

2 Policy responses to social inclusion barriers in Spain

This chapter provides an overview of social inclusion policies in Spain at the central and regional levels. It provides an analysis of Spain's regional inclusion plans and discusses the programmes in place in the areas of minimum income, labour, housing, education, health, care and digital skills. It also provides insights into the governance arrangements to promote horizontal and vertical integration for social inclusion.

2.1. Spain's institutional framework for social inclusion is complex

In Spain, competences¹ and responsibilities for designing and providing social inclusion policies are divided between the different administrative levels. Some are shared between the central and regional governments, and others are devolved to regional governments. In particular, minimum income benefits and social inclusion policies are under the responsibility of regions (called Autonomous Communities of Spain [Comunidades Autónomas de España], hereafter “AACC”), while local authorities are often responsible for providing a range of complementary policies. In this context, Spain introduced a minimum income scheme, *Ingreso Mínimo Vital* (IMV), in 2020 to ensure a common income floor that is accessible and promotes social inclusion across the country.

This chapter provides a typology of the organisation of social inclusion pathways across Spain's regions, with a focus on a range of policies that impact inclusion outcomes, such as active labour market policies (ALMPs), family support policies (childcare and long-term care), health policies (e.g. aimed at people with addictions and mental health issues or a disability) and relevant housing support, in addition to social services and transfers for inclusion, prevention of socio-economic exclusion and help with basic needs. Within these policy areas, the goal is to identify the key governance aspects of social inclusion, including co-ordination between various policy areas and across administrative levels, involvement of the third sector, the type of professionals involved in service provision, data sharing practices and processes, complementarities among social inclusion policies, and the existence of individualised social inclusion plans. The chapter combines extensive literature research with an intense information-gathering campaign on the ground. Box 2.1 briefly explains the methodology followed by the OECD to gather and compile this information.

2.1.1. The National Strategy for Preventing and Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion provides a framework at the central level

The current framework for social inclusion is the National Strategy for Preventing and Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion (Estrategia Nacional de Prevención y Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social) 2019-23. This strategy aims to fight poverty (with a focus on child poverty) and reduce inequalities and disparities in income levels. It is framed as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. This strategy was originally drafted by the Ministry of Health, Consumption and Social Well-being but has come to be managed by the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 (MDSA2030) following a government restructuring.

Overall, this can be considered a comprehensive strategy that offers a multidimensional approach to social inclusion (see Chapter 1 for a discussion on the different dimensions of social exclusion). It covers income support and policies in employment, education and training, health, work-life balance, long-term care and housing and energy poverty. Furthermore, it presents a combination of preventive and palliative measures, as well as measures that cover the whole population and specific actions for groups identified as vulnerable. To integrate the different policy areas covered in the strategy, there is an Inter-ministerial Commission for National Action Plans for Social Inclusion. In this line, the strategy is also comprehensive in terms of participation, as the drafting of the document included a consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, including ministries, the AACC, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social partners.

Box 2.1. The methodology used to gather data to construct a typology of Spain's social inclusion pathways

The provision of social inclusion policies in Spain covers many policy areas: labour inclusion, housing, income protection, child and long-term care policies, physical and mental health, education and others. To gather information on the governance of these areas within the social inclusion framework, the OECD and the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (MISSM) distributed questionnaires and conducted online interviews with all the Spanish AACC between March and July 2022. This work was performed in two steps:

- **Distribution of two questionnaires:** A qualitative one, asking for descriptive information in the areas of governance and financing, digitalisation, labour inclusion, housing, minimum income schemes, care policies, health and early school leaving. In addition, a quantitative questionnaire was sent to gather, for each policy area, information on users' needs, characteristics of services, benefit processing and statistics concerning staff.
- **Online interviews:** Interviews with the AACC were carried out at an early stage of the project to clarify any potential doubts concerning the information requested in the questionnaires and give the regional authorities the opportunity to add comments or clarifications on the organisation of social inclusion policies in their AACC.

Once the information had been gathered, the next task consisted of organising the results, harmonising the data as much as possible and completing the information with other sources (legislation, databases, academic literature, etc.). In addition to the interviews with the AACC, semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with the following actors:

- **Ministries:** Interviews were conducted with the Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda and the Ministry of Education and Professional Training. Information was exchanged via email with the Ministry of Health.
- **Local entities:** Municipalities of Barcelona (Cataluña), Colindres (Cantabria) and La Línea de la Concepción (Andalucía); Mancomunidad of Torrelodones, Hoyo del Manzanares, Alpedrete y Moralzarzal (Comunidad de Madrid); Insular Council of Mallorca (Illes Balears), Diputación de Valladolid (Castilla y León) and the inclusion working group of Otxarkoaga (Bilbao, País Vasco).
- **Third-sector entities:** Cáritas, Cruz Roja, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Hogar Sí, and Save The Children.

This methodology has allowed the OECD to gain a broad understanding of the current state of social inclusion policies and pathways in Spain. Mapping social inclusion governance has identified key barriers and potential avenues for reform. At the same time, regional and local authorities and the third sector have had the chance to elaborate on the functioning, limitations and upcoming reforms in social inclusion. This has enhanced understanding of differences and similarities across regions.

2.1.2. The Social Inclusion Network (Red de Inclusión Social) provides a forum for sharing practices across Spain

Beyond the national strategy, the main forum for communication on social inclusion is the Red de Inclusión Social (RIS), or Social Inclusion Network. This network gathers representatives from the public administration responsible for managing European funds and social inclusion policies at the European, national, regional and local levels. Representatives from the AACC include members from social services and employment departments. It also includes social entities, NGOs, trade unions, and the High

Commission against Child Poverty. This network works through working groups, exchanges of best practices or training for professionals, among other activities.

The RIS has a joint presidency, shared by the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy (MITES) and the MDSA2030. In addition, the main governing body of the network, the Plenary, includes representatives from 20 national bodies, including directorate-generals, general secretariats and institutes representing 10 ministries. The High Commission against Child Poverty is the latest national body included in the governance of the RIS. The network also includes representatives from the regional level. In addition, work is structured around six different working groups, whose composition is more selective than that of the RIS Plenary and thus only includes ministries directly involved with the area covered.

The different activities of the RIS include joint training sessions for employment and social services, with the goal of moving towards enhancing co-ordination between these two areas. There are also dissemination sessions on relevant topics, such as the intergenerational transmission of poverty or the feminisation of poverty.

2.1.3. Multiple stakeholders are responsible for social inclusion

Spain is one of the most decentralised countries in the OECD with regard to public spending, and many public services are provided at the regional level. According to the 1978 Constitution, Spain has a three-tier system with central, regional and local governments. There are 17 self-governing AACC, 2 autonomous cities, 50 provinces and 8 131 municipalities. The map of competences is regulated in the Spanish Constitution, and while some are exclusively managed by the central government, most are shared between the central and regional governments.

Social services, minimum income benefits and social inclusion policies are under the responsibility of the AACC – based on Article 148.1.20^a of the Constitution. At the same time, the new minimum income scheme (IMV) established at the national level is now within the competence of the central government, with some exceptions, while the AACC, which previously had their own minimum income benefits are still managing them if a supplement is needed or for those not eligible to receive the IMV. The design of the IMV has been under the competence of the MISSM. Within the MISSM, the General Secretary of Objectives, Inclusion Policies and Social Forecasting is in charge of collecting indicators in this area; monitoring the effectiveness and use of the IMV; designing, promoting and evaluating inclusion policies; and co-ordinating policies and strategies with other ministries such as the MDSA2030.

In addition, given the multidimensional nature of social exclusion, many additional actors come into play at the national and subnational levels. Following the Spanish Constitution, education and health are shared competences, with the central government establishing the overall structure of the system and the main framework in national laws, but the AACC enjoying a high degree of budgetary and organisational autonomy.

In the field of employment, the national public employment service (SEPE), an autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, together with the public employment services of the AACC, constitute the National Employment System. SEPE contributes to the development of employment policy, manages the protection system for unemployment and ensures the information on the labour market. Public employment services (PES) in each AACC are responsible for implementing ALMPs and labour intermediation in co-ordination with central authorities. Targets within the National Employment System are co-ordinated through the Spanish Activation Strategy and Employment Policy National Plans.

Housing is traditionally a competence of the AACC according to the Constitution (Article 148.3). At the same time, the central government has also influenced housing regulation through credit regulation, which affects all regions (Article 149.1.11 CE) and through determining the basis and co-ordination of general economic activity planning (Article 149.1.13 CE). The main goals of housing policy are set out in a multi-annual plan by the central government, but the AACC and local entities establish priorities and define

requirements for entitlements. Currently, the General Directorate of Architecture, Housing and Land within the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda is responsible for the latest Housing Plan (2022-25).

Since 2013, many AACC have enacted new regional legislation on housing, instituting a right to housing, mobilising empty housing and promoting subsidies to help pay energy bills. This gave impulse to a new national Housing Act, approved in May 2023, to regulate rental housing, instate a minimum social housing threshold of 30% in new builds, increase taxes on empty property, regulate evictions for indebted people, and regulate rental prices in areas of short supply, among others (Ley 12/23 de 24 de mayo, por el derecho a la Vivienda).

2.2. Regions have chosen different policy arrangements with respect to social inclusion

This section describes the regional strategies and main policies and services implemented in Spain for citizens facing inclusion barriers. Some policy fields presented include income support, labour integration, housing and healthcare support.

2.2.1. Less than half of the regions have a current regional plan for social inclusion

In parallel to the national framework, some AACC have developed social inclusion plans or strategies of their own. These differ in terms of time frames, topics covered, and government departments involved (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. AACC regional social inclusion plans and the departments in charge

AACC	Has a social inclusion plan	Government department	Name of the plan	Time period
Andalucía	Partial (does not cover the whole territory)	Equality, Social Policy and Work-life Balance	Estrategia Regional Andaluza para la Cohesión e Inserción Social. Intervención en Zonas Desfavorecidas	2018-22
Aragón	No	Citizenship and Social Rights		
Asturias	No	Social Rights and Well-being		
Illes Balears	No	Social Affairs and Sports		
Canarias	Yes	Social Rights, Equality, Diversity and Youth	Estrategia Canaria de Inclusión Social	2019-21
Cantabria	Yes (outdated)	Employment and Social Policy	II Plan de Emergencia Social de Cantabria	2018-20
Castilla y León	Yes	Family and Equality of Opportunities	Plan Estratégico de los Servicios Sociales de Castilla y León	2017-21
Castilla-La Mancha	Yes (outdated, with a new one being developed)	Social Well-being	Estrategia contra la Pobreza y la Desigualdad Social de Castilla-La Mancha	2017-20
Cataluña	No	Social Rights		
Comunitat Valenciana	Yes	Equality and Inclusive Policies	Plan Valenciano de Inclusión y Cohesión Social	2017-22
Extremadura	No	Health and Social Services		
Galicia	Yes (outdated)	Social Policy	Estrategia de Inclusión Social de Galicia	2014-20
Comunidad de Madrid	Yes	Family, Youth and Social Policy	Estrategia de Inclusión Social de la Comunidad de Madrid	2016-21
Región de Murcia	No	Women, Equality, LGTBI, Family and Social Policy		
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	Yes	Social Rights	Plan Estratégico de Inclusión de Navarra	2018-21
País Vasco	Yes (and a new one is	Equality, Justice and Social	IV Plan Vasco de Inclusión	2017-21

AACC	Has a social inclusion plan (being developed)	Government department	Name of the plan	Time period
La Rioja	No	Social Policy, Family, Equality and Justice		

Note: Plans that finished before 2020 have not been taken into consideration for this table. Plans that ended in 2020 are considered outdated. Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022) and regional government websites.

