

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2024

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA
A COUNTRY COMMITTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS
AND COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Spain presents its third Voluntary National Review in a context of progressive recovery from a pandemic, with a war at Europe's doorstep and a conflict in Gaza that is threatening to spread, and unprecedented levels of geopolitical instability. Although the world had already experienced multiple crises like the ones we are facing today, this time the response from the Spanish Government could not be more different. This Report sets out Spain's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, always understood from a human rights perspective.

Spain is a strong advocate for social, economic, and environmental justice, confronting inequalities, discrimination and violence, and climate change with a human rights approach. Understood in this way, the 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for a just transition to a sustainable development model that puts people and the planet at its core. The 2030 Agenda is also a mirror of the commitments and obligations that Spain has adopted under international law.

While the financial and economic crisis of 2008 was tackled with austerity measures and curtailments of rights, Spain has now implemented an expansive, solidarity-based response to the current crises, expanding rights and the welfare state towards universality. The positive effects of this rights-respecting response can already be seen in numerous indicators reflected in this Report as a result of the measures deployed by the Government, both to tackle the crises and in compliance with our Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. But much more remains to be done, and this Report also details the challenges we face both nationally and internationally.

This Report first presents the main advances, stagnations, and setbacks in terms of the benchmarks reflected in our Sustainable Development Strategy (I). It analyzes a selection of public policies and regulatory frameworks deployed since the approval of the Strategy in 2021 which, although not an exhaustive list of Spain's efforts in this period, do allow us to identify the main advances made and the pending challenges (II). The Report also describes the strategic progress made by autonomous communities and cities and by local authorities (III). It reports on progress made in the area of policy coherence for sustainable development (IV), and identifies persistent challenges that Spain will prioritize to deliver on the 2030 Agenda (V). In annex, civil society assesses the progress on and weaknesses of the Strategy (Annex I), the National Institute of Public Administration presents the role of the SDGs in the training of public employees (Annex II), the National Statistics Institute provides information on the international SDG indicators for which Spain currently has data (Annex III), and the Defensor del Pueblo (Ombudsperson and National Human Rights Institution) presents its actions in the context of the 2030 Agenda (Annex IV).

Spain's firm commitment to human rights in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is evident in numerous concrete actions. Examples include our participation in three cycles of the Universal Periodic Review, with a fourth committed for 2025; support for the mandates of international human rights mechanisms, with Spain being a candidate for membership to the Human Rights Council for 2025-2027; and the approval of the Second National Human Rights Action Plan (2023-2027), for which the 2030 Agenda and its implementation in Spain through our Sustainable Development Strategy are fundamental instruments. Additionally, the Democratic Memory Law (2022) strengthens the defense of democracy and the social and democratic rule of law, by fostering knowledge of the democratic stages of our history and by preserving the memory of the victims of the Civil War and of Franco's dictatorship, anchored in the principles of truth, justice, redress, and the guarantees of non-repetition.

The risk of poverty or social exclusion is one of the most pressing problems in our country, particularly affecting families with dependent children. This risk, despite being on a downward trend, affects more

than a quarter of the population in Spain, with a higher prevalence in women. The greatest risk factor for poverty or social exclusion in Spain is having dependent children: this risk is 34.7 points higher for single-parent families (80% of which are headed by a woman) than for other households without children. Alarming rates of child poverty also persist (34.5%), as well as among Roma population (98%), people with disabilities (30%), and foreigners born outside the EU (57%). However, income inequality, a problem closely linked to the risk of poverty or social exclusion, has decreased for women and men between 2015 and 2023, both in the s80/s20 indicator and the Gini coefficient, showing a positive trend in the redistribution of income associated with work activity.

The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion (2019-2024) —aligned with the Sustainable Development Strategy, SDG 1, and the European Pillar of Social Rights— was adopted to fight against poverty, invest in education, training, and employment, strengthen the social protection system, facilitate access to housing, and improve the impact of social inclusion policies. This Strategy contemplated measures such as the Minimum Living Income (IMV, in Spanish), approved in 2020 as an entitlement to guarantee a minimum income that allows those who lack it to live a life in dignity. Since then, in cumulative terms, more than 2.4 million people have benefited from this measure. Between 2023 and 2024, the number of beneficiaries has increased by 33.5 per cent (reaching more than 1.7 million today), of which 41.2 per cent are children or adolescents. We must double our efforts to extend the coverage and depth of the protection afforded by this new entitlement so that it reaches all potential beneficiaries.

