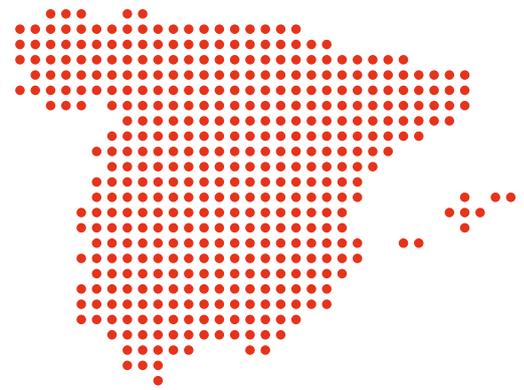


Social Rights Monitor

2021

Country Monitor:
Spain



solidar



TOGETHER FOR
SOCIAL EUROPE

SOLIDAR's Spanish National Strategy Group (NSG) remains concerned over persistent social exclusion; poverty, unemployment, and high gender inequalities in employment contexts and beyond; and the lack of accessible healthcare and decent housing. The social fabric had not fully recovered from the 2008 financial crisis, but it is now being further damaged by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The NSG says there is a strong need to strengthen trade union membership and collective bargaining power in order to improve working conditions, which are a priority for making Spain a more equal country where public services are widely accessible.

	2018	2019	2020	EU-27 2020
GINI index¹	33.2	33	32.1	30.2 (2019)
Unemployment²	15.3%	14.1%	15.5%	7.1%
Gender Equality Index³	70.1	72.0	72.0	67.9
In-work poverty⁴	13.0%	12.8%	11.8%	9.2 % (2019)
Housing Overcrowding⁵	4.7%	5.9%	7.6%	17.1% (2019)
CIVICUS Civic Space Monitor⁶	NARROWED	NARROWED	NARROWED	N/A

Selected indicators on the state of social rights in Europe

Missing data for 2020 are not available at the time of publication of the Social Rights Monitor 2021.

Equal opportunities and fair working conditions

The Spanish National Strategic Group reports that legislative changes over working conditions and labour rights were undertaken because of the pandemic. In particular, emphasis was put on the prevention of occupational risks and the protection of health and safety at work. According to the Spanish trade union Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.), the Temporary Redundancy Programmes (“ERTE – Expediente de Regulación Temporal de Empleo”⁷) have proved useful. **Around 4 million workers temporarily dismissed during the hardest phase of the pandemic had been at risk of losing their**

jobs. Nevertheless, structural problems were magnified, especially exposing the increased precariousness of temporary contracts, poor work-life balance, the gender pay gap, and the absence of a monitoring body to oversee the working conditions of the self-employed. One of the main priorities identified by the National Strategy Group to tackle these issues and ensure fair working conditions and equal access to the labour market is to strengthen trade union membership and unions’ collective bargaining power. Moreover, greater value needs to be placed on female participation, particularly in sectors that were seen to be crucial

1 Eurostat (2021). Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?lang=en&-dataset=ilc_di12

2 Eurostat (2021). Unemployment by sex and age: annual data: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en

3 European Institute for Gender Equality (2021). Gender Equality Index: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/ES>

4 Eurostat (2021). In-work at-risk-of-poverty-rate : <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm070/default/table?lang=en>

5 Eurostat (2021). Overcrowding rate by age, sex and poverty status – total population: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvho05a/default/table?lang=en

6 CIVICUS (2021). Civic Space Monitor - Spain: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/spain/>

7 ERTE, Expediente de Regulación Temporal de Empleo, is regulated in the Spanish Workers’ Statute – Estatuto de los Trabajadores.

during the year, such as national healthcare and public education. The National Strategy Group also calls for the development of better policies to fight the increasing discriminatory and fascist discourse that is developing across the country. This often prevents vulnerable people from receiving equal treatment in a fair labour market.