In total, there are only six AACC that have an updated social inclusion plan, nine if counting those that had a working plan until 2020. In addition to these, Andalucía has a Regional Strategy for Social Cohesion and Insertion that covers only geographical areas identified as being at risk of social exclusion rather than the whole territory. This leaves eight AACC with no social inclusion plan. Of these, there are certain AACC, such as Asturias or Cataluña, that did have social inclusion plans in the past but that have not continued to work with this tool, and others, like Murcia, that are waiting for the approval of a social services law that will set the framework for future social inclusion plans.

In general, regional plans are comprehensive in their approach to social inclusion. The ten plans analysed included mentions of income support, labour inclusion, housing, health and education and training, which shows a multidimensional understanding of the nature of social exclusion. In addition, government departments in charge of these areas are generally mentioned as part of the social inclusion plans, showing an integrated perspective.

Care policies are the main area of social inclusion that is still underdeveloped in these plans. Eight of the ten plans analysed mention the work-life balance related to the care of children. However, these approaches tend to focus only on child poverty, overlooking the impact of care duties for families and how this interacts with social inclusion. Mentions of long-term care as a core social exclusion policy appear only in Castilla y León, Comunitat Valenciana, Comunidad de Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra. This suggests that, while more traditional social inclusion policies are considered both in the diagnostic and on the measures taken to tackle exclusion, the transition to including other factors, such as care duties, is still limited. Similarly, the emergence of digital gaps affecting the population at risk of social exclusion is still underdeveloped in most social inclusion plans. Eight out of ten regional strategies mention this topic, but the number and detail of the programmes foreseen to mitigate this gap remain marginal in most AACC compared to other areas tackled by the inclusion plans.

As the analysis confirms, most AACC lack a long-term, consistent approach to their social inclusion frameworks. While social inclusion plans have existed for many years now, there is significant variation when it comes to which AACC use this tool, as well as on the social inclusion plan and strategy time periods.

The evolution of social inclusion plans for the time period 2012-22 shows that only the País Vasco and Galicia have a continued approach to social inclusion plans over time. While the two strategies from Andalucía follow each other in time, the current framework is not a continuation of the previous one but a new approach to social inclusion. Furthermore, two AACC, Cantabria and Cataluña, used to have a continued approach to social inclusion plans but no longer use this tool. All the other AACC show isolated social inclusion plans. Interviews were inconclusive about the reasons for the lack of continuity, which is in some cases related to changes in regional governments and subsequent changes in priorities.

The lack of a continued, comprehensive approach to social inclusion plans can have two main implications. The first relates to evaluation and incorporating evaluation feedback into new policies and programmes. Most plans and strategies envisage an ex-post evaluation that makes it possible to assess the adequacy of existing programmes and adapt them if necessary. However, without a continuous framework, lessons for these evaluations may not reach this stage and thus would not serve the purpose of informing policy reforms. An example of good practice is that the latest Basque and Galician plans include a reflection on

the evaluation of the previous framework, and new measures and objectives build on this. On the other hand, strategies, such as those from Madrid or Castilla-La Mancha, build their diagnostics and objectives mostly from survey data and statistics rather than previous policy results. The second implication relates to the fact that, in the case of plans that have a specific budget allocated by year, the ending of these plans with no foreseen continuation can lead to the ending of financing for specific programmes and cuts in the existing allocation of resources, leading to a possible lack of continuity or projects.

2.2.2. Different policy areas for social inclusion are weighted differently across regions

As mentioned earlier, a multidimensional approach to social inclusion involves the consideration of other policies besides income support schemes. Key policy areas analysed in this section to highlight regional differences in social inclusion coverage include labour policies, housing, health, education and work-life balance.

Minimum income, emergency benefits and inclusion itineraries

Before the introduction of the IMV, all AACC had some kind of minimum income scheme (MIS) in place. These schemes showed substantial regional variation in indicators such as generosity, per capita spending, adequacy, coverage, or length of payment of the benefits (AIREF, 2019^[11]).

As part of their MIS, 12 AACC had planned some kind of individual inclusion itinerary throughout the duration of the benefit. These itineraries usually include primary social services, employment services and, in some cases, other areas, such as health, education or housing. The degree of implementation of these itineraries shows some variation. For example, while the AACC, such as Andalucía or Castilla-La-Mancha, envisage the creation of itineraries as part of their MIS legislation, according to interviews and policy questionnaires, these have not yet reached the implementation stage. In addition, the entry into force of the IMV seems to be impacting the functioning of regional inclusion pathways. An example from interviews comes from Castilla y León, where those beneficiaries who have transitioned from the previous Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía to receiving the IMV are no longer subject to participation in an integrated inclusion pathway (and thus, no longer benefit from them).

Beyond MIS, 14 AACC also have some kind of last resort emergency transfer, managed by social services and targeted at individuals or households who do not fulfil the criteria for other social transfers and are in some type of emergency situation. In most cases, these transfers are a one-time payment targeted at a specific need that the individual or household cannot pay for. While Cataluña does not have a general emergency transfer, it has a specific one targeted at specific housing emergencies. In the case of the Balearic and the Canary Islands, these emergency transfers are not regional but rather managed through the different Island Councils (Consejos Insulares). In Aragón, there are two types of emergency transfers: emergency aid for general situations and specific emergency aid for the payment of energy consumption. Among others, the first type is aimed at covering needs such as the impossibility of living in one's habitual dwelling, buying food or lacking resources to maintain essential personal care, primarily clothing and hygiene.

The introduction of a national minimum income scheme: The Ingreso Mínimo Vital (IMV)

The most relevant reform within the area of social inclusion in Spain in recent years has been the introduction of a guaranteed income scheme, the IMV, in 2020. The introduction of the IMV, with a total allocated budget of almost EUR 3 000 million for 2021 and a coverage goal of 850 000 households, has entailed a significant increase in resources for social inclusion in the Spanish territory. According to a study by the Independent Authority for Spanish Fiscal Responsibility (AIReF) (2022^[2]), a total of 450 000 households fulfil the criteria both for the IMV and their corresponding regional MIS. The overlap of the IMV with previous regional MIS is spurring reform and budget reallocation of income support across

the different AACC. Due to the scope of this new national policy and administrative challenges in transitioning from regional to national income support, adaptation by the AACC is gradual and remains ongoing in most cases.

At the moment, three main scenarios can be distinguished when it comes to the relationship between the IMV and regional MIS (EAPN, 2021^[3]):

- AACC with regional MIS having higher amounts than the IMV, where regional schemes now complement the national benefit. This is the case for Aragón, Canarias, Cataluña, Comunitat Valenciana, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco.
- AACC with regional MIS that show a broader coverage of profiles than the IMV. This group includes Aragón, Comunitat Valenciana and Illes Balears.
- AACC with regional MIS that would only be activated for cases where a household has been denied or is not entitled to the IMV, as a last resort.

Table 2.2 summarises the current state of adaptation of regional MIS to the IMV. It includes whether the reconfigured regional transfers complement the IMV amount and if they play a subsidiary role to the national transfer – that is, whether they cover profiles not eligible for the IMV complement, such as based on age or residency requirements.

Table 2.2. Adaptation of **Spain's** regional minimum income schemes to its national minimum income scheme (IMV)

	Regional benefit	Complementary to IMV	Subsidiary to IMV	Subsidiarity coverage
Andalucía	Renta Mínima de Inserción Social, now becomes Ingreso por la infancia y la Inclusión		✓	Persons who do not fulfil the IMV criteria. For example, the term of the legal residence permit for migrants remains undetermined, which may reach more migrant people.
Aragón	The former Ingreso Aragonés de Inserción (IAS), now becomes Prestación Aragonesa Complementaria del Ingreso Mínimo Vital (PACIMV)	✓	✓	Persons who do not fulfil the IMV criteria.
Asturias	Salario Social Básico (SSB)		✓	Persons who do not fulfil the IMV criteria: no maximum age, fewer requirements for migrants, higher amount for people with disabilities.
Illes Balears	Renta Social Garantizada (RESOGA)		✓	Persons who are not entitled to IMV.
Canarias	Renta Canaria de Ciudadanía	✓		
Cantabria	Renta Social Básica (RSB)			
Castilla-La Mancha	Ingreso Mínimo de Solidaridad (IMS)		✓	IMS covers a broader age range as there is no maximum age.
Castilla y León	Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía (RGC)	✓	✓	Persons who do not fulfil the IMV criteria. Also, there is no maximum age to be a potential beneficiary.
Cataluña	Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía (RGC)	✓	✓	RGC covers a broader age range as there is no maximum age.
Comunitat Valenciana	Renta Valenciana de Inclusión (RVI)	✓	✓	RVI covers more cases. For example, being over 18 years of age and being in a situation of functional dependency, although the minimum age for RVI is 25.
Extremadura	Renta Extremeña Garantizada	✓		
Galicia	Renta de Inclusion Social de Galicia (RISG)		✓	Persons who are not entitled to IMV. For example, the legal residence requirement for migrants is exempted for persons with refugee and asylum

	Regional benefit	Complementary to IMV	Subsidiary to IMV	Subsidiarity coverage
				seeker status.
La Rioja	Renta de Ciudadanía (RC)		✓	Persons who do not fulfil the IMV criteria.
Comunidad de Madrid	Renta Mínima de Inserción (RMI)		✓	RMI covers a broader age range.
Región de Murcia	Renta Básica de Inserción (RBI)			
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	Renta de Inclusión Social (RIS)	✓	✓	RIS covers a broader age range and cases such as migrant status.
País Vasco	Renta de Garantía de Ingresos (RGI)	✓	✓	RGI can be applied for by people over 18 in vulnerable conditions.

Note: Regional MIS are considered complementary in those cases when the regional transfer is used to complement the amount of the IMV. AACC where complementarity is legally possible but whose regional MIS is less generous than the IMV have been excluded from this category. Subsidiarity refers to those regional MIS that cover profiles rejected by the IMV. In any case, to access the regional MIS, claimants must apply to the IMV first.

Source: OECD social inclusion interviews and questionnaires (2022) and EAPN (2021), *El Ingreso Mínimo Vital un año después. La perspectiva autonómica*, www.eapn.es/publicaciones/452/el-ingreso-minimo-vital-un-ano-despues-la-perspectiva-autonomica.

In total, eight AACC complement the amount of the IMV with their regional MIS. These include AACC with more generous MIS than the IMV: Aragón, Canarias, Cataluña, Comunitat Valenciana, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco. In addition, Extremadura has a minimum amount that is higher than the IMV (EUR 537.84 vs. EUR 469.93), and it also includes a EUR 100 transfer for single-parent families. Finally, while the Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía (RGC) in Castilla y León shows lower amounts than the IMV, the regional government has modified the legislation to allow for the RGC to complement the IMV for 1 000 households (EAPN, 2021^[3]).

With regard to subsidiarity, up to 13 AACC (all of them except Canarias, Cantabria, Extremadura and Murcia) broaden to some extent the coverage of the IMV. The most common ways of broadening the coverage are through less strict residency requirements (this is the case for Andalucía, Asturias, Galicia and Comunidad Foral de Navarra); the inclusion of a broader age range for beneficiaries (Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Madrid, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco); special provisions for persons with disabilities (Asturias, Comunitat Valenciana); or acting as a last resort for those households in a vulnerable situation that have been denied or have no access to the IMV (Aragón, Illes Balears and La Rioja).

Information from policy questionnaires on how budget adaptation is taking place is inconclusive. In most cases, the introduction of the IMV has not yet triggered a strong change in the budget provision for regional MIS, as the transition for beneficiaries is still an ongoing process. The AACC show a progressive decline in the provision of funds dedicated to regional MIS, although those with more generous schemes, such as Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco, report little budget adaptation to the introduction of the national benefit.