The protection of the rights of children and young people includes the fight against child poverty, the protection of children and adolescents against any type of violence and discrimination, the promotion of their participation, and the guarantee of the effective right of young people to design and develop their life plans. As part of Spain's commitment to end child poverty, the Child Assistance Supplement (CAPI, in Spanish) is enabling almost half a million families to obtain additional financial support for each child under the age of 18 in the household. CAPI can also become the basis (together with the Income Tax maternity deduction) for a child allowance with greater coverage, to bring us up to levels of protection comparable to our European neighbours. In 2021, the EU invested 2.4% of its GDP in children and families, while Spain invested only 1.5%. We must expand and facilitate access to family protection through mechanisms under the framework of the Families Act, currently under parliamentary consideration.

The Law on the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence (2021) responds to the constitutional mandate to protect children and to the obligations derived from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It provides for a more child-friendly justice system and establishes a framework of obligations for more effective protection by public administrations against any type of violence, including the most serious crimes of abuse, such as sexual harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, or gender-based violence.

The Youth Strategy 2030 (2022) focuses on providing access to public education and affordable housing and generating decent, stable, and well-paid employment opportunities. This Strategy is aligned with the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and is complemented by the Youth Action Plan 2022-2024, which includes an investment of more than 33,330 million euros for youth emancipation, and with the Strategy for the Rights of Children and Adolescents 2023-2030. The recent creation of the Ministry of Youth and Children demonstrates Spain's firm commitment to protecting and guaranteeing their rights.

Guaranteeing the right to adequate and affordable housing, enshrined in Article 47 of the Constitution and in treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, remains a challenge. Housing has become a factor of inequality, poverty, and social exclusion, due to unequal access to wealth, real estate speculation, and pressure on the market from tourist and seasonal rentals. In particular, households renting at market prices face the highest housing costs: 30.6% spent more than 40% of their income on housing in 2023. This figure is around 10 points above the EU average. This situation is due both to the increase in the population percentage in this tenure regime (with an increase of 21.6% in 12 years, mostly in households of people between 16-29 and among those on

lower incomes), as well as the worrying increase in rental prices, which was of 25.2% in this same period. In some areas, increases of up to 50% have been recorded. To address this emergency, the Right to Housing Law (2023) includes measures to increase the supply of affordable and public housing (with an investment of 8.42 billion euros), offers tools to regional and local administrations to regulate rental prices, and protects groups with greater difficulties from evictions without housing alternatives. Its implementation by all administrations will be crucial to guarantee an affordable supply for the population as a whole and, particularly, for young people. This effort must be accompanied by mechanisms to regulate tourist and seasonal rentals (which is estimated to take up a fifth of the private housing stock), and to increase the public housing stock.

Sustainability in urban development is promoted through the Spanish Urban Agenda (2019), which provides methodological tools to develop action plans that integrate sustainability into planning, mobility, climate change, and the quality of architecture. The Architecture Quality Law (2022) seeks to create more inclusive, safe and sustainable environments, where cultural heritage is protected and environmental impacts are minimized. A big challenge will be to adapt cities and buildings to heat waves, which are becoming more numerous and intense in Spain, and to do so we will have to rethink the urban planning model and public buildings with a social perspective that protects the most vulnerable.

We are facing an unprecedented ecological crisis for which we will have to address the climate crisis, pollution, and biodiversity loss by incorporating the social dimension. Public policies aimed at halting and reversing the ecological crisis must ensure that its impacts do not increase existing inequalities, and must also ensure a fair distribution of the costs and benefits of the transition.