Among the measures adopted by the government, the National Strategy Group highlights the positive impact of two specific measures: the regularisation of migrant workers⁸ and the subsidy introduced for domestic workers.⁹

PRECARIOUSNESS AND ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

The National Strategy Group points out that the recovery measures adopted in 2019 to tackle increasing labour precariousness¹⁰ did not prove efficient in coping with the social and economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis. Indeed, research published by the NGO Oxfam Intermón on the occasion of the 2021 Davos Forum found that working conditions are deteriorating and acting as catalysts for inequality.¹¹ In addition, the economic sectors with the lowest salaries are those being more affected by the pandemic measures. In the third trimester of 2020, the unemployment rate increased by 2.4 percentage points,¹² but this was mitigated by the positive impact of ERTE. Migrant workers found themselves in a particularly precarious

situation because of their vulnerable administrative status: administrative irregularities and short-term residency permits and contracts influence the stability of their situation in Spain. Generally speaking, **the pandemic disproportionately hit young, low-skilled, and temporary workers.**¹³ Data collected by the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration¹⁴ demonstrates that temporary employment helped workers and companies in the short term. But it also highlighted the need to strengthen permanent contracts to reverse the trend of increasing unemployment.¹⁵

According to the annual labour force survey issued by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE – National Institute of Statistics), the number of employed people continues to decrease. More than 137,000 people lost their jobs between the last quarter of 2019 and the beginning of 2020.¹⁶ Despite countermeasures, young workers were hit worse than other groups: unemployment among people up to 20 years old increased 55% from 2019. According to Eurostat, **Spain has the largest share of unemployed youth in the EU-27, at 41.7% compared to an EU average of 17%.** The Plan de Choque por el Empleo Joven 2019-2021 (Shock Plan for Youth Employment) aimed to improve competitiveness by increasing the participation of young people in the labour market.¹⁷ It consisted of around 50 structural measures, which aimed to increase the quality of employment, close the gender gap, and reduce youth unemployment. The National Strategy Group reports that the most effective

8 INE (2020) Encuesta de Población Activa – EPA <https://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/daco4211/epa0220.pdf>

9 Eurofund (2020) Extension of the extraordinary subsidy for lack of activity to domestic workers: https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/ES-2020-14_617.html

10 Eurofound (2019) Labourmarket segmentation: Piloting new empirical and policy analyses https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef19033en.pdf

11 Oxfam Intermón (2021). Superar la pandemia y reducir la desigualdad [Overcoming the pandemics and reducing inequalities]: <https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/2izodgd8e3eeqg51cl20qx8pf3xyf78q>

12 Ibid.

13 Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934232162>

14 Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration: <https://www.inclusion.gob.es/en/index.htm>

15 OECD (2021), Economic Survey: Spain 2021. <https://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Spain-2021-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

16 Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2021) Encuesta de Población Activa: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=4028>

17 SEPE (2018) Shock Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021: <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/en/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/plan-de-choque-empleo-joven-2019-2021>

measures of the plan include those that ensure a long-term commitment to the young people and university students who will soon enter the labour market.

The National Strategy Group highlights how the concept of precariousness can also be applied to the social sphere, where the confinement had a strong negative impact. Physical and mental health were more at risk for precarious and vulnerable groups, who did not have sufficient means and tools to find alternative ways of living, working, and studying. Moreover, gender-based violence dramatically increased during the lockdowns. There was a 48% increase in calls to specialised telephone helplines and a 733% increase in online consultations with experts, the Spanish National Strategy Group reported.

GOOD PRACTICE

The Instituto de la Juventud de España InJuve¹⁸ (Spanish Youth Institute), an initiative of the Ministry of Social Rights, covered themes of crucial importance for the young generation. The institute created a booklet containing a collection of the best policy responses from governments worldwide, selected for their responses to the challenges that affect youth and for programmes that represent real alternatives for youth. The compilation of 20 Good Practices in Public Youth Policies,¹⁹ carried out jointly by OIJ, UNDP, UNFPA, ECLAC, and UNESCO, was presented during the XXII Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in November in Cadiz.

