in spending in an array of policy initiatives concerning university scholarships and grants, early childhood education and extracurricular programs.

2.1.2. Access to different tracks and levels

In terms of educational reform, the 8/2013 Act (LOMCE)⁷ was passed, approving the creation of a new Basic Professional Training qualification (FPB). More flexible, earlier itineraries and bridges between professional and academic training were also introduced. The changes in government in certain regions, following the May 2015 regional elections and June 2016 general elections, implied changes in the LOMCE implementation schedule since the 2016/2017 academic year (Royal Decree 5/2016⁸) (i.e. suspension of the academic effects of the final evaluation tests for secondary and baccalaureate education).

2.1.3. Social support to learners

The system of grants was reformed in the 2013-2014 academic year (Royal Decree 609/2013⁹). Eligibility conditions were made stricter (higher minimum grade required to receive a grant, more importance attached to the academic record). In 2018, the minimum grade required to receive a grant was reduced to the level in effect before the reform of the grants system in 2013.

Except for a few regions, university fees for undergraduate and master's studies were significantly increased in September 2012, thus introducing an additional obstacle to accessing higher education for groups without great purchasing power and without the right to a scholarship. Total expenditure on scholarships and grants also declined in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 academic years at a time when many families were experiencing increasing economic difficulties in supporting their children attending university. This budget cut was mainly reflected in the decline in the number of scholarships. In the 2013-2014 academic year, university students received, on average, 27% less scholarships than two years earlier (El Diario, 18-8-2015). After many years of fiscal restraint, the budget plan for 2021 includes a significant increase in resources devoted to education.

⁷ 8/2013 Act, <http://goo.gl/UpKyig>.

⁸ Royal Decree-Law 5/2016, 9 December, <https://goo.gl/JJR6Y0>.

⁹ Royal Decree 609/2013, <http://goo.gl/jKx9rP>; Royal Decree 293/2016, <https://goo.gl/wWfQKn>

Table 1: Mapping education policy initiatives in Spain

Issue in education	Main instruments to address it	Direction
Equity	Reinforcement of educational tracking	Segregation
Access to university	Increase of university fees	Retrenchment
Scholarship	Higher requirements to receive a university scholarship	Retrenchment
Drop-outs	Cutbacks in extracurricular programs for students at risk of dropping out (all these initiatives are expected to be reverted under the recently introduced LOMLOE Act and the 2021 Budget Plan)	Retrenchment
Early childhood	Cutbacks in budget for early childhood education (0-3 years). To be reverted in 2021	Retrenchment

EDUCATION (HE)	Low stratification	High stratification
High commodification		X*
Low commodification		

* Values are not uniform across regions. Commodification and stratification are particularly high in Madrid and Catalonia, two of the most populated regions

Source: Busemeyer, 2015 (pg.: 29-33) amended by authors

2.2. Labour market policy for youth

Interventions against unemployment in Spain are highly fragmented (Del Pino y Ramos, 2013). Since 2003, the Employment Act and its subsequent reforms have been oriented to modernise employment policies¹⁰ in line with the European Employment Strategy, and to improve the governance of the system after regional decentralisation, the incorporation of new actors in this domain of policy (employers, private providers, community and non-profit organisations), and the promotion of employment activation (Martín, 2014).

- ▶ The first evaluations of the Youth Guarantee, conceived as an ambitious European initiative aimed at facilitating access to the world of work for young people through various programmes and measures in the fields of entrepreneurship, self-employment, and employability, suggest that the programme experienced serious implementation

¹⁰ Employment Act 56/2003 (following the reform of Act 18/2014 of 5 October) Art. 7.1.bis, <http://goo.gl/Aa4IXK>.

problems in Spain, reflecting a considerable gap between the intended recipients and the final beneficiaries (Moreno, 2017; Igal, Pac and Gómez Quintero, 2018). Public opinion data also suggest that it was a measure that did not become properly known (according to the 2016 European Youth Eurobarometer, only 24% of Spanish youth aged 16 to 30 reported hearing about this scheme).

- ▶ The Spanish government approved a new Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021¹¹ in December 2018, oriented at reducing youth unemployment levels, and a new Plan (Reincorpora-T) oriented at preventing and reducing long-term unemployment in April 2019, strengthening human resources in PES by the provision of 3,000 new caseworkers and creating of the function of primary counselling. In March 2019, the Annual Plan for Employment (PAPE) was also approved.