Spain has improved on a number of indicators in this area. Compared to the historical maximum in 2005, there has been a positive trend since 2015 with a reduction in GHG emissions equivalent to 11.7%. Electricity generation with renewable energy has continued to grow, and is now above the percentage of non-renewable sources (59.5%); energy intensity also shows a positive evolution, down by 12.7% since 2015; and renewable energy in transport has increased from 1.2% in 1990 to 9.7% in 2022. However, GHG emissions continue above 1990 levels (+2.4%). Spain is committed to the European objective of reducing these gases by 32% in 2030 and to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The evolution of these gases, which come mainly from transportation (30.7% of the total) and industry, and of GDP shows that changes in GDP still have important effects on emissions, and that we need to do more to accelerate absolute, sufficient, and sustained decoupling over time, in line with the Paris Agreement and the SDG target 8.4.

The Climate Change and Energy Transition Act (2021), together with the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (2021-2030) and the Decarbonisation Strategy 2050, is the main framework for achieving climate neutrality by 2050. To achieve this, Spain is in the process of updating its targets and increasing its climate ambition by committing to: reducing its GHG emissions by 32% compared to 1990; increasing renewables to 48%; supplying the electricity system with 81% of renewable energy generation; improving energy efficiency by 44%; and reducing energy dependence by 51%. By 2050, we must reduce emissions from transport and mobility by 98%. To this end, various initiatives have been deployed, including the aforementioned Law and its regulatory developments, the Sustainable Mobility Law (currently under parliamentary consideration), and the Safe, Sustainable, and Connected Mobility Strategy, which establish measures such as the obligation to adopt sustainable urban mobility plans based on population numbers and air quality or the creation of low-emission zones in urban environments. Furthermore, in order to tackle the effects of climate change that we are already experiencing, such as rising temperatures, heat waves, droughts, forest fires, and floods, the 2nd National Plan for Climate Change Adaptation (2021-2030) promotes the mainstreaming of adaptation in all public administrations. With 700 deaths a year due to climate change in Spain, the recent creation of the Health and Climate Change Observatory, which will focus on diagnosing and evaluating the effects of the climate emergency on health, highlights the urgency of tackling this problem transversally. We must also continue to make progress in the democratization of the electricity system and the improvement of self-consumption; and the review of the Energy Poverty Strategy (2019-2024) is an opportunity to move towards universal access to clean and affordable electricity.

We need a just transition that addresses the climate and environmental crisis by accompanying working people and territories affected by the transformations of impacted productive sectors. The Just Transition Strategy, one of the pillars of the Strategic Energy and Climate Framework (2019), creates the tool of Just Transition Agreements to minimize the negative impacts of the ecological transition in coal-fired areas and with closing thermal power plants. Since then, within the framework of social dialogue, tripartite agreements have been signed between the Government, trade unions and companies to ensure that closures take workers into account, maintaining employment in the territories, restoring environmentally degraded areas, and supporting retraining and the search for new employment. This just transition has also been supported by prioritizing these regions in public tenders totalling 2.7 billion. In addition, the Sustainable Mobility Act introduces the obligation for companies with over 500 employees to introduce sustainable mobility plans.

To ensure a just transition that combats the climate crisis and expands people's rights, we must also include public services and social policies in the just transition plans of specific sectors or territories. We need to reform compensatory mechanisms for people who lose their jobs and ensure job retraining processes designed with the participation of the workers themselves, ensuring that women, people of foreign origin, and other vulnerable groups are included.

Protecting biodiversity and marine and terrestrial ecosystems by focusing on their conservation and restoration is a priority. Although the ecological and chemical status of surface and groundwater has remained constant in recent years, and the protection of marine and coastal areas has increased by 166.9% compared to 2016, the increased recurrence of extreme weather events will also critically affect water availability, with important implications for sectors such as agriculture, livestock, forestry, tourism, and human consumption. We can already see these effects in the percentage of degraded land, which has doubled since 2015 (+113.5%). Along with the need to reduce emissions and produce in a more environmentally friendly way, there is therefore an urgency to adapt to the reduced availability of water that all scientific models predict for Spain. Despite these challenges, Spain is committed to sustainability in the agricultural and livestock sector. The agricultural area devoted to organic farming has increased by 66.15% between 2013 and 2022 and ammonia emissions attributable to livestock decreased between 2021 and 2022. Domestic food waste has decreased by 6.1% between these years, and extra-domestic food waste by 11.3%. In order to restore ecosystems, and thus return all damaged, altered or degraded environments to their original condition, we will promote the National Restoration Plan, complying with the EU Regulation on Nature Restoration, and implementing of the National Green Infrastructure Strategy. This effort follows in the wake of projects that have already been undertaken to protect our emblematic aquatic environments, such as Mar Menor or Doñana.