As for the destination of funds, no systematic approach has been applied to reallocating the specific budget dedicated to MIS to other policies. An exception would be Illes Balears, where funds will be allocated to increasing the regional emancipation transfer, an autonomy transfer for individuals previously under guardianship, and a complement of social transfers to adapt non-contributory benefits to the living standards of the region (EAPN, 2021^[3]). In addition, other AACC, such as Cantabria or Castilla-La Mancha, report that the MIS budget will be reallocated to other social policies, such as social emergency transfers.

Labour inclusion

In Spain, the AACC are responsible for designing regional ALMPs and organising ALMP implementation via regional PES. In this context, a Common Portfolio of Services² is set up with the aim of guaranteeing equal opportunities across the AACC in access to employment services for all groups of users. It sets out the measures and services that all PES across the country are required to provide:³ 1) counselling for jobseekers; 2) counselling and placement services for employers; 3) training and qualification services; and 4) self-employment counselling services. Nevertheless, to allow sufficient flexibility to adapt to the characteristics of the beneficiaries in the different AACC, regional PES can provide complementary services.

The 2022 Annual Employment Policy Plan details the ALMPs that the AACC would develop in 2022. It differentiates between those services and measures common to all of Spain and those specific to each AACC. Regarding ALMPs addressed to vulnerable groups, all AACC envisage implementing supplementary job creation schemes or employment subsidies; nine AACC plan additional counselling and intermediation actions; and two AACC have designed specific training programmes (Illes Balears and Galicia). Under the employment law (Article 30), vulnerable groups include young people, women, the long-term unemployed, people over 45, people with family responsibilities, people with disabilities, people in a social exclusion situation and immigrants.

Regional social inclusion plans often highlight the importance of adapting ALMPs to the specific needs of those at risk of social exclusion. In this context, the Transformation and Resilience Recovery plan with its investment in “vulnerable groups” (within Investment 4, “New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity” of Component 23, “New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market”) is playing an important role by endowing the AACC with the means to provide personalised support to people in vulnerable groups. At least two projects are being funded in each AACC with the aim of implementing personalised itineraries of labour market integration that include counselling and career advice, job intermediation and training. Besides this recent development, the AACC have implemented other counselling, job intermediation and/or training programmes over the past five years targeting vulnerable groups in general or specific populations at risk of social exclusion.

Finally, subsidies to employers and job creation schemes are prevailing ALMPs when talking about the labour market integration of people at risk of social inclusion in Spain. Social Integration Enterprises are companies that perform profitable economic activities while recruiting socially excluded people. Through the on-the-job training and guidance provided in the integration enterprise, individuals should become equipped to find a job in the primary labour market. In 2022, 249 Social Integration Enterprises were active across the Spanish territory. More than 50% were in Cataluña, País Vasco and Madrid communities. In contrast, Asturias, Illes Balears, Castilla-La Mancha, Comunitat Valenciana, Extremadura, Galicia, and Murcia count fewer than ten Social Integration Enterprises each (Vargas, 2022^[4]). Similarly, more than 2000 Special Employment Centres provide workers with disabilities with productive and remunerated work. Andalucía and Castilla y León are the AACC with the highest number of centres (the two AACC accounted for 33% of the centres in 2019). However, Andalucía, Cataluña and Madrid have the largest number of employees working in the Special Employment Centres (Observatorio sobre discapacidad y mercado de trabajo en España, 2019^[5]).

Housing policies

When analysing the housing policies that are part of the social inclusion frameworks of different regions, the analysis considers categories of emergency housing, housing policies specifically targeted at socially excluded populations and policies to combat energy poverty (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. Housing policies in Spain's AACC

	Emergency housing	Accompaniment for persons/households under emergency housing programmes	Public social housing for vulnerable groups	Rent transfers for vulnerable groups	Programmes against energy poverty
Andalucía	✓	✓	✓		✓
Aragón	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asturias	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Illes Balears			✓	✓	
Canarias	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cantabria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Castilla-La Mancha			✓	✓	✓
Castilla y León	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cataluña	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.
Comunitat Valenciana	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Extremadura	✓		✓	✓	✓
Galicia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
La Rioja	✓		✓	✓	
Comunidad de Madrid	✓	✓	✓		
Región de Murcia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
País Vasco	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: "n.a." stands for missing or not available information.

Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022), regional government websites and regional social inclusion plans.

Sixteen AACC (all of them, except Castilla-La Mancha) have an emergency housing programme, though coverage varies substantially by AACC. The main groups covered by emergency housing include victims of gender-based violence and their dependants, individuals or households under an eviction situation, and individuals under exceptional circumstances, such as natural disasters or refugee status. However, the adequacy of resources allocated to this policy remains unclear, as interviews with local entities have raised the issue that emergency housing is not always available for the population in need in some AACC, such as the Comunidad de Madrid, among others. An analysis of the catalogue of services by region highlights that such housing programmes are more widespread for gender-based violence victims than for those under any other emergency circumstance and that such programmes are subject to sufficient budgetary capacity only in some cases.

Apart from providing emergency housing services, 13 AACC also have accompaniment programmes for persons in these situations, even if three of these only contemplate this monitoring for victims of gender-based violence (Asturias, Cantabria, and Castilla y León). Accompaniment programmes include actions such as coverage of basic needs (Aragón), social inclusion of gender-based violence victims (Asturias, Cantabria, Castilla y León) and social and labour inclusion (Galicia, Comunidad de Madrid).

Regarding housing policies targeting vulnerable groups, all AACC have public social housing for individuals and households with scarcity of resources. In addition, 12 AACC complement the national framework of rent transfers included in the National Housing Plan by providing extra financial support in the form of rental aid for vulnerable groups. Other housing policies for vulnerable groups include the improvement of housing accessibility (Asturias), as well as specific measures for homeless persons (Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Region de Murcia) or the Roma population (Andalucía, La Rioja, Comunidad de Madrid).

Finally, on energy poverty, the national framework contemplates two energy vouchers for vulnerable households to help finance energy supplies. Most AACC have transferred the management of this specific

area to local entities through primary social services. Policies mostly include transfers covering the cost of energy supplies for emergencies through specific programmes or social emergency transfers. Some AACC (Andalucía, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León) also have mediation programmes with energy companies to prevent the interruption of energy services.

Health

In the area of health, the analysis will focus on three core elements: the existence of specific measures for vulnerable groups as part of regional health plans; specific mental health measures for vulnerable groups; and the presence of multidisciplinary teams for those cases when individuals with health needs also show needs in terms of social inclusion. A summary of the coverage of these areas in the different AACC can be found in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Health policies for vulnerable groups in Spain's AACC

AACC	General health programmes for vulnerable groups	Mental health programmes for vulnerable groups	Co-ordination protocols between health and social services	Presence of multidisciplinary teams
Andalucía	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aragón	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asturias	✓	✓		
Illes Balears		✓		
Canarias		✓		
Cantabria				✓
Castilla-La Mancha	✓	✓	✓	✓
Castilla y León	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Cataluña	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comunitat Valenciana	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.
Extremadura	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.
Galicia	n.a.	✓	n.a.	n.a.
La Rioja	n.a.	✓	n.a.	n.a.
Comunidad de Madrid	✓	✓	✓	✓
Región de Murcia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	✓	✓	✓	✓
País Vasco	✓	✓	n.a.	n.a.

Note: Information on co-ordination protocols and multidisciplinary teams is only available for AACC providing information. "n.a." stands for missing or not available information.

Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022), regional government websites and regional social inclusion plans.

Regarding general health measures, 11 AACC have specific actions in their health strategies or policy frameworks with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups. Groups tackled by these AACC include victims of gender-based violence, migrants, people in penitentiary institutions, homeless people and people with addictions, among others. Specific programmes include sanitary support for vulnerable groups, agreements with the third sector and organisations working with collectives at risk of exclusion, co-ordination protocols between the health and social services departments or the regular presence of social workers in health centres.

The specific issue of mental health has also been strongly correlated to situations of social exclusion. To this end, 15 AACC have undertaken specific measures either as part of a specific mental health strategy, general health strategy or as part of their policy framework for health measures. The groups tackled by these measures are largely similar to those mentioned for general health. Measures include priority access to mental health resources for people in social exclusion, specific care and information centres and

accompaniment programmes and specific measures for groups such as victims of gender-based violence, homeless people or people with addictions.

Finally, the presence of multidisciplinary teams that integrate health professionals, social workers and other services that may be needed can be key for approaching special exclusion cases. Co-ordination protocols between health and social services are present in at least seven AACC, while multidisciplinary teams can be found in at least eight AACC.⁴

Education and early school leaving

Early school leaving (ESL) can be both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion situations (OECD, 2016^[6]). This is especially key in a country like Spain, which had in 2021 the second highest rate of early leavers from education and training in the European Union after Romania (Eurostat, 2022^[7]). Therefore, the analysis of education policies related to social inclusion will concentrate on this area, specifically whether the AACC have targeted programmes for those at risk of social exclusion that supplement the national ESL framework and the availability of second-chance schools.

The main programme at the national level is called PROA+ (Programme for Orientation, Progress and Educational Enrichment). It targets educational centres with a significant number of students in a situation of educational vulnerability and who showcase a series of difficulties or obstacles throughout their educational trajectory. In addition, 15 AACC have developed their own programmes to fight ESL, with a strong focus on absenteeism and specific vulnerable groups, such as the Roma.

Thirteen AACC also have second-chance programmes, either in the form of second-chance schools or through the financing of scholarships. These usually target young individuals who dropped out of the educational system, do not hold a degree, or are unemployed. In addition to regional initiatives, the association, Las Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad (E2O) counts a total of 43 second-chance schools in nine AACC, providing educational services to around 8 000 students yearly (Escuelas de Segunda Oportunidad España, 2022^[8]). In certain cases, the activity of these schools is developed in collaboration with local entities, such as in the municipalities of Gijón or Barcelona. This collaboration happens in different modalities: first, in the participation of local entities as partners in the national association of second-chance schools, the E2O. Another is the availability of second-chance schools in public entities, such as the City Council of Gijón, through the Local Agency for Economic Promotion and Employment. Finally, the collaboration of public local entities can also take place through public funding for E2O partners in order to establish this service in the community, as in Barcelona.

At the national level, it is also worth mentioning the existence of the Formación Profesional Básica (Basic Professional Training), consisting of vocational training programmes with a duration of two years for individuals who have not finished compulsory education and want to continue their studies to obtain a professional training qualification.

Work-life balance and long-term care

Care barriers can be crucial when it comes to overcoming social exclusion situations, something that applies both to childcare and long-term care (LTC). The issue of care is still overlooked in social inclusion plans and strategies, however, and work-life balance and LTC policies are not always included as part of individual inclusion pathways. The analysis of regional care policies will look at income support for vulnerable households with children; school canteens and early childhood education and care (ECEC); programmes for vulnerable children; early care for children with disabilities; and support for carers in the area of LTC (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.5. Care policies for vulnerable groups in Spain's AACC

AACC	Income support for vulnerable families with children	ECEC programmes for vulnerable children	School canteen programmes for vulnerable children	Early care for vulnerable children with disabilities	Support for carers in LTC
Andalucía	✓	✓	✓		✓
Aragón	✓		✓	✓	✓
Asturias			✓	✓	
Illes Balears		✓	✓		
Canarias			✓		
Cantabria	✓	✓	✓		
Castilla-La Mancha			✓		
Castilla y León	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cataluña	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comunitat Valenciana		✓	✓		✓
Extremadura			✓		
Galicia	✓	✓	✓		
La Rioja	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Comunidad de Madrid	✓	✓	✓		✓
Región de Murcia	✓	✓	✓		
Comunidad Foral de Navarra		✓	✓	✓	✓
País Vasco	✓		✓	✓	

Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022), regional government websites and regional social inclusion plans.