2.2.1. Unemployment protection (PLMP)

Unemployment protection in Spain was built as a social insurance scheme compensating individuals for salary losses. Nowadays, it constitutes a mix of different schemes (both contributory and social assistance-based), which offer different levels of protection depending on contributory history, unemployment duration, age, and/or family structure.

Recent developments in unemployment benefit regulation have been driven by the economic crisis, the extremely high unemployment levels (Bouget et al., 2015; Muñoz del Bustillo, 2016), and the fiscal consolidation policies implemented in Spain. Reforms introduced in 2012 were mainly aimed at cutting spending¹²: reducing benefits, more strict eligibility conditions, obligations, and sanctions, as well as the elimination of certain benefits. In February 2014, new measures were introduced to even further restrict the conditions for receiving benefits and to strengthen obligations for job-seekers (suspensions of benefits due to travel abroad).¹³

In 2009 the Spanish central government implemented a new temporary program aimed at providing social assistance for six months, supporting employment insertion processes. This program has been extended and renewed till today (first called PRODI – Temporary Program for Protection and Insertion –, since 2011 called PREPARA – Professional Requalification Program). In January 2015, a new programme was introduced to offer a new employment social assistance benefit (Employment Activation Program). These social assistance schemes contributed to reducing the number of unemployed workers who did not receive any cash transfers after finishing their right to a contributory unemployment benefit, however, it openly failed to effectively address the huge problem of unemployment or to create a coherent system protecting the long-term unemployed.

The volume of those covered by unemployment benefits has been decreasing since 2012 (protecting only 58.9% of all unemployed workers in 2014), while the weight of contributory

¹¹ Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021 (*Plan de Choque por el Empleo Juvenil 2019-2021*) <http://bit.ly/2XKXuAn>.

¹² Royal Decree 20/2012, on measures to guarantee budget stability and foster competitiveness, <http://goo.gl/VQDLZ>.

¹³ 1/2014 Act on the protection of part time workers and other urgent economic and social measures (BOE 1.3.2014) <http://goo.gl/SaiQ1h>, consolidating the provisions for unemployment protection of Royal Decree 11/2013.

schemes is decreasing in favour of social assistance programs. Despite this, it has not been possible to reduce spending on unemployment benefits below 3% of the GDP since 2009.

2.2.2. Active labour market policy (ALMP)

Active Labour Market policies in Spain have gained institutional strength thanks to the European Employment Strategy. Thus, some measures have been introduced through the Spanish Employment Strategy 2012-2014, the Annual Employment Plan in 2014, and the launch of a new "Spanish Employment Activation Strategy 2014-2016". The goals of these programs include: youth employability through the implementation of the National Youth Guarantee System approved in December 2013 (with the support of EU funds), facilitating job placement in salaried employment, and promoting entrepreneurship activities. In December 2016, new legislation was adopted to increase coverage by removing obstacles and requirements to programme eligibility.¹⁴

Despite these initiatives, there continues to be a significant disconnection between active and passive employment policies in Spain (OECD, 2017), as well as between social and employment services. Resources have been allocated to the most urgent needs, reducing the focus on prevention, activation, and investment-related programs. While expenditure on passive policies constitutes around 3.6% of the Spanish GDP, active measures receive around 0.7% of the GDP, and their development during the period of recession and fiscal consolidation has been very weak. In addition to that, there is a large imbalance in the use of financial resources for activation programs. Three factors were limiting the effectiveness of active labour market policies: a) weak employment services mediation (only 8% of contracts achieved over 2 million offers), b) stagnation of subsidies for employment creation (75% of subsidized employment was fixed-term out of a total of 200,000), and c) low participation in training activities (the number of participants of labour supply training decreased by 26.8% for 2012, on labour demand training more than 3.2 million workers were reached, an increase of 1.5% compared to 2012). The measures adopted in the 2014 Employment Plan entailed some progress in terms of output indicators, but less so in terms of outcomes.

The National Employment System establishes that Regional Public Employment Services (PES) are responsible for the development and implementation of active labour market policies within their territories (including the responsibility for unemployment registration), whereas unemployment benefits (both contributory and non-contributory) are managed and controlled by the Central PES. In that frame, regional PES provides individualised services to users, including professional guidance, intermediation, training for employment, and advice for self-employment, to achieve their incorporation, continuance, and progress in the labour market. Nevertheless, the development of practices based on individual approaches of diagnosis and personalised paths is scarce and deficient (AIReF, 2019).