We must change our unsustainable linear economic model, moving towards a circular economy to adapt our forms of production and consumption to the environmental limits of the planet. The consumption of materials in Spain is 2.3% higher than in 2015 and we produce 2.4% more waste per capita. However, the cost of materials per unit of GDP has been reduced by 7.6%, waste recycling has increased by 40.7% in 2021 compared to 2015, and our ecological footprint has improved by 3.9% since 2015. Spain's Circular Economy Strategy 2030, its Action Plan, the creation of the Commissioner for the Circular Economy, and the Law on Waste and Contaminated Land for a Circular Economy (2022) show Spain's commitment to reducing the impacts of resource extraction and transformation and to minimizing waste generation. With an investment of 492 million euros, it also seeks to support companies in sectors with the greatest potential for circularity in the economy, and 40% of the amount disbursed has gone to SMEs.

One of the main pending challenges in Spain is the persistent structural inequality that affects women and girls. This gap is evident in the labour market, where employment rates are always higher for men and at all levels of education, although the difference decreases with higher educational levels. The gap can also be seen in the higher number of women inactive in the labour market due to care work (20.1% compared to 4.9% of men) and in women's double working day, whereby family and household care is

added to the burden of employment. To address this situation, Spain must continue to implement care policies that reduce working time and improve the mechanisms for reconciliation and co-responsibility, through measures such as the remuneration of care periods for dependent children, or the increase to 20 weeks of maternity and paternity leave, among others.

Gender-based violence continues to be a terrible scourge for our country, with data indicating an increase in the proportion of women and girls aged 16 and over who have suffered violence by intimate partners or ex-partners, and a death toll that fluctuates in an unacceptable range of 49-59 since 2015. Faced with these problems, the 3rd Strategic Plan for the Effective Equality of Women and Men (2022-2025) guides the institutional and social changes necessary to achieve real and effective equality between men and women, and includes a comprehensive framework of reforms to address the different expressions of inequality that affect women and their protection against gender-based violence.

In Spanish cooperation policy, gender equality is also a cross-cutting issue, along with the empowerment of women, girls, and adolescents. The Law on Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity (2023) mainstreamed this priority in all cooperation processes and instruments, and between 2021 and 2023, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) tripled its budget to promote women's political participation and economic empowerment. Spain is committed to an explicitly feminist foreign policy, with the will to transform the structures that perpetuate inequalities and unequal access to resources and decision-making spaces.

Discrimination based on race, origin, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression continue to hinder progress towards a free society. Hate crimes, mainly due to racism/xenophobia, sexual orientation and gender identity, and sex/gender discrimination, increased by 40.74% between 2015 and 2022. The 2nd Action Plan to Combat Hate Crimes (2022-2024) seeks to address this reality by improving prevention, investigation and police assistance to victims, avoiding double victimization, and approaching the groups most likely to suffer from these crimes, always in collaboration with civil society and other institutions in this area. The Roma population continues to be a group particularly affected by multiple forms of discrimination in Spain, with reported cases increasing in recent years and in 2022 alone standing at over 500. The National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (2021-2030) seeks to fight against anti-Roma discrimination of this diverse group, integrating the gender perspective, pursuing the improvement of their living conditions, strengthening their participation, and improving public investment in specific measures related to poverty, social exclusion, digital divide, employment, and education.