GENDER EQUALITY

A 2020 constitutional provision makes the principle of gender equality compulsory in all public policies and legal frameworks,²⁰ and the Spanish Royal Decree Law 6/2019²¹ on gender equality was approved in 2019. The National Strategy Group reports that these led to important improvements in the domain of equal treatment and opportunities, as well as a reduction in discrimination – both direct and indirect – against women in the field of employment and occupation.

The Royal Decrees 901/2020 and 902/2020 provided for concrete actions, such as the creation and implementation of an “Equality Plan” for all companies with more than 150 employees. The decrees also described the scope of these plans and the procedure for their negotiation and implementation. In addition, the decrees oblige companies to be transparent over equal pay from April 2021: they have to publish sufficient and meaningful information on their levels of remuneration. This allows authorities, trade unions, and other organisations to more easily detect discrepancies and the presence of discrimination. These measures apply to all companies with more than 150 employees and are binding requirements. Companies have to keep a pay register and set up a remuneration audit. The National Strategy Group welcomes these initiatives and supports the presence of workers’ representatives in companies as an effective way of advancing gender equality at work.

However, the National Strategy Group points out that the measures undertaken by the government are welcome but not sufficient. **There**

18 Injuve, Ministerio de derechos sociales y Agenda 2030: [Injuve, Instituto de la Juventud](#).

19 Injuve (2020). 20 Buenas prácticas en políticas públicas de juventud / 20 Good practices in youth public policies. [www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/20buenaspracticasyjuventud.pdf](#)

20 State Official Newsletter (2020) Spanish Constitution <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229>

21 Spanish Government, <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rdl/2019/03/01/6/con>

is a lack of policies aimed at reconciling work and families, supporting domestic workers, and reducing persistent gender segregation. Improvements in this area would contribute to a more equal society in Spain and Europe. Despite the government measures, there are dramatic inequalities: the rate of full-time equivalent (FTE) employment is 37.7% for women compared to 52% for men, according to a 2021 report issued by the European Institute of Gender Equality.²² Worryingly, the allocation of time dedicated to care and domestic work presents serious challenges for gender equality: 84.5% of women report doing housework every day, compared to 42% of men.²³ The European Institute of Gender Equality finds that women are also strongly underrepresented as members of political bodies: only 41% of Spanish ministers and 39% of members of parliament are women. The share is even lower for women board members, at only 23.6% in the largest quoted companies.²⁴

The National Strategy Group reports that more measures encouraging co-responsibilities are therefore needed. It welcomes the introduction – from 1 January 2021 – of equal parental leave of 36 months. Nevertheless, parental leave in Spain is unpaid, and self-employed workers are not eligible for it.²⁵ Due to the pandemic and consequences such as teleworking and lockdowns, many people experienced overload and burnouts due to an increased amount of work. As women are mainly responsible for housework in Spain, they benefitted from the introduction of Royal Decree 8/2020, which allows more-flexible working hours, including a reduction for people caring for family members.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

The pandemic exposed some of the structural weaknesses of the country, after the State of Emergency introduced limitations on mobility and social and economic activities. Although it is still too early to measure the medium- and long-term effects on welfare and the labour market, some trends are identifiable. One major problem is that, before the pandemic's outbreak, employment levels and the economic conditions in Spain had still not fully recovered from the 2008 financial crisis.²⁶ The pandemic and the containment measures therefore halted the recovery and even put further pressure on vulnerable groups – in particular women, migrants, and young workers.

Despite measures to mitigate the negative impacts of Covid-19 on employment and the economy, new measures for working life and conditions have been implemented, such as the introduction of a minimum living income and a regulation on telework. However, the National Strategy Group thinks it dangerous that telework has not been precisely regulated, and it calls for a more detailed framework: during the past months, telework led to an increase in overtime, which was often unpaid and not recognised by employers. On the other hand, the introduction of the Ingreso Mínimo Vital (Minimum Vital Income) – aimed at preventing the risk of poverty and social exclusion – was approved by Royal Decree Law 20/2020. Though this is a positive development fuelled by the Covid-19 crisis, the National Strategy Group points out that its complexity is delaying effective deployment and hindering concrete results in improving equal opportunities for recipients.