¹⁴ Royal-Decree 6/2016, on urgent measures for the impulse of the Youth Guarantee National System <https://goo.gl/IPIK11>

2.2.3. Industrial and other labour relations

Most young people faced significant restrictions to accessing benefits of last resort, such as the Prepara Plan, devised by the Zapatero government in 2011 as a subsidy for the long-term unemployed who had no right to any other unemployment benefits. Until 2013, to receive that subsidy of 400 €, the applicant had to have exhausted all entitlements and to demonstrate that he had no other benefits exceeding 75% of the Minimum Wage (SMI). From that moment on, in addition to this requirement, family income would be taken into account so that all profits divided between the persons living in the same house did not exceed the limit of 481€ (corresponding to 75% of the SMI). In practice, the vast majority of young unemployed people who had not emancipated, or returned to the family home with the crisis, were left out. Those who entered the labour market or switched jobs (mostly young) saw their wages plummet compared to those workers who held their jobs.

Table 2: Mapping youth oriented labour market policy (LMP) initiatives in Spain

Issue in LMP	Main instruments to address it	Direction
Reforms in contributory and social assistance based unemployment benefits.	Cutting benefits in contributory programs & New social assistance based programs to increase coverage among the most vulnerable segments	Focalization
National Youth Guarantee System	Facilitate job placement in salaried employment and promoting entrepreneurship activities	Activation of young NEET

Source: Bouget, et. al., 2015; Del Pino and Ramos, 2013

LABOUR MARKET	Compensatory	Preventive
Structure-related	X	
Individualising		

Source: Pohl and Walther, 2007 amended by authors

2.3. Social welfare policy

The Personal Social Services (PSS) system in Spain is an institutionally complex and fragmented system providing benefits and services (information, guidance, advice, diagnosis and assessment, legal protection, etc.) to vulnerable groups. The primary social services are under the responsibility of the municipalities, and the specialised services depend on the regions. They are regulated by every Autonomous Community, with no central government law overseeing them. Although a process of relative horizontal regulatory convergence has taken place, the social services continue to be a fragmented institutional space with significant territorial inequalities in terms of financial effort, coverage, and guaranteed rights (Rodríguez-Cabrero et al., 2016).

During the years before the crisis, the right of access to social services for vulnerable groups, including the youth, was strengthened, catalogues or portfolios of services were established, and there was a certain commitment to guaranteeing their financing. The economic and financial crisis had a major impact on social services as the demands increased while the supply was insufficient to respond to the social needs, so the additional demand created by the crisis was mostly responded by NGOs. Although investment in social services has been recovering since 2016, spending on these programs in 2018 (1.57% of GDP) did not yet reach the level of 2007 (1.68% of GDP).

Certain normative reforms (such as Law 40/2015 on the Legal Regime of the Public Sector) favoured greater control of municipal social services by the Autonomous Communities and, as a result, the re-centralisation of services and the encouragement of selective privatisation have been promoted. In 2018 the "universal social card" was approved, providing information on all the economic social benefits received by individuals and households, as well as information on social exclusion and existing social protection gaps.

Welfare cuts had a particular impact on young families with children due to the elimination of subsidies for birth or adoption of a child (popularly known as the "baby check"), and those aids created by the regions to support young families with children. The social services system continues to have significant deficiencies in responding to the challenges of vulnerable youth, homelessness, child poverty, and parenting support (Fantova, 2015; Casado et al., 2019). The share of social benefits aimed at responding to basic needs (food and monetary help) increased from 33% in 2007 to 50% of the total available resources in 2011, while the amount devoted to urgent help more than doubled (from 4% to 11% in the same period). The general coverage of social needs decreased by not expanding the number of beneficiaries (roughly 1.2 million people since 2010) despite the significant deterioration of the living conditions of large segments of the population, and notably of the most vulnerable groups (CES, 2017). Consolidated expenditure of local governments on social services (without considering that of the State and the Autonomous Regions) dropped by more than 19% between 2010 and 2013 (from 6.4 to 5.2 billion €).