The reform of Article 49 of the Spanish Constitution (the first modification of social content since its approval in 1978) is a milestone that has brought it in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, determining the obligation for public authorities to promote policies that guarantee their full personal autonomy and social inclusion, in universally accessible environments, and encouraging the participation of their organizations. The reform incorporates a feminist and intersectional approach that motivates the special protection of the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

The Law for the Real and Effective Equality of Trans People and to Guarantee the Rights of LGBTI People (2023) introduces milestones such as the adaptation of public services to guarantee equal treatment, the regulation of registry modifications related to the mention of a person's sex and the adaptation of documents, or the recognition of intersectionality in discrimination. The protection of this group is also a priority for the Spanish cooperation, multiplying by six, between 2017 and 2023, the resources allocated to protect and promote the rights of LGBTI people.

The Spanish economic system has been characterized by insufficient structural diversification and a high degree of concentration and dependence on productive sectors with lower added value, but,

thanks to the rapid deployment of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, this reality is progressively transforming. Despite the pandemic, Spain is now the country with highest growth and lowest inflation rates among the main European countries, having recovered its pre-pandemic real GDP in the third quarter of 2022, 9 months earlier than expected. The service sector maintains its predominance, with a contribution to the total value generated by the country in 2022 of 74.6% (within which tourism activity reached 11.6% of GDP), followed by industry (17.4%), construction (5.4%), and agriculture (2.6%). In terms of evolution, the greater relative weight of the industry stands out, increasing by 1.6 percentage points since 2019 and demonstrating the positive effect of the commitment to R&D and innovation.

It is crucial to continue transforming our production model by ensuring the ecological and digital transition of the economy, increasing the weight of the social and solidarity economy, and guaranteeing investment in R&D and innovation. The Spanish Social Economy Strategy 2023-2027, following the approval of investments in this and the care fields worth 1.7 billion, seeks to support the recognition and visibility of this sector, which accounts for 10% of GDP and contributes to 12.5% of employment in Spain. On the other hand, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 99.8% of enterprises and 53.3% of total business employment in Spain. The Strategic Framework on SME Policy 2030 supports these enterprises by recommending areas of action for public administrations to prioritize in their policies. The Destination Tourism Sustainability Plans, deployed by more than 500 local administrations with an average financial boost of 3 million each, aim to transform the tourism sector so that it preserves natural and cultural resources for future generations and improves the quality of life of local communities. Following the same logic, the Law on Measures to Improve the Functioning of the Food Chain (2021) prohibits the destruction of value in the food chain and practices of selling at a loss to promote fairer trade relations. Investment has also been made in 5G infrastructure, the penetration of which has increased by more than 23 points between 2021 and 2022 alone. Spain is also committed to investment in R&D and innovation, with spending as a proportion of GDP of 1.44% in 2022. In addition, the Law on Science, Technology, and Innovation (2022) guarantees public funding for R&D and innovation at 1.25% of GDP and, adding private investment, 3% by 2030. This Law also improves the working conditions of researchers, seeks to attract international talent, and integrates gender equality as a fundamental axis. In order to facilitate the participation of workers in decision-making in their company, initiatives to improve the democratization of companies will be promoted within the framework of social dialogue and in line with Article 129 of the Constitution.

We must move towards a more modern, progressive, and green tax system. Taxation is an essential instrument to redistribute wealth, finance public services, reduce inequalities, and incentivize the ecological transition. To this end, measures have been developed to improve its progressivity and alignment with the 2030 Agenda, such as the solidarity tax on large fortunes; the establishment of temporary levies on productive sectors; the approval of the tax on financial transactions; or the reduction of VAT on basic products and energy in order to alleviate the price hike in services and basic products resulting from the invasion of Ukraine. New taxes have also been developed to promote the circular economy and tax landfills and the incineration of waste, and non-reusable plastic packaging. In addition, the Law on Measures to Prevent and Combat Tax Fraud (2021) includes important measures such as the extension of the concept of tax havens, the prohibition of tax amnesties, and the improvement of the regulation of investment companies with variable capital (SICAVs). At the international level, the mobilization of domestic public resources through fair taxation is also a chapter of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and is a debate that Spain will promote as host country of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development.