At the national level, starting in 2022, the IMV has a childhood complement for households with children, with an amount that varies with the age of the children (see Chapter 3). In addition, ten AACC have some kind of economic transfer for households with dependent children. These include single transfers at the moment of birth or adoption (Cataluña, Galicia, País Vasco), complement regional MIS (Aragón, Cantabria, La Rioja) or transfers to pay for work-life balance services (Castilla y León), among others.

In the specific area of children support and work-life balance, 11 AACC have developed ECEC programmes to specifically address vulnerable children's needs. These range from direct access to ECEC for those children in households that receive a regional MIS (Comunitat Valenciana) or priority access to ECEC (La Rioja, Comunidad de Madrid) to partial or total financing of early education for children at risk of exclusion (total financing in Cantabria, Castilla y León Cataluña and Comunidad de Madrid; total or partial financing depending on income in Andalucía, Illes Balears, Galicia, Murcia and Comunidad Foral de Navarra; and partial financing in País Vasco).

Another key service for work-life balance and child well-being is school canteens. All AACC have developed programmes in this area, from direct access for vulnerable children (Comunitat Valenciana) to different reimbursement and financing schemes (free-of-charge policies for vulnerable children in Andalucía, Asturias, Canarias, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Extremadura, Galicia, Murcia, Comunidad Foral de Navarra; partial reimbursement in Illes Balears, Cataluña, La Rioja, Comunidad de Madrid and País Vasco).

Moving towards the specific vulnerable group of children with disabilities and their families, seven AACC contemplate as part of the social services catalogue the service of early care for children aged either 0-3

or 0-6 with disabilities. There is thus still room for developing more targeted care policies for those vulnerable groups with stronger care needs.

As for LTC, beyond the national framework of care services and transfers from the Ley de Dependencia, which entered into force in January 2007, only six AACC also provide specific regional programmes targeted at carers. These include training programmes (Andalucía, Aragón) and respite for carers (Andalucía, Comunidad de Madrid, Comunidad Foral de Navarra), among other support programmes.

Digital gaps

The emergence of the use of new technologies, especially in light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, has raised issues on the emergence of a digital divide that can especially affect women, the elderly and low-income individuals (OECD, 2020^[9]). This can have significant consequences for social exclusion in the absence of adequate skillsets. The response to these challenges varies by AACC and is summarised in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Digital inclusion in **Spain's** AACC

AACC	Mentions a digital gap in its social inclusion plan	Provides training on digital skills for vulnerable groups
Andalucía	✓	✓
Aragón		
Asturias		✓
Illes Balears		
Canarias		
Cantabria		
Castilla-La Mancha	✓	✓
Castilla y León		
Cataluña		
Comunitat Valenciana	✓	✓
Extremadura		✓
Galicia	✓	
La Rioja		
Comunidad de Madrid	✓	
Región de Murcia		✓
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	✓	✓
País Vasco	✓	✓

Note: Information on mentioning a digital gap has only been gathered for those AACC with updated social inclusion plans or have plans that ended no earlier than 2020.

Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022), regional government websites and regional social inclusion plans.

Among the nine AACC with an updated social inclusion plan, or one ending no earlier than 2020, seven make mention of a digital divide. Five contemplate specific objectives and measures to tackle the digital divide, mostly through training programmes and increasing access for vulnerable groups, particularly women and people over 55. The Comunidad de Madrid and the País Vasco only mention the digital divide as a challenge and part of their diagnostic, with no specific measures. Finally, in the case of Comunidad Foral de Navarra, the digital gap is not mentioned in the original strategy but has since been added as a key objective through its operational plans.

Trainings on digital skills aimed at vulnerable groups exist at the regional level in eight AACC. Groups covered by these programmes are diverse and include collectives such as unemployed persons (Extremadura), women (Aragón, País Vasco), women in rural areas (Comunidad Foral de Navarra),

persons at risk of social exclusion (Andalucía, Comunitat Valenciana, Comunidad Foral de Navarra), persons with disabilities (Andalucía, Comunitat Valenciana), older people, migrants and the gipsy population (Andalucía).

Despite digital barriers being critical for populations at risk of social exclusion, policies to address the digital divide remain nascent in most AACC and are not yet an integral component of social inclusion frameworks. Table 2.7 presents an overview of support mechanisms for users with digital needs for six AACC for which digitalisation questionnaires are available.

Table 2.7. Existing digital support mechanisms in Spain's AACC

	Possibility of in-person requests for social inclusion programmes	Existence of online application systems adapted to mobile phones	Existence of support mechanisms for users with difficulties submitting applications on line
Andalucía	✓	✓	✓
Aragón		✓	
Cantabria	✓		
La Rioja	✓	✓	
Comunidad de Madrid	✓		n.a.
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	✓		✓

Note: Information is missing for the AACC not included in this table, as well as for the existence of support mechanisms in Madrid.
Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires (2022).

Most AACC in the sample (with the only exception of Aragón) provide the option of in-person applications for social inclusion programmes. As seen above, this possibility is key for including those who lack the resources or skills to make an online application and who may be otherwise excluded from the system. In accordance with current legislation (and in particular with the Ley 39/2015, de 1 de octubre, del Procedimiento Administrativo Común de las Administraciones Públicas), citizens have the legal right to not communicate electronically with the administration. When a legal act imposes the obligation for a collective to engage in electronic communication, it must be shown that the collective have access to the necessary electronic means and that they are available (Article 14.3). However, legislation related to social inclusion often does not mention this provision, which gives citizens the right to use offline means of communication (Taula d'entitats del Tercer Sector Social de Catalunya, 2022^[10]).

The existence of online application systems adapted to mobile phones is also crucial, as in 2021, only 53.6% of households with monthly incomes below EUR 900 per month had a working computer (INE, 2021^[11]). In this context, adapting online application forms to mobile phones can be key to enhancing accessibility as, according to the same survey, 98.8% of households under the same income threshold had a mobile phone. Despite this, only half of the AACC of the sample (Andalucía, Aragón and La Rioja) have adapted application forms, while Cantabria, Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra have not.

Finally, the last column of the table shows the AACC with some kind of support or technical assistance programmes for persons with difficulties when it comes to filing applications on line. Such programmes are only present in Andalucía and Comunidad Foral de Navarra at the moment. In Andalucía, this is done through local commissions as part of the European Reference Framework for the Digital Competence of Social Services (ERACIS) strategy. In Comunidad Foral de Navarra, third-sector entities supported by public funds offer digital capacitation programmes for these cases. While there are no specific referral protocols, public services are aware of these resources and direct users to them. At the local level, the Xarxes de serveis d'atenció, developed in Barcelona, also act as centres for supporting claimants in this context. These offices act as systems of assistance to help people overcome difficulties in the application

procedure for benefits. These Xarxes have a support team for the procedures as well as digital training units.

This overview, as well as the lack of information for many AACC, suggests that specific policies for tackling the digital gap targeted at vulnerable populations are still underdeveloped in most AACC. Furthermore, there is still no comprehensive approach to specific measures to tackle the consequences of digitalisation or clear identification of the most vulnerable groups.

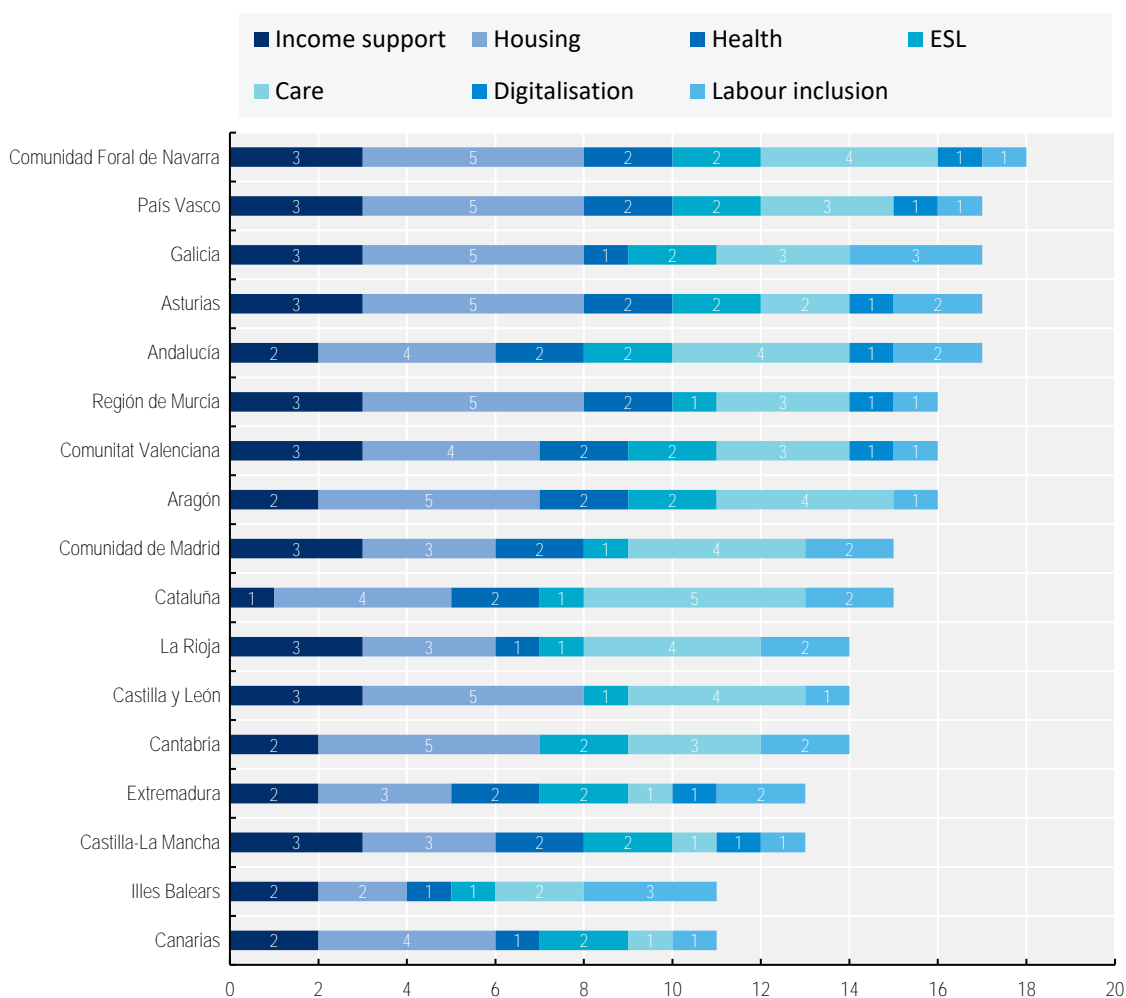
A regional typology of social inclusion policies

Figure 2.1 shows a ranking of social inclusion policies by thematic area based on the number of indicators for each area which were available in Tables 2.3 to 2.7 and the discussion of benefits and policies under minimum income and labour inclusion. It shows how in specific areas, some groups of AACC lag behind the rest, as well as the extent to which different areas have a broad coverage at the regional level in Spain. The main conclusions that arise from this figure are the following, by area:

- Income support is one of the most developed areas of social inclusion. With the only exception of Cataluña, which does not have last-resource emergency transfers at the regional level, all other AACC have at least two out of three indicators (regional minimum income, inclusion itinerary linked to minimum income and last-resource monetary transfer).
- The area of housing shows more regional variation. While 12 out of 17 AACC have at least 4 out of 5 indicators covered, there are five AACC with 3 or fewer indicators: Comunidad de Madrid, Castilla-La Mancha, La Rioja, Extremadura and Illes Balears.
- In health, there are 11 AACC that have two indicators from the analysis. In addition, 4 AACC (Galicia, La Rioja, Canarias and Illes Balears) have one indicator. Castilla y León and Cantabria are the two AACC that do not have specific health measures for vulnerable groups.
- For ESL, all AACC have at least one out of the two indicators (programmes for ESL and second-chance programmes). The list of the AACC that only have one is Murcia, Comunidad de Madrid, Castilla y León, Cataluña, La Rioja and Illes Balears.
- As seen throughout the analysis of this section, the area of care is still not fully integrated within the social inclusion framework in Spanish regions. Cataluña is the only AACC to have five out of the five indicators in this area. The AACC with less development related to care policies (one or two indicators) are Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Canarias and Illes Balears.
- Finally, as already mentioned, the issue of the digital gap is still under development in most AACC, as only eight AACC show some kind of policy related to digitalisation targeted at vulnerable groups. Nine AACC have no reported policies in this area: Aragón, Galicia, Comunidad de Madrid, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Cantabria, La Rioja, Canarias and Illes Balears. It should be noted that the six highest-ranking AACC do have digitalisation measures, suggesting this area is mostly addressed when a comprehensive approach to social inclusion is already in place.