The Youth and Adolescence Protection Act, passed in July 2015¹⁵, addressed situations of risk and helplessness of children, voluntary guardianship, as well as foster care and adoption. Also, in the area of combating underage poverty, a special allocation of €17 million was included in the 2014 Spanish National Budget. This sum was increased to €32 million in 2015 and to €48 million in 2016. These meagre resources were given to the regions to deal with situations of families with minors in severe material deprivation through the intervention of the Personal Social Services.

The tax reform implemented in January 2015 also included tax incentives to help vulnerable families. It included a more favourable treatment for disabled people, the elderly, and large families regarding personal income taxation. There was a significant increase in exempt personal and family allowances (up to 32%, according to the NRP 2015), with the creation of three new negative taxes for large families, single-parent families with two children and disabled descendants or older family members.¹⁶ One million families were supposed to benefit from these negative tax schemes.¹⁷

2.3.1. Access and eligibility to social assistance

Minimum income schemes (MIS) do not constitute an integrated system in Spain, but rather a series of programs regulated and managed from different state levels. As it occurred in the case of national social assistance unemployment benefits (representing around 60% of MIS benefits in 2012), recent reforms have sought to cut spending by controlling access and limiting entitlements, while at the same time trying to strengthen job insertion by toughening eligibility requirements.

These schemes do not constitute an adequate safety net for vulnerable populations. MIS are fairly ineffective against poverty due to their strict eligibility conditions, the limited magnitude of the cash transfers associated with them (very poorly adjusted to family size), and their failure to adapt to the situation of the long-term unemployed. Data on the number of households without any income, and people at risk of poverty, show the ineffectiveness of MIS in protecting the growing number of severely vulnerable households.

In addition to means-tested criteria, eligibility conditions for regional MIS include age requirements that seriously limit the right of the youth to be covered by these schemes. Except for the regions of Cantabria and the Basque Country (where the minimum age to apply for these benefits is 23), the remaining 15 regions establish an age threshold of at least 25 for individuals to apply for these benefits.

Regional MIS offers significantly different levels of protection as well, generally well below European adequacy standards (Ayala, 2016; Marchal and Van Mechelen, 2014).

In March 2019, the government launched a new Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty

¹⁵ Law 26/2015, 28 July, modification of protection of children and adolescents, <https://goo.gl/iJk34M>.

¹⁶ The amount is 1,200 € per year, accruable for each family situation and whose reimbursement can be sought in advance in monthly payments of 100 € per month in 2015.

¹⁷ NRP 2015, page 129, <http://goo.gl/JJI0QU>.

and Social Exclusion 2019-2023, including the proposal for future deployment of a MIS at the national level for people in need, which should be progressively developed in the coming years.¹⁸ This new scheme (Minimum Income Level) was finally adopted in June 2020 by the new leftist coalition government formed in early 2020. The Minimum Living Income is a non-contributory benefit under the social security system that guarantees a minimum income for households with income under the severe poverty threshold. However, the scheme does not support young people under 23 who are living on their own, unless they have children.

2.3.2. Access and eligibility to social services

Social services responsible for the provision of in-kind services performed very poorly in addressing the social impact of the crisis. Despite focusing its meagre resources in the most urgent situations, they did not prevent the deterioration of the living conditions of large segments of the population. They *de facto* delegated part of the response to social demand in third sector organisations, while local governments' expenditure significantly dropped.

Local social services have had to focus on the most urgent needs by reducing the intensity of social benefits and relinquishing some promotion and prevention activities. Cash benefits for basic needs (food and monetary help) rose from 33% in 2007, then to 50% in 2011, while the amount paid for urgent help more than doubled (from 4%, to 11% in the same period). Coverage rates decreased, remaining unchanged since 2010 (CES, 2017), below the threshold of 1.2 million people. Accordingly, additional demand created by the crisis has been satisfied by large NGOs.

Table 3: Mapping youth oriented Social Welfare Policies in Spain

SOCIAL WELFARE	
Individualised	
Familialised	X

Source: Cantó, 2014; CES, 2017.

2.4. Housing policy

In the context of the crisis, emancipation rates of the youth fell from 2011 since a growing number of young people experienced very significant difficulties in accessing housing (Marí-Klose, Cerviño, Juliá Cano 2018).¹⁹ Public policies gave a very limited answer to the problem of access to affordable housing for the youth.