Spain has made great strides in promoting a labour market with more rights and that is more equitable, inclusive, stable, and of good quality. In 2024, we have historic job creation figures, especially among women and young people. We have more people affiliated to social security, better activity rates among young people, lower rates of unemployment, seasonality, and part-time work, and better salaries than in 2015. The 2021 labour reform has strengthened collective bargaining and in two years it has halved the high rates of temporary employment in the private sector, to 13.2%, below the EU average. In this period, Spain has taken the lead in the EU in the creation of permanent employment, with an increase of 3 million people. Between 2015 and 2024, the number of people affiliated to social security increased by almost 32%. In addition, the percentage of young people under 24 who are neither studying

nor working, nor in training fell from 15.64% in 2015 to 10.49% in 2022. Early drop-out rates from education and training among the population aged 18-24 also fell by just over 50% and, since the approval of the labour reform, the temporary employment rate of people under 30 has fallen by 20 points. Between 2015 and 2023, the unemployment rate decreased by 9.1 points. Although this phenomenon affects more women than men (3.06 points more in 2023), 9.8 million women are currently in employment, marking the highest number ever recorded. Unemployment reveals, however, a gender and age bias: 65.6% of women over 40 take more than a year to find a job, compared to 58.9% of men in that age bracket. Temporary work, which in 2015 affected 25.7% of contracts as a result of job cuts after the 2008 crisis, has reached an all-time low of 13.4%. These improvements have also had an effect on women, for whom the temporary employment rate of newly registered contracts was 98.3% in 2015, and now stands at 57.4%. Part-time employment was reduced in this period, from 15.7% to 13.5%.

In the framework of social dialogue, the minimum interprofessional wage increased by 54% since 2018 (around 400 euros more per month), thus complying with the revised European Social Charter by representing 60% of the average net wage, an obligation that will be included in the next amendment of the Workers' Statute. Despite this increase, foreigners earn on average 27.7% less than those with Spanish citizenship, and the wage gap between people with and without disabilities stood at 82.8% in 2021. The gender pay gap, however, decreased by 25% between 2018 and 2024. Spain will continue to develop an economic and labour market policies aimed at converging with European employment rates, with particular attention to young people, those in long-term unemployment, and other vulnerable groups, as well as a wage policy that ensures a fair distribution of income between employers and employees. It is also necessary to continue to improve the protection of the unemployed, extending the coverage of groups that cannot access unemployment benefits, as well as the functioning of active employment policies. We must also move towards a more equitable distribution of time, giving more space to care and rest by reducing the maximum legal working day, without a reduction in pay, to 37.5 hours a week, progressively, until 2025. This measure will reorganize the distribution of time, promote gender equality, and involve companies in co-responsibility for care. Finally, it is crucial to address the reform of the Workers' Statute to bring it in line with the demands and realities of the world of work in the 21st century and to continue to expand labour rights.

We have reversed the underfunding of public services, decimated after the cuts of the 2008 crisis, and brought them closer to average European investment levels. Public investment in education accounted for 4.4% of GDP in 2022, thus fulfilling the commitment to invest between 4 and 6% adopted in the UNESCO Paris Declaration. In health, investment stood at 6.9% of GDP, 0.7 points higher than in 2015. And in social protection, investment was 18.8%, reducing the gap with the EU-27 average investment from 2.5 points in 2015 to just 0.7 in 2022. In this area, we can highlight the increase in the contribution of the National Administration to the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency (SAAD), a key pillar of the welfare state in Spain, by 150% between 2020 and 2023. But we must continue to address the underfunding of social services and ensure a strong egalitarian framework in the face of the current territorial fragmentation. The aim must be to advance the universality of the social protection system in order to reduce economic inequality and eradicate poverty.

Public investment in education has had a positive impact on guaranteeing the right to an inclusive, equitable, and quality education. The number of teachers has increased (more than 87 % of whom benefit public schools) and repetition rates continue to fall. The 2020 Education Act (LOMLOE) promotes the expansion of the first cycle of early childhood education (0-3 years), emphasizing the need to facilitate access for children at risk of poverty and social exclusion, and declares the second cycle to be free of charge. This is a highly relevant measure given the importance of this educational level in later school success and the close link between educational levels and the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In this sense, the creation of new public places for 0- to 2-year-olds has allowed the school enrolment rate to rise to 45.9% in the 2022/2023 school year, and specifically for 2-year-olds to 71.2%. The overall amount allocated to grants has increased by 39.7%, benefiting 2.7 million people, which represents an increase of 11.2% from the 2019/2020 school year. Vocational Training, modernized through the new 2022 Law, has a key role to play in generating opportunities for employability in stable and high-quality employment, with an increase by 41.8% in its student body since 2015. The rates of entry into the labor

market, three years after graduation, have also risen sharply.