22 EIGE (2021). Gender Equality Index – Spain. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/domain/work/ES>

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Spanish Government, Excedencia por cuidado de hijos: https://www.mites.gob.es/es/Guia/texto/guia_7/contenidos/guia_7_16_2.htm

26 Molina, O., (2021). Working Life in Spain in 2020. Centre d'Estudis Sociològics sobre la Vida Quotidiana i el Treball – QUIT, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona – UAB <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/country/spain#working-life>

The National Strategy Group recognizes that ERTE, the temporary redundancy programme to avoid layoffs, was the main success in government employment policies.

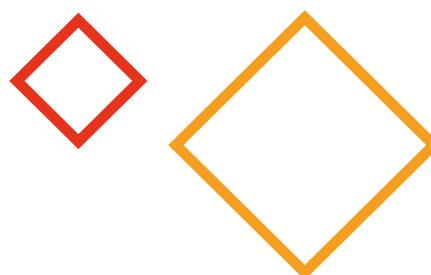
It covered and protected a significant number of workers from unemployment (498,000 in just the last quarter of 2020).²⁷ At the end of 2020, a slight increase in employment levels was recorded by the Spanish statistics institute INE, particularly in the private sector. Nevertheless, 80% of the new contracts are temporary, indicating a precarious situation in the Spanish labour market.

In Spain, as all across Europe and beyond, the pandemic completely changed education and learning. This had a huge impact on younger children, as they are at high risk of poverty in Spain: one out of three depend on school meals for nutrition.²⁸ Moreover, online learning endangered personal growth and development, particularly for children from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. Children living in crowded households often lacked the necessary tools and equipment for learning, or else they had to share tools, and they rapidly fell behind at school.

Migrants and newcomers were also particularly disadvantaged throughout the year. They often suffered more than others from the pandemic, due to precarious and overcrowded housing conditions, which favour contagion and make lockdowns harder.

The closure of social spaces that organised inclusion activities and training made it even more difficult, if not impossible, for newcomers to build trusted networks and safe spaces to live, share, and recover from a difficult situation. Moreover, the digital divide is evident among young migrant students and learners, worsening their learning environment and outcomes.

Nevertheless, the NSG points out that the Spanish government has adopted other measures to protect migrants during the year. These include the extension of residency for asylum seekers, by simplifying family reunification procedures, and the introduction of telematic application forms for victims of gender violence to request provisional permits.



27 INE (2021) EPA – Encuesta de Población Activa https://www.ine.es/prensa/epa_tabla.htm

28 EAPN Spain (2021), Poverty Watch 2020: https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EAPN-EAPN-SPAIN-POVERTY-WATCH-2020_ENG_FINAL-4708.pdf

Social protection and inclusion

According to the National Strategy Group, the pandemic hit Spain very hard, with severe consequences for both the economy and society. According to a report on the Spanish economy by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),²⁹ a durable and sustainable recovery will be achieved only by addressing pre-existing structural challenges, including the labour market, and by correctly supporting and protecting employment. Inequalities remain very high, and the most affected groups remain women, young people, foreigners, single parents, and the unemployed. In order to tackle inequalities and foster social protection and inclusion, the National Strategy Group identifies three priority areas: addressing poverty, increasing access to healthcare, and improving housing policy.

In February 2020, the European Commission Country Report³⁰ warned Spain to tackle precarious employment and structural unemployment, which have led to high rates of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. In 2020, 21% of the population was affected by these problems,³¹ while 5.4% of households cannot afford a meal with meat at least every other day.³²

Throughout the year, Spanish policies failed to meet the goals they were set, and the consequences of the pandemic aggravated

socio-economic conditions. At the end of 2020, the increase in child poverty stood out, affecting 27.4% of children – 35% higher than the rate for people older than 18.³³ In addition, inequality increased, and the net income of the poorest 20% of the population is one-sixth that of the richest 20%.³⁴ Moreover, the country needs to tackle geographical disparities in the distribution of people at risk of poverty and exclusion, who are concentrated in the south of the country, where this rate is four times that in the north.