¹⁸ Estrategia Nacional de Prevención y Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social 2019-2023: <http://bit.ly/2KQkPNo>

¹⁹ Between 2009 and 2017, emancipated young people went from 12.2%, to 8%. Among the 25 to 29 years old, it went from 44.2% to 38.7%. These are very low figures compared to European averages (30% for young people between 20 and 24, and 59% among those aged 25 to 29) (López Navas, 2019).

2.4.1. Access to public housing

Investment in public housing stock remained extremely low, placing Spain in an unusual place in Europe. Moreover, social rent remained an option available only to a very small proportion of young people.

One of the main problems is the low public investment in housing (0.5% of GDP in 2016 according to Eurostat), well below the levels of the period before the economic crisis. For example, public investment in housing decreased from €1.248 billion in 2007, to €584 million in 2016. The limited resources allocated to housing policy cannot modify the model of access to housing, to offer effective solutions or to guarantee access to decent and adequate housing, especially for low-income households (CES, 2017).

2.4.2. Access to and affordability of commercial housing

The basic emancipation subsidy (210€ for four months, which could be accompanied by other economic facilities for young people between the ages of 22 and 30 to access the rental market) that helped to leave their parents' home to tens of thousands of young people in Spain was cancelled in December 2011, but remained in place for those who had the subsidy previously granted. In July 2012, the subsidy amount was reduced to 147€, denying it to all youth pending the study of their application. Between 2008 and 2011, a total of 490,000 people requested the subsidy and 76% were approved (Gentile, 2016).

Law 1/2013²⁰ on measures to strengthen protection of mortgage payers, debt restructuring and social renting, was a result of a Citizens' Legislative Initiative, and suspended eviction for 2 years (subsequently extended to four years in 2015²¹), without altering the mortgage foreclosure proceeding. It protected excluded persons, such as large families, single-parent families with at least two dependent children, families with a child under three, disabled persons, victims of gender violence, and families in which the mortgage debtor was unemployed or had used up social benefits.

The establishment of the Social Housing Fund in 2013²² brought some support to the most vulnerable groups, who lost their home due to eviction (Banco de España, 2016). Evicted persons could remain in the dwelling they had lost on a rental basis.

The reform of March 2017²³ extended the moratorium period for evictions following mortgage foreclosures until March 2020, improved access to housing rental during processes of foreclosure, extended the economic conditions of protection, debt restructuring, and social rent for vulnerable groups.

²⁰ <http://goo.gl/UsDPxb>.

²¹ Royal Decree 1/2015, currently 25/2015 on the second chance mechanism, reducing financial burden and other social measures.

²² Act 1/2013 on measures to strengthen protection of mortgage payers, debt restructuring and social renting, <https://goo.gl/1o3W36>

²³ Royal Decree-law 5/2017 Modifying Law 1/2013 on measures to strengthen the protection of mortgage borrowers, debt restructuring and social rental.

Royal Decree-Law 7/2019 on urgent measures in the field of housing improved the protection of rental contracts and introduced measures to protect from eviction in the case of a mortgage payment. However, it does not apply measures to the empty housing that could form part of the housing offer.

Through a series of schemes to support rental housing, urban rehabilitation, and renovation, the State Housing Plan 2018-2021 seeks to facilitate access to housing for the most vulnerable groups (including the youth) and to reactivate employment in the construction sector. The aim is to rebalance a model of access to housing that is excessively based on ownership and the production of new dwellings (Arriba and Rodríguez Cabrero, 2018). This initiative entails a continuation of the State Housing Plan developed between 2013 and 2016 and extended to 2017. The new plan launches several programmes, including the Rental Assistance (subsidies of up to 40% of the monthly rent are foreseen for low-income households with maximum amounts between €600 and €900 per month for 3 years) and the Youth Assistance (for people under 35 for the rental or purchase of housing in localities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, including either up to 50% of the cost of the rent, with monthly amounts between €600 and €900 for 3 years, or 20% of the purchase price for the acquisition of a dwelling).

The National Strategy for the Prevention and Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2019-2023 includes actions against the loss of housing and support for access to housing for all. In 2020, in response to the economic deterioration provoked by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the new leftist coalition in government enforced new measures to prevent evictions and utilities being cut off.

Table 4: Mapping youth oriented housing policy initiatives in Spain

HOUSING	Universal access	Selective/targeted access
High commodification		X
Low commodification		

Source: Arriba and Rodríguez Cabrero, 2018; Gentile, 2016.