In terms of how the AACC compare when drilling down in the ranking, there is strong variation, with 13 of 17 AACC falling behind in at least one area. The four AACC not on this list are Andalucía, Comunitat Valenciana, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco. These are also four of the five highest-ranked AACC, and all of them have a recent social inclusion plan. As for those AACC that fall behind in a higher number of areas, Illes Balears falls behind in a total of four areas (housing, ESL, care and digitalisation) and Illes Balears, Castilla y León, Cataluña and Comunidad de Madrid in a total of three.

Figure 2.1. Ranking of Spain's AACC by area of social inclusion



Note: The elements taken into account for this ranking comprise: the existence of a regional minimum income scheme (MIS); the presence of inclusion itineraries linked to the MIS; last-resource economic transfers; emergency housing; accompaniment for persons/households under emergency housing programmes; public social housing for vulnerable groups; rent transfers for vulnerable groups; programmes against energy poverty; general health programmes for vulnerable groups; mental health programmes for vulnerable groups; regional early school leaving programmes for vulnerable groups; the existence of second-chance schools; income support for vulnerable families with children; early child education and care programmes for vulnerable children; school canteen programmes for vulnerable children; early care for vulnerable children with disabilities; support for care in the area of long-term care; training on digital skills for vulnerable groups; counselling and labour market intermediation; training programmes and subsidies to employers and job-creation schemes.

Source: The ranking builds on the analysis of OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022) and regional government websites.

2.3. Resources for social inclusion vary greatly across regions

The AACC differ in how their social inclusion policies and programmes are organised and whether these are grouped as part of a comprehensive social inclusion plan or strategy. These different approaches translate into differences in budget governance, as social inclusion budgets are strongly related to having a social inclusion plan. Only three AACC present a comprehensive approach to the budgeting of social inclusion policies but do not have a strategy.

Table 2.8 presents a summary of different approaches to budget governance found in the AACC for those regions where information is available, based on policy questionnaires and interviews and on regional

social inclusion plans. Four groups emerge from this categorisation. First, a group formed by those AACC that have a social inclusion plan that ended no earlier than 2020 with its own budget. There are also five AACC that have a plan but no specific budget allocated to it. Third, as described above, three AACC do not have a plan but do have an integrated budget for social inclusion policies. Finally, one AACC does not have a social inclusion plan or budget.

Table 2.8. **Spain's** AACC budget governance and social inclusion

	AACC having a social inclusion plan	AACC that do not have a social inclusion plan
AACC having a specific budget for social inclusion	Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León, Comunidad de Madrid, Comunidad Foral de Navarra	Aragón, Extremadura, La Rioja
AACC not having a specific budget for social inclusion	Andalucía, Canarias, Comunitat Valenciana, Galicia, País Vasco	Cataluña

Note: Information is missing for Asturias, Illes Balears and Murcia.

Source: OECD social inclusion questionnaires and interviews (2022) and regional social inclusion plans.

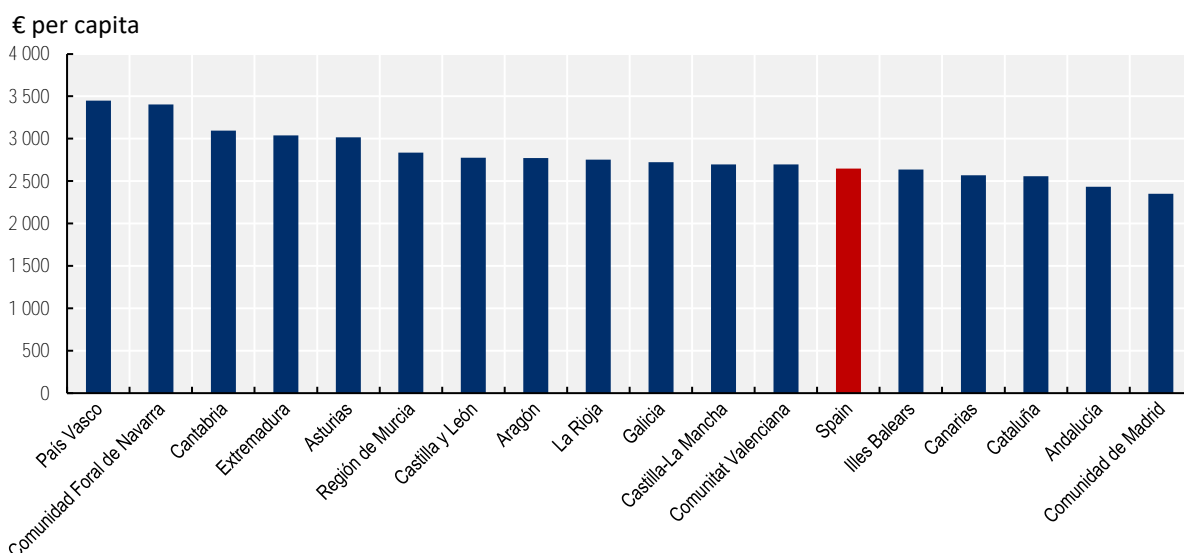
Measuring spending on social inclusion poses challenges for comparison between the AACC. First, since social inclusion encompasses diverse policy areas, no specific budget allocation covers only social inclusion programmes. Moreover, the lack of further integration between policy areas also complicates measuring expenditure. Second, while the closest to this would be the “social insertion and prevention” item of the social services catalogue, which should include: 1) intervention community services and social voluntary work; 2) socio-educational intervention and accompaniment in social inclusion itineraries; and 3) coverage of basic needs; not all AACC include the same kind of policies and services within this category, making comparisons inaccurate.

As an approximation, Figure 2.2 shows differences in per capita spending in social policy in 2019, including social services, education, health and housing, with over EUR 1 000 variation between the region with the highest spending (País Vasco, EUR 3 450 per capita) and the lowest (Comunidad de Madrid, with EUR 2 350 per capita). The three AACC with the most per capita spending (País Vasco, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and Cantabria) also have the lowest social exclusion rates. A more striking case is that of Extremadura, which is the region with the second-highest exclusion rates; it also has the fourth-highest per capita spending. The AACC where spending falls below the national per capita average of EUR 2 648 tend to have above-average social exclusion rates, with Madrid as the sole exception. Madrid has the lowest per capita spending but exclusion rates below the national average.

There is significant variation between the AACC in terms of needs and demand for social inclusion programmes and the resources allocated, including spending figures, staff ratios and coverage rates. To understand the resource adequacy of a given region, it is necessary to relate needs and resources in a way that reveals whether the resources allocated by an AACC are adequate for its population's needs. To do this,

Figure 2.3 presents a two-dimensional ranking that shows the scores of all AACC based on the indicators gathered and analysed to measure resources and needs. The horizontal axis represents the level of resources allocated to social inclusion programmes, based on a total of ten indicators, while the vertical axis represents differences in the level of social inclusion needs of the population, based on a total of nine indicators.

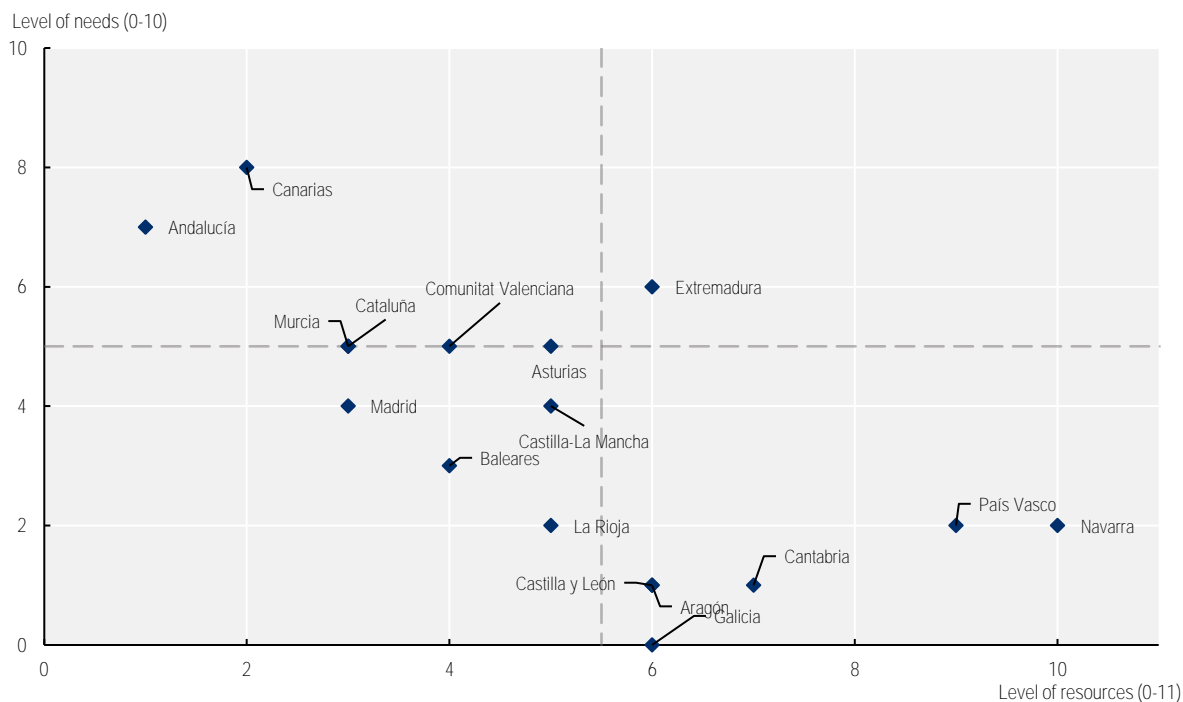
Figure 2.2. Per capita spending on social services, education, health and housing by AACC, 2019



Note: Social spending is calculated as the sum of spending on social services and promotion; education; health; access to housing; and promotion of construction.

Source: Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública (2022^[12]), *Liquidación de los Presupuestos de las Comunidades Autónomas*.