The National Healthcare System, despite budgetary efforts, continues to recover from the pandemic period. In a context of maintaining the indicator of unmet medical need at values close to 0%, the 14.13% increase between 2017 and 2022 in visits to primary care stands out, demonstrating the need to focus greater efforts on this level of care, which is key to guaranteeing the right to public and universal healthcare. Especially significant is the 488% increase in demand for healthcare in the case of mental health. In response, the Mental Health Strategy (2022-2026), the Mental Health Action Plan (2022-2024), and the creation of the Mental Health Commissioner in 2023, raise the relevance of this issue on the national agenda. Given the close link between mental health and social determinants including adequate housing, security, job stability, or access to health and social services, the Commissioner seeks to develop a comprehensive approach to mental health in all policies at all levels of government.

Guaranteeing universal social protection as a human right must include strengthening the third and fourth pillars of the welfare state: pensions and long-term care. Fulfilling its obligations in this area, the Government has strengthened the budget for pensions and the SAAD, two fundamental pillars of this right. Pensions have been reassessed in line with average annual inflation, with the average pension increasing by more than 20% since 2020, and the number of SAAD benefits increased by 88.61% since 2015, covering 92% of benefits out of total claims for the first time in December 2023. Waiting lists have been reduced by 35% between December 2020 and 2023 thanks to the Action Plan on Dependency (2021-2023), designed to reinforce this system and guarantee more adequate and personalized care. This will continue to be reinforced through the new State Strategy for a new model of community care, which will lay the foundations for a new model of long-term care that guarantees lives in dignity and with more rights for those under care and those providing care. We must guarantee a right to care from a feminist and inclusive perspective that addresses entrenched inequalities in the distribution of care.

Spain is proactive in the fight against global injustices, including threats to human rights, democratic principles, and the sustainability of the planet. We are in a context of increasing levels of extreme poverty worldwide, significant inequalities between and within countries, and worrying increases in CO₂ emissions in absolute terms. Increasing population and life expectancy are demographic changes that we will have to cope with, along with the growth of cities, where around 55% of the world's population already lives. Climate change is also expected to cause the forced displacement of up to 700 million people by 2030. In 2021, conflict, violence, and disasters caused the internal migration of 38 million people, the second highest number in a decade. The Spanish international cooperation is firmly committed to sustainable development, human rights, and peace; a commitment evidenced in the Law on International Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Global Solidarity (2023). In 2023, Spain's Official Development Assistance represented 0.24% of Gross National Income, the twelfth largest donor in the OECD Development Assistance Committee. This Law obliges Spain to reach 0.7% by 2030. Between 2018 and 2022, Spain increased investment by more than 66%, especially in ODA aimed at gender equality, the elimination of violence against women and girls, and environmental protection. The right to high-quality education is also an objective of Spain's international cooperation policy, as a priority area of action in our partnership frameworks with many countries.

Tackling the demographic challenge requires addressing depopulation, ageing, territorial dispersion, the gap in socio-economic opportunities, and unequal access to public services in urban and rural areas. With 83.8% of municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants and 1.9% with more than 100,000, Spain is a country of large overpopulated cities in coastal areas and with a clear north-south gradient, and with rural areas in the process of depopulation, mainly in the interior. This imbalance also features a gender gap that continues to widen, with a particularly high concentration of female population in large cities, and a predominantly male population in the rural world. Access to public services is also unequal, despite the efforts made in recent years. Many municipalities with challenging demographics do