Severe material deprivation – indicating severe vulnerability and a lack of basic tools considered essential for participation in the community – increased sharply from 2008 and was worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. Material deprivation is higher among single-parent households, many of which are headed by women, according to the INE's Encuesta de condiciones de vida 2020 (Living Conditions Survey).

Despite a decrease in inequality of disposable income, Spain remains among the most unequal EU countries,³⁵ most likely due to the common use of temporary contracts that do not qualify for unemployment benefit and thus generate precariousness and low incomes. Moreover, 13% of the work force suffers from

29 OECD (2021), Economic Survey: Spain 2021. <https://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Spain-2021-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>

30 European Commission (2020) 2020 European Semester: Country Report – Spain: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1584543810241&uri=CELEX%3A52020SC0508>

31 INE (2021) Life Conditions Survey 2020: <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9958>

32 Ibid.

33 EAPN Spain (2021), Poverty Watch 2020: https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/EAPN-EAPN-SPAIN-POVERTY-WATCH-2020_ENG_FINAL-4708.pdf

34 Ibid.

35 EU Commission, Country Report Spain, 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2020-european-semester-country-report-spain_en.pdf

in-work poverty, particularly young workers.³⁶ In this regard, the National Strategy Group points to the introduction of the new Minimum Vital Income, which was established in May 2020 by the Spanish Royal Decree Law 20/2020. The Minimum Vital Income is a non-contributory social security benefit aimed at providing economic coverage to people living in conditions of severe material deprivation. It is part of a policy framework called the Escudo social (social shield), which aims to lift more than 1 million people out of poverty.

Poor and vulnerable people also suffer from scarce access to health treatment, medication, and medical teams. Based on data collected by the European Health Survey 2020, there is a huge gender gap in access to healthcare. According to the survey, 12.94% of women report excessive delay or being unable to access medical care over the last year. In addition, 2.19% report being unable for financial reasons to access medical care, 10.04% unable to access dental care, 1.34% unable to access prescription drugs, and 1.02% unable to access mental health care. Among men, financial reasons prevent 1.49% from accessing medical care, 8.82% from accessing dental care, 0.76% from accessing drugs, and 0.48% from accessing mental health care)³⁷

According to the National Strategy Group, significant concerns remain over housing affordability. The pandemic exacerbated existing problems connected to housing policy in Spain, including construction deficiencies, severely overcrowded households, and limited access to basic utilities. The Plan Estatal de Vivienda 2018-2021 (Housing State Plan)³⁸ aimed to bring about structural improvements, such as

improving the quality of buildings – their physical conditions, energy efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability – and facilitating young people’s access to decent and adequate housing. Nevertheless, young people – whose access to housing is closely related to their presence in the labour market with permanent contracts – are still paying incredibly high amounts to have a place to live. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) 2020 report on housing Informe de posición sobre Vivienda 2020 (Position Paper on Housing), finds that young people spend 91.2% of their net salaries on rent.³⁹ The National Strategy Group also highlights that buildings are often not accessible to people with physical disabilities. Only 22.9% of buildings provide safe spaces for people with disabilities, leading more than 4 million people to live in a house that does not respond to individual needs.⁴⁰

JUST TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY

The transition towards a green economy in Spain features many aspects, plans, and actors. Nevertheless, the National Strategy Group finds that the overarching framework for the development of just transition policies in the country is the European Green Deal and related policies. Spain is trying to invest in environmentally friendly technologies to support industrial innovation, decarbonise the energy sector through energy efficiency, and deploy cleaner and cheaper public transport systems. These points were largely included in the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan, approved in April 2021, which will provide Spain with €140 billion by 2026 with which to boost

36 INE, (2021). Encuesta de condiciones de vida 2020 / Living Conditions Survey: https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176807&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976608