2.5. Health policy

The National Health System (SNS) is a universalistic decentralised system, made up of 17 Regional Healthcare Systems (-SRS- run by each of the Autonomous Regions). Fully financed through general taxation since the early 2000s, the central government is responsible for the basic legislation, while regional health authorities are in charge of the deployment of that basic legislation within their territories.

The process of fiscal consolidation seems to be far from over. According to the 2017-2020 Stability Plan, the Spanish government expected to continue cutting down public spending on healthcare to 5.57 in 2020.²⁴

²⁴ Update of the Stability Program of the Kingdom of Spain, 2017-2020, <https://goo.gl/saV4JU>.

2.5.1. Access to public health care

The 16/2012 Royal Decree “Urgent Measures to Ensure the Sustainability of the SNS”²⁵ brought about a radical change in the philosophical foundation of the SNS by reverting its universalistic ethos and re-introducing an insurance logic in the definition of entitlements. Migrants in an irregular situation (except for minors and pregnant women) were officially left out of SNS, entitled to care only in case of emergency or infectious diseases. Spaniards with income higher than €100,000 per year and not contributing to the Social Security system (who had been included in the SNS only in January 2012, through the 33/2011 Public Health Law) were not considered “insured” and were, therefore, excluded from the system²⁶.

In July 2016, the Constitutional Court issued a ruling cancelling this limitation (STC 139/2016)²⁷, thereby granting access to the SNS again to every Spanish and EU citizen legally residing in Spain. A similar development took place with regards to jobless people older than 26 without benefits and unemployed workers without benefits who leave the country for more than 90 days. Both of these groups, among whom there is a significant number of young workers, were initially excluded from the SNS by the RD 16/2012, although they were later re-introduced into the system under the condition of proving a lack of financial resources. The implementation of this regulation in a profoundly decentralised system created a complex situation with an extremely heterogeneous response from regional health authorities.²⁸ This has somehow increased the levels of administrative discretion, reinforcing inequalities in access to healthcare, and generating conflicts between the central and regional governments over the exact delimitation of competences to define healthcare entitlements²⁹.

The incoming government announced on 15 June 2018 that in the following six weeks it planned to go back to the situation previous to passing the RD 16/2012, which restricted undocumented migrants' access to the SNS.

2.5.2. Public health and raising awareness

Spain's National Strategy on Addictions 2017-2024, builds on the two previous strategies (National Drugs Strategy 2000-2008, and 2009-2016), as well as on the three action plans

²⁵ 6/2012 Royal Decree of urgent measures to guarantee the sustainability of the SNS, <http://goo.gl/ILEV6r>.

²⁶ Those who were not considered “insured” could not open entitlements as “beneficiaries” to their dependent relatives, so these too were excluded from the SNS. The total number of people affected by this restriction was estimated by the Ministry of Health to be around 47,000 (<https://goo.gl/9cCgXs>).

²⁷ Available at <https://goo.gl/EmP7SG>.

²⁸ While certain regions removed their health cards from this group starting in September 2012 (Castile-La Mancha), as dictated by the central government, others did so with exceptions (Madrid, Balears, Castile-Leon, Murcia, and Rioja), a third group explicitly refused to adopt that measure (Andalusia, Asturias), and a last group established alternative schemes to keep attending to this population (Aragon, Basque Country, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Catalonia, Extremadura, Galicia, Navarra, and Valencia) (MDM, 2014).

²⁹ In November 2017, the Constitutional Court issued a favorable ruling to the central government in the case of the extension of health coverage to migrants in an irregular situation in the Basque Country (<https://goo.gl/cALAK5>). A month later it did the same with regards to the case of the Valencian Community (<https://goo.gl/9QUqg3>). In both cases, the TC argued that these Autonomous regions had exceeded their powers when trying to define eligibility criteria to access their SRS, something that remains the exclusive competence of the central government.

developed under those two strategies (the National Action Plan on Drugs 2005-2008, under the 2000-2008 strategy, and the Action Plans on Drugs covering 2009-2012 and 2013-2016, developed under the second National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016). This strategy will be rolled out through two consecutive action plans (2017-2020 and 2021-2024), including a list of actions to be implemented together with the institutions responsible for their implementation.