Figure 2.3. Ranking of Spain's AACC based on their social inclusion needs and resources



Note: The level of needs of a given AACC is based on a total of ten indicators: social exclusion rates; severe poverty rates; rent overburden rates; share of households not able to keep their house warm; share of population with unmet health needs due to economic reasons in the areas of medical attention and mental health; share of children aged 0-2 enrolled in early childhood education and care (ECEC); share of children 0-2 enrolled in ECEC who attend public centres; share of persons with dependency rights waiting to receive long-term care benefits and long-term unemployment as a share of the labour force. The AACC are given a score of 1 per indicator when above the national average, except for the indicators related to children aged 0-2, when the score is given for the AACC below the national average.

Source: Data for needs corresponds to (Foessa, 2019^[13]), Calculations based on ECV 2019, Calculations made using the Encuesta Nacional de Salud (2017) (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2022^[14]; Imsero, 2021^[15]).

OECD.stat.

Data for resources corresponds to Consolidated 2019 budget liquidation by AACC (Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública, 2022^[12]; OECD, 2022^[16]); Data on MIS amounts from Ministerio de Sanidad Consumo y Bienestar Social (2018). Spending data from the consolidated 2019 budget liquidation by AACC (Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública, 2022^[12]). OECD Affordable Housing Database (Observatorio Vasco de la Vivienda, 2020^[17]); Spending data from the consolidated 2019 budget liquidation by AACC (Ministerio de Hacienda y Función Pública, 2022^[12]). Staff data from (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2020^[18]; Directores y Gerentes de Servicios Sociales, 2020^[19]), and OECD calculations based on SEPE data.

In terms of the adequacy of resources allocated to social inclusion, an AACC can be categorised by need and level of resources:

- A first group includes those AACC with a low level of need and a high level of resources targeted at social inclusion. País Vasco and Comunidad Foral de Navarra are found in the first group. These AACC show social below-average inclusion needs while presenting the two highest scores for the allocation of resources. This suggests that the comparatively high level of resources allocated to social inclusion manages to adequately cover the needs of the population.
- A second group, formed by Andalucía, Canarias, Cataluña, Comunitat Valenciana, Extremadura and Murcia, are those AACC where the needs of the population are high, but the level of resources is low. In all of these cases, the current level of resources allocated for social inclusion would not be enough to cover the population's needs. Andalucía and Canarias are the clearest examples of this situation, with the two highest scores concerning population needs and the two lowest regarding the level of

resources. Cataluña, Murcia and Comunitat Valenciana show lower levels of needs than Andalucía and Canarias, but their level of resources lags behind most AACC. The case of Extremadura is more nuanced, with the highest level of resources for this group. However, the needs of the population are the third highest among all AACC.

- The third group comprises the AACC that show low levels of needs in combination with an average level of resources. This group includes Aragón, Cantabria, Castilla y León, Galicia and La Rioja. In these cases, even if the level of resources is not particularly high, it seems to come in combination with lower levels of need for the population, suggesting the existence of adequate resources.
- The last group is formed by the AACC that show levels of needs close to the average, together with low levels of resources: Asturias, Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha. Illes Balears would be a middle case between the third and the final group, falling closer to this one. The needs of the population in these five AACC are in all cases higher than for the first and third groups, but the level of resources is in all cases lower, suggesting a mismatch in adequacy.

2.4. Co-ordination mechanisms and policy evaluations should be further enhanced

2.4.1. Horizontal and vertical co-ordination mechanisms are not always well developed across regions

The analysis shows a great degree of variation when it comes to the different co-ordination mechanisms existing in the different AACC across areas, as well as between levels of government and with the third sector. Table 2.9 summarises the co-ordination mechanisms present in each AACC, including horizontal co-ordination mechanisms (existence of interdepartmental bodies, co-ordination protocols and data sharing between departments); vertical co-ordination (involvement of local entities through specific bodies and integrated systems of data sharing); the presence of multi-disciplinary teams; and the involvement of the third sector.

Table 2.9. Co-ordination mechanisms present in Spain's different AACC

	Existence of interdepartmental bodies	Co-ordination protocols	Data sharing between departments	Involvement of local entities through specific bodies	Integrated systems of data sharing with the local level	Presence of multi-disciplinary teams	Involvement of the third sector through specific bodies
Andalucía	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Aragón			✓			✓	✓
Asturias	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Illes Balears	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Canarias	✓		✓				
Cantabria						✓	
Castilla-La Mancha					✓		
Castilla y León	✓		✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓
Cataluña		✓					
Comunitat Valenciana	✓	✓	n.a.	✓		n.a.	
Extremadura	✓	n.a.	n.a.				✓

Galicia	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓		n.a.	
La Rioja					✓	✓	
Comunidad de Madrid		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Región de Murcia			✓				
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
País Vasco	✓	✓	✓	✓		n.a.	✓

Note: AACC are considered to have multidisciplinary teams when they fare as multidisciplinary in at least four of the six policy areas analysed. Teams are considered multidisciplinary when having two or more professional profiles involved in income support, four or more for labour inclusion, two or more for housing, three or more for health, two or more for early school leavers and three or more for care. “n.a.” stands for missing or not available information.

Source: OECD policy questionnaires and interviews (2022) and regional social inclusion plans.

A series of AACC have inter-departmental bodies with the aim of achieving better co-ordination concerning the different areas related to social inclusion. These are often related either to the existence of a social inclusion plan or to inclusion itineraries linked to minimum income schemes that involve different departments. Different modalities of inter-departmental bodies include:

- In Andalucía, the ERACIS strategy (Andalusian Regional Strategy for Social Cohesion and Inclusion) foresees an inter-departmental commission that holds yearly meetings to perform a monitoring of the plan. Furthermore, bilateral meetings with the goal of modulating policies are frequent in this AACC, mostly between the areas of social services, employment and education.
- Canarias have a General Council of Social Services with representatives from government departments from areas such as social rights, employment, housing, health or education, among others. This Council meets at least once a year and is in charge of co-ordination and co-operation on areas related to social policies.
- In Castilla y León, a Social Services Council aims to integrate and co-ordinate advisory functions and participate in policy proposals. It is divided into ten different thematic sections, with representation from the different government departments, territorial entities and third-sector organisations.
- Comunitat Valenciana has a Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for its social inclusion plan, including representatives from the areas of employment, education, health and housing, among others. This commission co-ordinates and evaluates the plan’s implementation and budgeting and drafts biannual outcome reports.
- Extremadura has an Inter-administrative Council of Social Services, with representation from different areas such as social services, education, housing, LTC, health, employment and women. It is in charge of technical and administrative co-operation and works primarily to unify requests from the user’s perspective.
- Galicia has an Interdepartmental Commission for Social Services and Social Inclusion to ensure co-operation between the different regional government departments involved in the Social Inclusion Strategy of Galicia 2014-20.
- In Comunidad Foral de Navarra, structured inter-departmental co-ordination emerged during the implementation process of the last regional strategy. The cross-area nature of the Strategic Inclusion Plan of Navarra 2018-21, which affects different government departments (housing, education, health and social rights, among others), entailed a series of governance challenges that led to the creation of four working groups. The topics covered by these working groups are inclusive health, education, housing and employment. They aim to create a co-ordination structure between social rights and other areas to implement joint measures.

- The País Vasco has a participative framework of periodic meetings that makes it possible to connect all systems. In these meetings, each department provides information on progress made in social inclusion. This participatory framework is formed by the Inter-institutional Commission for Social Inclusion (internal government co-ordination) and the Basque Inclusion Council (including third-sector organisations as well). The Commission is constituted as the highest body for collaboration between Basque public administrations in order to ensure inter-institutional co-ordination in the various actions in the field of social inclusion. It is attached to the department responsible for income guarantee and social inclusion. On a five-yearly basis, this institution also conducts a report on the control of the quality of management.

There are also two AACC where the existence of inter-departmental bodies is planned but has not reached an implementation stage:

- In Castilla-La Mancha, the last Strategy against Poverty and Social Inequality foresees the creation of a steering committee and a technical committee to ensure the existence of a co-ordination and monitoring system led by the Social Well-being Department. These committee meetings, however, are not taking place during the implementation process.
- La Rioja also holds a regulatory framework for the existence of an Inter-institutional Commission that would be held to co-ordinate social inclusion policies if the region were to have a social inclusion plan. However, in the absence of such a plan or strategy, this Commission has yet to hold a meeting.

In addition to specific bodies, six AACC have developed some kind of protocol or written guidelines specifying how co-ordination in the area of social inclusion should take place between different government departments:

- Cataluña has co-ordination protocols specific to the area of income support. Since the Renta Garantizada de Ciudadanía is jointly managed between the social rights and the employment departments, the relationships between departments concerning this area have been systematised. These joint competencies are structured on the basis of detailed instructions (Instruction 01/2018 and 39/2017) containing the procedures when a user applies for the regional MIS. Instruction 39/2017 sets out the procedure in which the joint work of social services and employment is performed. The employment office is responsible for processing all regional MIS applications and for developing an individual labour inclusion plan. If a user with a labour profile applying for the regional MIS also wants to apply for the Supplementary Benefit of Activation and Insertion, the social services department is in charge of the elaboration and follow-up of an individual social inclusion plan.
- Since 2019, Comunitat Valenciana has had a protocol establishing the information and referral between social and employment services for establishing a social diagnostic and drafting an individual inclusion pathway for recipients of the regional MIS.
- In the cases of Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra, there are written guidelines to structure co-ordination related to social inclusion. This applies to communication between government departments, other administrative levels, and the third sector.
- Murcia has developed social services and employment protocols to improve access to employment for persons at risk of social exclusion and socio-sanitary protocols to enhance the accessibility and continuity of services.
- In País Vasco, protocols and guidelines are part of the regional social inclusion plans that provide a participation framework and connect systems.

Castilla y León, País Vasco and Comunidad Foral de Navarra are the three AACC with a higher number of co-ordination mechanisms (five out of seven). Castilla y León has two out of three horizontal co-ordination mechanisms, as well as integrated data sharing with local entities and structured involvement

of local entities and the third sector. Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco have specific bodies to include local entities and the third sector in the social inclusion framework. On the other hand, none of these AACC has integrated mechanisms of data sharing with local entities or a multidisciplinary approach to social inclusion on the ground. There are also two AACC with four co-ordination mechanisms: Andalucía and Madrid. Andalucía has two out of three horizontal co-ordination mechanisms, as well as structured involvement of local entities in the social inclusion framework and multidisciplinary teams. Finally, Madrid has multidisciplinary teams, a dedicated body for local entities, co-ordination protocols and data sharing across departments.

Based on the information and indicators available, the AACC showing the weakest development of co-ordination mechanisms are Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha, Cataluña and Murcia. Of these, Murcia is the most striking case, as it had one of the broadest ranges of social inclusion policies, but the analysis from this section suggests that these are not necessarily interconnected among them or integrated for beneficiaries. Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha and Cataluña also fared below average in terms of the existence of social inclusion policies, coming together with underdeveloped co-ordination mechanisms. From this group, it should be noted that Castilla-La Mancha has an inclusion plan that foresees the creation of co-ordination mechanisms. However, these have not been developed according to questionnaires.

Regarding vertical co-ordination within the AACC, financing agreements are one of the most common frameworks for co-ordination between the AACC and local entities. In Spain, the competence for the provision of primary social services corresponds to local entities, although part of the financing of these services can originate from higher administrative levels (Pontones Rosa, Pérez Morote and González Giménez, 2010_[20]). While local entities finance part of their social services provision, part of the local social services budget comes from the regional, national and sometimes European levels. In addition, financing from the regional level represented the highest share of primary care budgets in most AACC (OECD, 2022_[16]).