37 INE (2021). European Health Survey 2020: <https://www.ine.es/dynt3/inebase/es/index.htm?type=pcaxis&path=/t15/p420/a2019/p05/&file=pcaxis>

38 Royal Decree 106/2018 of 9 March regulating the State Housing Plan 2018-2021: <https://goo.gl/NdeEtZ>

39 EAPN (2021), El derecho a una Vivienda adecuada y Digna, Informe de posición sobre Vivienda 2020. [The right to adequate and decent housing] https://www.eapn.es/ARCHIVO/documentos/documentos/1588750014_informe-vivienda.pdf

40 Ibid.

investments and make reforms. Spain's plan includes an important and ambitious agenda of investments and structural reforms with the objective of a greener, more digital, and more socially cohesive country.⁴¹

The Spanish Recovery Plan states that all measures proposed through it shall adhere to the principle of not causing significant harm to the environment.⁴² The National Strategy Group believes that the plan represents a positive step forward and wants local-level plans to be developed to protect people and help companies, industries, and territories shift towards sustainable development and production. The NSG believes that sustainable mobility and digital connectivity will be two key areas for Spain in coming years.

At the same time, the European Commission's proposal for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)⁴³ introduces changes aimed at concrete results in the areas of food security, the socio-economic development of rural areas, and the environment. According to the National Strategy Group, rural areas undoubtedly play a key role in the transition towards a greener economy, although they face multiple challenges. On the one hand, Spanish agriculture is vulnerable because of high volatility in some sectors, high fragmentation in terms of economic size and concentration of supply, and the concentration of exports in certain markets. This affects its long-term resilience, particularly in some sectors and territories. Productivity growth is low, and there is a low

level of investment, research and innovation, as well as low uptake of new technologies. There are also problems such as water availability, a high risk of soil erosion, and a high risk of desertification, especially in certain regions. As a result, the European Commission considers that Spanish agriculture needs to improve its ecological and climate transition in line with the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy⁴⁴ and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.⁴⁵

To conclude, **the National Strategy Group is concerned that, together with great opportunities, the transition to a greener economy could generate new inequalities in the Spanish society.** The NSG calls for in-depth consultations with social partners and civil society organisations, in order to develop a comprehensive and inclusive strategy that will leave no one behind.

GOOD PRACTICE Community Composting

In Pontevedra, the provincial council and civil society are promoting a waste model based on community composting and zero-kilometre treatment of municipal biowaste. Not only private citizens joined the initiative, but also university campuses, the Pontevedra university campus, the local vocational training centre, the geriatric centre, and several local restaurants. These structures do not leave any organic waste for external treatment.⁴⁶

41 Spain – Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021): https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/spains-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en

42 Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021), Impulso a la Transición verde / chapter on the Green Transition: <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/recuperacion-transformacion-resiliencia/transicion-verde/default.aspx>

43 European Commission (2018) The common agricultural policy at a glance: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en

44 The Farm to Fork Strategy, published by the European Commission in 2020, calls for action for a fair, healthy, and a sustainable food production. It aims at building an European food chain which keeps into consideration producers, consumers, but also the climate and the environment. https://ec.europa.eu/food/system/files/2020-05/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf

45 The strategy for 2030 calls for the establishment of an European network of protected areas of land and sea, for the development of an European nature restoration plan, and to introduce measures to enable a better implementation and monitoring of transformative policies tackling the biodiversity challenge. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_nl

46 Deputación Pontevedra, Revitaliza Plan: <https://revitaliza.depo.gal/compostaxe-comunitaria>

Civic space

Freedom of association was not altered during 2020. Article 2 of Organic Law 1/2002 of 22 March 2002 regulating the right of association affirms the right of all persons to associate freely for lawful purposes. According to the law, the right of association includes the freedom to associate or create associations without the need for prior authorisation. Nevertheless, 2020 was marked by the pandemic at all levels. Administrative deadlines were paralysed, and the administration modified its working practices, particularly through telematic procedures. Certain fundamental rights were restricted. But in the case of the right of association, insofar as it is exercised in a less-physical manner, the NSG affirms that it has not been negatively affected.