Although a highly varied and structured array of prevention programmes is on offer in Spain, the coverages of these programmes have been declining since 2009, and the offering is highly focused on education. The main objectives of the new strategy are to reduce the presence and harm associated with the use of substances with addictive potential and behavioural addictions, and to delay the onset age of addictions to legal drugs (tobacco, alcohol), prescription drugs and other substances with addictive potential, illegal drugs. The new strategy also includes non-substance or behavioural addictions, with particular emphasis on betting (offline and online), as well as videogames and other addictions associated with new technologies.

A slight increase in the high-risk consumption of alcohol and other substances and young people particularly has been observed, together with low risk perception and the social “normalisation” of the recreational use of substances (alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, new psychoactive substances, and others), constituting worrying indicators of the tendencies among youth.

Table 5: Mapping youth oriented health policy initiatives in Spain

HEALTH CARE	High (universal) access	Low (status-related; i.e. student, employee) access
High commodification		
Low commodification	X	

Source: Moreno-Fuentes, 2018.

2.6. Active citizenship and youth involvement in decision making

The Youth Council of Spain (CJE) is a platform of youth entities, created by law in 1983 and formed by the Youth Councils of the Autonomous Communities and youth organisations of the state level. It promotes the participation of youth in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. It is currently made up of around 60 youth entities, constituting a platform for reflection and for the exchange of ideas and experiences between the different sensitivities and ideologies that shape the reality of youth associations in Spain. It also aims at channelling the proposals, claims, and complaints arising within the CJE to the State Administration, social agents, and the media. Its objective is to participate in the design of policies that directly or indirectly affect young people and to present alternatives to the problems of this group. It also conducts studies and research to analyse the situation of the youth in Spain and provides services and support to youth entities across the country.

Conclusion

Different socio-economic indicators show how far Spain has come from the “great recession” and the protracted period of fiscal consolidation that accompanied it. The European Council’s CSR on the National Reform Programme (NRP) in 2016 and 2017 highlighted the limitations of the reforms implemented in Spain, combining reductions in social spending with institutional changes, which had a negative impact on the coverage and quality of education, healthcare, personal social services (PSS), and employment services. Certain policies contained within the NRP 2014-2018 may have contributed to reducing labour exclusion. Social inequalities have been reduced slightly from 2015 to the present. However, Spanish social policies are not sufficiently robust to meet the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy regarding active inclusion and poverty reduction.

The logic of social investment, conceived as the creation of quality human capital and active citizenship, is still weak and patchy. It ought to be strengthened in the domains of education, occupational training, active employment policies, and healthcare.

Since the end of 2013, Spanish macroeconomic indicators have improved, and jobs have been created. However, unemployment rates (notably regarding youth and the LTU) continue to be very high, and a high share of the new jobs created are based on temporary contracts (91% in 2017³⁰), something which particularly affects the youth.

The crisis increased unemployment rates and had a negative impact on inequality (the Gini index rose from 0.324 in 2008, to 0.347 in 2014, and slightly fell to 0.341 in 2017). At the same time, wage inequality increased abruptly between 2008 and 2012, largely due to a collapse of incomes at the lower end of the distribution (García-Serrano & Arranz, 2014).

The FOESSA Reports (2014, 2016) reveal how the impact of the crisis in Spain must be analysed not only through the growth in inequality and poverty, but in the weakness of the income and wealth distribution model resulting from three structural changes: a relatively non-competitive productive structure that creates employment only cyclically, based mainly on lower added value activities, a vulnerability affecting a significant section of Spanish society, and a welfare system offering low-level protection (Cantó, 2014).

The general trends of the different social protection schemes of the Spanish welfare regime can be summarised in the following tables.

EDUCATION (HE)	Low stratification	High stratification
High commodification		X*
Low commodification		

* Values are not uniform across regions. Commodification and stratification are particularly high in Madrid and Catalonia, two of the most populated regions

³⁰ Ministry of Employment and Social Security, SEPE (2017) <https://goo.gl/KnQj7L>.

LABOUR MARKET	Compensatory	Preventive
Structure-related	X	
Individualising		

SOCIAL WELFARE	
Individualised	
Familialised	X

HOUSING	Universal access	Selective/targeted access
High commodification		X
Low commodification		

HEALTH CARE	High (universal) access	Low (status-related; i.e. student, employee) access
High commodification		
Low commodification	X	

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