not have educational centres, pharmacies, or high-quality communication infrastructures for accessing medical and hospital services. However, the urban-rural gap in terms of the risk of poverty and social exclusion has been reduced from 8.6 points in 2015, to 5.5 in 2023. The 130-Measure Plan to address the demographic challenge (2021) focuses on strengthening decentralized public services in rural areas, particularly in the fields of health, education, vocational training, social services, and dependency. In order to guarantee the right to grow old and live independently in the social environment, priority has been given, among other areas, to care for dependency from a social and community perspective, promoting community and proximity care systems in rural environments. It also includes a gender focus as a fundamental axis, among others, giving financial support to women's entrepreneurship and their employability in the territory and guaranteeing security, care, and assistance resources for victims of violence against women in rural areas. The LOMLOE also includes measures to improve schooling, school transport and canteens, internet access, and other resources to ensure high-quality education in rural areas. Finally, the 334% increase in broadband coverage compared to 2015 is significant, an aspect that is a relevant factor for improving economic opportunities, access to public services, and population retention in rural areas and areas at risk of depopulation.

Understanding the 2030 Agenda from a human rights perspective also means that its implementation must embody human rights principles such as participation, transparency, and accountability. Spain has set up a multi-level governance system for the 2030 Agenda, with a Government Commission with ministerial representatives at the highest level, a Sectoral Conference with representatives from all the autonomous communities and the Federation of Local and Provincial Entities (FEMP), and the Sustainable Development Council, a formal space for articulating the participation of civil society. In addition, multilevel governance is strengthened in sectoral issues affecting sustainable development, with intergovernmental collaboration bodies, sectoral cooperation with autonomous communities, and the participation of civil society and other stakeholders. Mechanisms such as mid-term and final evaluations of measures contained in strategies and plans, the monitoring of indicators in progress reports, or specific compliance guarantee bodies ensure the transparency and accountability of government action. The 4th Open Government Plan (2020-2024) and the Law for the Institutionalization of Public Policy Evaluation in the National Administration (2022) complement Spain's efforts to ensure the transparency and evaluation of public policies to which we are committed.

The 2030 Agenda calls for collaboration between government entities and civil society to achieve the SDGs, with an emphasis on cooperation between regional and local governments in Spain. These governments have taken an active role, establishing governance structures and evaluation systems to measure progress and integrating the SDGs into budget and policy processes. Thus, in 2024, 68.42% of the autonomous communities in Spain had plans to implement the 2030 Agenda, and 63.1% stated that they had defined indicators to evaluate the impact of their public policies. In addition, 12 autonomous communities and the Autonomous City of Ceuta have established governance mechanisms among the different areas of the autonomous government to coordinate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and 68.4% have coordination mechanisms with local entities. Likewise, 12 regional governments and Ceuta have mechanisms for the participation of civil society, the private sector, and academia. Most have aligned their budgets with the SDGs, and 10 regional governments and Ceuta have incorporated policy alignment with the SDGs. The main challenges facing autonomous communities and cities include further strengthening citizen participation and policy coherence to achieve the SDGs.

Local entities, due to their proximity to citizens and scope of competence, are key to implementing the 2030 Agenda. In this sense, FEMP, through its Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, promotes awareness and implementation of the SDGs through institutional strengthening and the involvement of local stakeholders, standing out internationally as a good practice for bringing together 632 local governments that together represent a population of more than 31 million people. The Network facilitates the exchange of practices and offers tools such as localization and budget alignment guides and indicators, creating a common framework based on the pillars of the 2030 Agenda.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD), an approach that recognizes the interdependence of SDGs and the need to balance economic, social, and environmental dimensions, is a priority for Spain. Initiatives have been developed for the training of public employees in this area, progress in proposals for regulatory alignment with the SDGs, improvement of budget alignment, as well as the reporting and measurement of indicator 17.14.1 in 2023, which evaluates the degree of progress in the adoption of PCSD. In addition, the creation of the National Foresight and Strategy Office is evidence of the adoption of a holistic and long-term perspective in the formulation and evaluation of public policies, seeking to ensure their coherence and effectiveness. Spain will continue to promote multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance in order to advance in the area of PCSD. The mid-term revision of the Sustainable Development Strategy, planned for 2024-2025, will continue to explore these actions with a view to designing a National Integrated PCSD System.