However, the NSG reports that some organisations denounced the infringement of the right of assembly in 2020 for reasons of public health. Greenpeace and the Civil Liberties Union for Europe denounced an insufficient respect for this right and the disparity of criteria in similar situations.⁴⁷ It has also been pointed out that, when the denial of this right has been taken to court, courts have expressed themselves in different ways.

The Platform for the Defence of Freedom of Information (PDLI) also issued an annual report,⁴⁸ in which it refers to limitations on the right to freedom of expression. The Platform refers in its balance sheet to aggression against journalists and reporters by security forces when covering demonstrations. It also refers to a lack of transparency on the part of the

government in the information management of COVID. However, it also refers to mediation having taken place, indicating an improvement in the situation.

Journalists and related organisations, including the Madrid Press Association and the PDLI, asked the government for transparency and greater balance in the management of media questions in the telematic press conferences held daily after the beginning of the state of emergency.

The CIVICUS Monitor classified civic space in Spain as “narrowed” both in 2019 and 2020,⁴⁹ especially due to some concerning rulings issued by the Constitutional Court, which took a restrictive interpretation of the right to freedom of expression. A Spanish Court condemned Revista Contexto (CTXT) – an online media outlet – for breaching the “right to honour” of a famous actor in a news article published in 2016. The court went further by preventing the outlet from publishing any further information relating to the news that led to the lawsuit, a ruling that raised concerns over freedom of information.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Eurofound finds that throughout the last year, some organisations have emerged with the aim of building and developing strategic networks between the government, social partners, and civil society. They conduct awareness-raising activities, organise training and workshops, and join research projects.⁵¹

47 Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Greenpeace (2020) Locking down critical voices: <http://www.rightsinternationalspain.org/uploads/publicacion/648dc0722c17b64486dcada16b3570eed60eae62.pdf>

48 PDLI (2020) Plataforma por la Libertad de Información: <https://libertadinformacion.cc/informes/>

49 CIVICUS (2021) Spain country report: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/spain/>

50 CIVICUS (2021) Constitutional court rulings threaten to limit freedom of expression: <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/?country=142>

51 Eurofound (2021) New forms of employment. https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20027en.pdf

Civil dialogue on national recovery and resilience plans

The National Strategy Group denounces a lack of transparency during the elaboration of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, as well as a reduction in access to information, public control, and good governance. Citizen participation has been scarce. In some autonomous communities, such as Galicia, even the choice of the strategic lines of action to which funds will be allocated has been privatised. The public-private partnership formula has been given absolute prominence, to the advantage of large companies and consultancy firms over public-community models. This is clearly visible in the creation of a new form of cooperation between government and companies, the so-called Strategic Projects for Economic

Recovery and Transformation (PERTE), which were set up by the Royal Decree Law 36/2020.⁵²

The orientation of the process has led to an evident asymmetry in opportunities to present projects. This favours companies and corporations, while SMEs, social and solidarity organisations, self-employed people, feminist projects, and even small municipalities did not have the tools or knowledge to present their projects. The NSG denounces a monopolisation of European funds by large companies to finance mega-projects, at the expense of local projects that could be truly transformative and resilient and have social, gender, and ecological impacts.

⁵² Royal Decree Law 36/2020 <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2020/12/31/pdfs/BOE-A-2020-17339.pdf>

SOLIDAR's Social Rights Monitor 2021 has been developed in the framework of the **Together for Social Europe** programme co-funded by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). It provides an insight into the state of social rights in 16 European countries. The Monitor assesses the state of social Europe in terms of equality of opportunities, fair working conditions, social protection, inclusion and civic space based on the observations of Civil Society Organisations working on the ground in combination with statistical data and scientific findings. This information is provided by National Strategy Groups that are set up in each of the 16 countries by a SOLIDAR member or partner. The 2021 Monitor also analyses to which extent civil society and social partners have been involved in the design of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, integrated in the 2021 European Semester cycle.

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