Vertical co-ordination with local entities is also key in Castilla y León due to the large extension of the territory and the high dispersion of the population. The main tool in this area is the Framework Agreement of Co-financing of Primary Care Teams and Social Services Programmes. In the case of *diputaciones*, this framework comes together with a monitoring commission where local entities can raise changes in their resource needs. Cataluña also has a Framework Agreement called a *contrato programa* with basic areas of social services, with a four-year duration. Local entities can also request specific financing for Local Plans of Inclusive Community Action as part of this framework. La Rioja is the last AACC to report financing agreements as the main co-ordination tool. In this territory, with the exception of Logroño, most local entities are financed by the regional government. This entails yearly meetings to adjust both the financing and the needs of local entities.

Third-sector entities such as major international NGOs like the Red Cross but also national NGOs are key actors in Spain's social inclusion framework, with major involvement in service provision across areas such as social and socio-sanitary services and educational support (Plena Inclusión, 2016_[21]). The third sector contributes 1.41% of gross domestic product (GDP), and three-quarters of its work covers the areas of social inclusion, integration and socio-health programmes. Some of the most relevant features of the role of the third sector as part of the Spanish welfare state include its territorial granularity, with more than 70% of entities working at the local, provincial and regional levels; and the involvement of civil society participation, including vulnerable groups (Plataforma Tercer Sector, 2020_[22]).

The different AACC differ in the degree of involvement and co-ordination with the third sector within their territories. At least five regions have structured communication through specific bodies or frameworks. In Aragón, there is a regional social inclusion network formed by third-sector entities, which is the main interlocutor for the regional government. There is frequent communication with this network, including information sharing. Castilla y León involves the third sector in the regional network for the protection and inclusion of persons and families in situations of social or economic vulnerability (Ley 4/2018). Third-sector

entities are also part of the Social Services Council of Castilla y León through a specific section for collaboration. Extremadura also involves the third sector through a Social Services Council. In Comunidad Foral de Navarra, there is a Council for Social Well-being with representatives from social entities and, finally, the País Vasco involves the third sector through the Basque Council for Inclusion.

In the case of Andalucía, co-ordination takes place mostly on the ground, with a strong involvement of the third sector in the ERACIS framework, through the participation in working tables rather than through a regional body. In addition, agreements with the third sector have been institutionalised as part of inclusion programmes, and more concretely in the area of accompaniment, as currently, inclusion plans in Andalucía include an accompaniment figure from the third sector. There are also AACC that report communication in the framework of specific projects, such as Canarias.

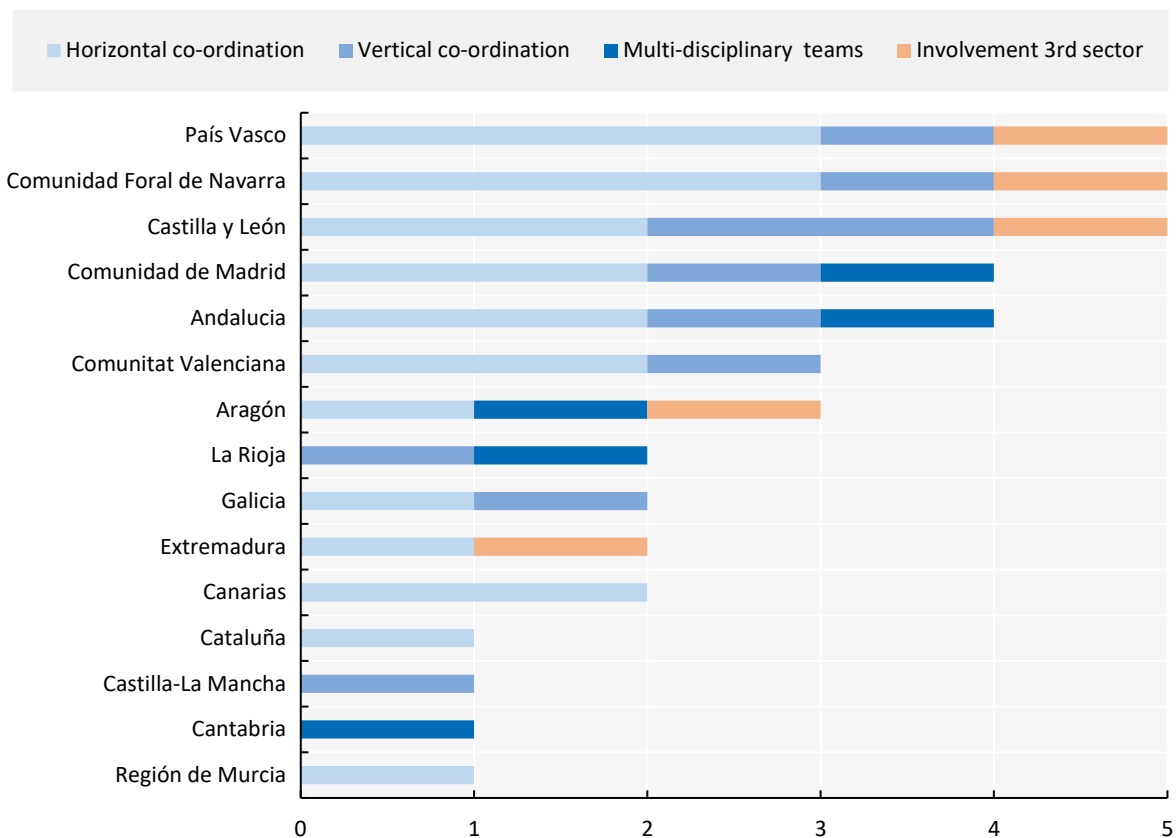
Co-ordination in the exchange of information between the services involved in the assessment and provision of benefits and services is crucial to developing a complete diagnosis, avoiding duplicities, reducing the administrative burden and improving users' experience and outcomes. Implementing the electronic personal social history (Historia Social Única, HSU) in all territories would be a major step forward in this respect. HSU's main objective is to allow administrations to gather information about the user's case, assessments, evolution of social care of the users throughout their intervention process, as well as the identification of the professionals and the services or benefits. Although most regions foresaw the implementation of their version of the HSU at the end of 2022, only Andalucía, Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha and Galicia have operational versions of this data-sharing system.⁵ In Galicia, the system makes it possible to share the regional social services system with other areas such as health, education or employment, facilitating the co-ordination between the different actors involved in service provision. Thanks to the HSU, both the social worker and the employment professional can access the whole social history of a person. Both systems are co-ordinated so professionals can upload their respective assessments to the HSU (and therefore make them accessible to each other). In addition, a single social inclusion agreement (linked to the itinerary) was created jointly by the two departments. Again, both can monitor the interventions by accessing the same source of information throughout the intervention process. Although it does not replace full interoperability, developing the HSU is a good opportunity to develop a common taxonomy across services, helping develop more interoperable information systems.

In addition to the development of the HSU, the full implementation of the Social Digital Card (TSD) would benefit users and professionals as well, as it aims to give citizens and professionals working with social benefits access to an overview of all transfer payments. Unlike the HSU, which depends entirely on the initiative of each AACC, the TSD implies co-operation at the local, regional and state levels. The TSD would entail avoiding identification errors, providing quick access to information about rights, and the entire social services could benefit from reducing the administrative burden of claiming benefits or services.

Although interoperability represents a challenge,⁶ it becomes essential for developing itineraries offering integrated social interventions. It would provide better information for users and reduce administrative work for professionals. Currently, SIUSS (Social Services Users Information System) does not have application programme interfaces (APIs) that allow for the implementation of software interfaces with other applications, hindering interoperability between services. In this context, some AACC are implementing their own unified system for all social services. La Rioja (PROTECNIA), Castilla-La Mancha (ASIST/MEDAS) and Castilla y León (SAUSS/CEAS) are examples of interoperability between primary and specialised services. Regarding interoperable systems between different agents, some systems are present in specific areas, such as dependency. For example, in Castilla y León, there is a certain degree of interoperability between social services (including primary services), the Tax Agency (AEAT) and the national dependency information system (Sistema Nacional de Información sobre Dependencia).

As a last step, Figure 2.4 ranks the AACC by the number of co-ordination mechanisms, breaking these down into four categories as developed above. This figure shows that variation exists not only in the number of mechanisms available but also in the types of co-ordination more prevalent across the AACC.

Figure 2.4. Ranking of Spain's AACC by area of co-ordination



Note: Asturias and Illes Balears are not included in this figure due to missing information from all areas. In addition, information on co-ordination protocols is missing for Extremadura and Galicia; data sharing across departments is missing from Comunitat Valenciana, Extremadura and Galicia; and information on multidisciplinary teams is missing from Castilla y León, Comunitat Valenciana, Galicia and País Vasco.

Source: Table 2.9 above, based on OECD policy questionnaires and interviews (2022) and regional social inclusion plans.

Horizontal co-ordination is the most widespread form of co-ordination in Spanish AACC: 12 of the 15 AACC for which information is available show at least one horizontal co-ordination mechanism. Only in Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha and La Rioja is there no structured co-ordination between departments. Castilla y León is the only AACC that fulfils the two criteria for vertical co-ordination, while nine other AACC have at least one mechanism in this area. Aragón, Extremadura, Canarias, Cataluña and Murcia are the AACC lagging in this regard. Finally, multidisciplinary teams and the structured involvement of the third sector are the two areas where the Spanish regions show less development. Only five AACC have mechanisms for each of these categories. For multidisciplinary teams, this aligns with information that informal mechanisms are the most common way of co-ordinating on the ground, raising the need for further formal protocols in this area. As for the third sector, while collaboration with these entities is widespread in most regions and third-sector entities frequently act as service providers, they are not always formally involved in the social inclusion framework of the AACC.

2.4.2. There is significant variation in the evaluation of social inclusion plans

The AACC differ in the degree of evaluation of their social inclusion programmes, as well as in the structure of these evaluations, actors involved throughout the process and whether evaluations are internal or external. Table 2.10 summarises the different approaches to evaluation taken by the different AACC, focusing on the type of evaluation and the actors involved.

Table 2.10. Evaluation mechanisms and actors involved in social inclusion plans in Spain's AACC

	Evaluation mechanisms	Actors involved in the evaluation			
		Other regional government departments	Local entities	Third sector	Beneficiaries
Andalucía	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓			
Aragón	Each programme has its own evaluation				
Asturias	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Illes Balears	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Canarias	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓		
Cantabria	Each programme has its own evaluation				
Castilla-La Mancha	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓		✓
Castilla y León	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy		✓		
Cataluña	Each programme has its own evaluation				
Comunitat Valenciana	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extremadura	Each programme has its own evaluation			✓	✓
Galicia	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓	✓	
La Rioja	No systematic evaluations are foreseen				
Comunidad de Madrid	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓		
Región de Murcia	Evaluation only for specific programmes	✓			
Comunidad Foral de Navarra	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy	✓	✓	✓	
País Vasco	Comprehensive evaluation of the strategy				

Note: No information is available from Asturias and Illes Balears. For Murcia, information on the actors involved comes from the evaluation of the II Pacto contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social en la Región de Murcia.

Source: OECD social inclusion interviews and policy questionnaires (2022) and regional social inclusion plans.

Nine AACC envisage a comprehensive evaluation of their social inclusion plans and strategies as their main evaluation mechanisms. This corresponds to the AACC with social inclusion plans ending no earlier than 2020 (see the section above, “Less than half of the regions have a current regional plan for social inclusion”), with the only exception of Cantabria. Of these, there are certain AACC such as Comunitat Valenciana, Galicia, Madrid and Comunidad Foral de Navarra that also have yearly evaluations of their plans, in addition to a final one. In the case of Comunidad Foral de Navarra, these yearly plans (*planes operativos*) have led to the identification of a series of obstacles during the implementation phase of the strategy, such as in the area of governance, and to the subsequent adaptation of measures and creation of working tables to tackle these issues, showing a feedback process between evaluation, design and implementation.

Other AACC show different approaches to evaluation. There are four regions (Aragón, Cantabria, Cataluña and Extremadura) where each programme related to social inclusion has its own evaluation. While this approach ensures that all policies are evaluated, it can prevent the existence of a comprehensive approach that brings together common lessons and challenges for different programmes. Less systematic approaches include Murcia, which only foresees evaluations for specific plans and La Rioja, where no systematic evaluation of social inclusion policies has been established.

Government departments involved in social inclusion are present in the evaluation processes of up to eight AACC. These are the same regions that envisage a comprehensive evaluation of social inclusion plans, except for Castilla y León, whose strategy focuses only on social services, and País Vasco, which reports that evaluations are undertaken by the government department in charge of inclusion, without mention of other actors. In addition, Murcia involves other departments for specific evaluations. This horizontal approach to co-ordination can be key for developing evaluations that take a multidimensional

approach to inclusion, helping to identify key areas where changes are needed, even if these belong to other policy areas.

Local entities are frequently consulted as part of regional evaluation processes, which is the case for at least seven AACC. While this ensures that different territorial challenges can be considered as part of the evaluation, interviews with local entities highlighted the lack of bi-directionality in the communication with regional governments. In several cases, this involvement consists of information requests made by the regional government, without specific channels for local entities to engage in an exchange on the implications of this information.

The third sector is only involved in evaluation in four AACC: Comunitat Valenciana, Extremadura, Galicia and Comunidad Foral de Navarra, consistent with interviews with third-sector entities reporting that contacts with the administration are scarce in the evaluation area. With the third sector is a key actor in providing social inclusion services in many AACC, their absence may result in information from the implementation phase of specific outsourced programmes not being included in the evaluations and thus not considered for future reforms. Finally, only three AACC include beneficiaries as part of the evaluation processes: Castilla-La Mancha, Comunitat Valenciana and Extremadura.

In a nutshell, there is significant variation in the mechanisms and involvement of different actors in evaluating social inclusion programmes. Comprehensive evaluations are foreseen only for half of the AACC, while the rest only have programme-based or non-systematic approaches to evaluation. In addition, the involvement of key actors for social inclusion also varies. From within the administration, regional government departments other than the one in charge of social inclusion are not always consulted for evaluation, and while local entities are consulted often, the lack of bi-directionality can be an obstacle for information flows; for example end-user's feedback is rarely included in policy evaluation protocols (see Box 2.2). As for external actors, while the third sector is a key provider of social inclusion services in many AACC, it is not considered part of the evaluation stage in most regions.

Box 2.2. User experience is rarely included in policy evaluation in Spain

The involvement of citizens, overall and policy beneficiaries, specifically throughout the policy cycle stages, especially policy design and evaluation, has gained substantial momentum in recent years. Citizen engagement is considered an essential tool to improve institutional quality, trust and ownership (European Commission, 2020^[23]), with the European Commission having highlighted the need for “strengthened citizen engagement” (European Commission, 2019^[24]). In the particular case of social inclusion policies and beneficiaries, involvement can be key to adequate policy design tailored to the particular needs and barriers faced by the population at risk of exclusion. In addition, considering the user experience in this area can help identify issues raised during implementation processes, such as the lack of enough information, the existence of administrative burdens or the lack of adequate services for specific needs.

The involvement of users in social inclusion programmes is still an underdeveloped area in all Spanish regions, with no AACC having developed a systematic approach to involving beneficiaries in this area. However, information from policy questionnaires and interviews reveals that this is a topic under consideration in numerous regions, with different mechanisms for involvement being developed. Some examples of involvement include:

- **User involvement through third-sector organisations.** Andalucía, Aragón and País Vasco currently work with third-sector entities during the policy process as interlocutors for the needs of beneficiaries. Andalucía also includes neighbourhood associations and is considering the involvement of users in policy evaluation in the next social inclusion framework. Aragón works with third-sector entities, mostly during the design phase of policies, as a means of including

professionals who work with policy beneficiaries. País Vasco also relies on third-sector entities in the area of social inclusion through the involvement of associations in the Basque Inclusion Council.

- **User involvement during the design process.** While Comunidad Foral de Navarra is currently working on a more systematic approach to the involvement of users in policy design, this has already been implemented for some programmes. For instance, the drafting process of the 2016 law that sets the regional framework for social inclusion and the regional MIS (Ley Foral 15/2016) included interviews with minimum-income beneficiaries. In a more indirect way, Castilla y León reports that the elaboration of the current Strategic Plan for Social Services involved associations of citizens from collectives that would be the subject of this strategy.
- **User involvement as part of the implementation process.** Examples of this include Aragón, where beneficiaries' opinions are considered for the development of its inclusion plan, which led to the adaptation of the regional MIS in line with the needs detected throughout this process. Another example of including users' opinions in the intervention process is the Crisol Programme in Extremadura, which promotes social and labour market insertion. Through individualised interviews with the participants, itineraries for social and labour insertion are jointly prepared. The objective is to provide an adequate response to the needs and preferences in each case in order to improve the process of employability and detect the potentialities of users.
- **User involvement in evaluation.** This is foreseen in Cantabria, where one of the objectives of strategic line 3 of the regional 2030 strategy refers to the promotion of the evaluation of the satisfaction of users of social services. Another objective from this strategic line refers to users' participation in decision making, especially on decisions related to their functional autonomy and community inclusion. In Extremadura, some channels allow the user's experience to be included in the social inclusion activities' evaluation phase. The user's perspective is included by collecting information from interviews or group discussions. These are conducted with the participants in the workshops or training actions framed in the social intervention programmes. Information is then gathered in the technical monitoring and evaluation reports that reflect on the implementation of the programmes in the territory.

2.5. Spain faces challenges in social inclusion that are diverse across the territory

In light of the analysis of different dimensions of social inclusion policies, five core topics have been identified as key reform areas in the Spanish AACC:

- transitioning towards a broader understanding of social inclusion programmes across policy areas, which takes a multidimensional perspective
- developing formal co-ordination mechanisms in the area of social inclusion, both horizontally and vertically
- ensuring the adequacy of resources dedicated to social inclusion so as to meet the needs and demands of the population
- moving towards an evaluation framework that secures continuity and considers users' perspectives
- adapting to digital challenges, both within the administration and in relation to the population at risk of exclusion.

Starting with developing a broader understanding of social inclusion programmes, the analysis has revealed that most AACC lack a multidimensional approach to social inclusion that covers all necessary

policy areas. In most AACC, regional government departments in charge of social services are the main and often the only actors in charge of inclusion policies. In recent years, there has been an impulse towards enhanced co-ordination between social and employment services, which can be seen in the development of multiple pilot projects throughout the Spanish territory. While this is a positive move forward that has led to a more integrated vision of inclusion, the analysis has also detected that other areas that are also key for the inclusion of vulnerable individuals, such as housing, health or care policies, are much less integrated with the actions and programmes developed by social services. In most AACC, co-ordination with these areas is severely limited, with no co-ordination protocols being developed and no mechanisms for data sharing. This isolation of key areas for inclusion can lead to duplication across some programmes while leaving coverage gaps in others. In terms of reforms, the existence of comprehensive social inclusion plans that include inter-departmental monitoring of their implementation can be key for the development of more multidimensional and efficient social inclusion frameworks in the Spanish AACC.

The second reform pathway, closely related to the transition towards a more multidimensional framework, concerns the development of formal co-ordination mechanisms in the area of social inclusion, both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, the creation of interdepartmental bodies (currently present only in eight AACC) and co-ordination protocols can enhance within-government communication in the area of social inclusion, leading to a clearer delimitation of responsibilities, but also to the creation of synergies and a better and more integrated service provision for users. Vertically, the analysis has detected a need for more bidirectional communication between local entities and regional governments, as nowadays, communication often only takes the shape of information requests from the regional to the local level. A stronger involvement of local entities in the social inclusion policy process could lead to better transmission of the changing needs and demands of the population at risk of exclusion and, in turn, to increased adequacy in policy design that leads to more efficient implementation. The need for formal co-ordination mechanisms, particularly referral protocols and institutionalised working groups, has also been detected at the local level, where co-ordination mostly occurs through the good will of professionals involved.

The level and adequacy of resources allocated to social inclusion have also been identified as a key pathway for reform. As seen in the section, “Resources for social inclusion vary greatly across regions”, there are only four AACC (Aragón, Cantabria, Comunidad Foral de Navarra and País Vasco) with a high level of resources that manages to keep the needs of the population low. In contrast, in Andalucía, Canarias, Cataluña, Comunitat Valenciana, Extremadura and Murcia, the analysis has detected a high level of need coming from the population, which come together with a low level of resources, revealing that resources allocated to this area are not adequate for the demands of the population at risk of exclusion. In terms of reform, beyond an increase in investment and staff that would lead to better coverage, the analysis also detected the need for further budget co-ordination across areas, which could lead to more efficient allocation of resources in social inclusion.

In terms of evaluation, the previous section detected a series of challenges related to evaluation, particularly in relation to continuity and the inclusion of users’ experiences. In terms of continuity, while most AACC have developed some kind of evaluation mechanism for their inclusion programmes, it has also been detected that the lack of continuity associated with most social inclusion plans often leads to these evaluations not being incorporated into new frameworks, interrupting the policy feedback. At the moment, social inclusion plans and frameworks also lack stronger user involvement during design and evaluation, which would help adjust programmes to the target population’s needs.

The last reform pathway is related to digitalisation challenges, both within the administration and in relation to the population at risk of exclusion. Within the administration, the analysis has shown that data sharing, as well as the interoperability of systems, both between government departments and between regional and local governments, is still an underdeveloped area. While some steps are being taken in this direction, the administration still shows broad room for improvement. Regarding digitalisation challenges related to users, the analysis has shown the existence of significant digital barriers for the more vulnerable population, which often lacks the necessary skills and resources for carrying out administrative procedures

on line. The AACC appear to have complicated application forms for inclusion programmes or benefits and have not been adapted to the digital skills and resources of the population. As an example, few AACC report adapting their interfaces for mobile phones, which are much more common in low-income households than computers. In addition, very few AACC have developed assistance or training programmes to support these users with the digital barriers faced in their contact with the administration.

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Notes

1. In this chapter, the concept of “competences” refers to the power to act in certain areas of social protection and to design public policies. These competences, as established by Spanish law and the Constitution, are assigned to specific levels of government (national, regional, local) or institutions.
2. Developed by the Royal Decree 7/2015 of 16 January 2015.
3. Article 27 of the Employment Law.

4. Co-ordination protocols and the existence of multidisciplinary teams are only considered for those AACC that sent the relevant information through policy questionnaires.

5. In most cases, HSU development plans provide for incremental or phased implementation. In fact, the HSU is a complex tool that, ideally, collects and harmonises information from multiple sources and administrations. It would be impossible to specify a full version of it from scratch. For this reason, even AACC who already have an operational version of the HSU are and will keep working on their further development and adaptation to new contexts.

6. As mentioned, HSU and TSD, as such, are not data exchange tools. Interoperable systems are designed to, either directly or through a third-party device, exchange data without the intervention (other than the configuration of data queries) of human operators. Interoperable systems require, among other things, secured communication protocols, a common taxonomy and common data models, application interfaces and, on the non-technical side, a clear regulatory context agreed by all involved actors, especially in terms of the transmission of personal sensitive data. The implementation of the HSU and the TSD can help administrations better understand the challenges they must overcome to implement interoperable systems; they can also contribute to the definition of a common taxonomy and, in some cases, to develop common data models.



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