

SPAIN

Key contextual data

Compiled by

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Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Please note

In alignment with country-specific usage, the terms used in this report for the main forms of centre-based ECEC settings are: **first cycle early childhood education centres** (*primer ciclo*, 0–2) and **second cycle early childhood education centres** (*segundo ciclo*, 3–5)¹. Any additional forms of provision are described where appropriate.

Historical milestones in ECEC in Spain

1838	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pablo Montesino founds the first 'infant school' (<i>escuela de párvulos</i>) at the primary school in the village of Virio in the province of Asturias. – The first Education Act (<i>Ley de Someruelos</i>) refers to these schools as the lower level of primary school education².
1849	Just 10 years later, 100 such children's schools have been established, but they are not publicly funded.
1857	<i>Escuela de párvulos</i> are recognised by law (Moyano Law) as the first stage in the education system and are mainly established in areas with more than 10,000 inhabitants.
From 1878	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – New educational ideas (e.g. Froebel) stream into early education. – In 1884, there are 864 institutions attended by about 25% of 3 to 6 year-olds.
From 1890s	Funding problems and poor quality lead to a reduction in the number of ECEC settings.
1901	In a primary reform (the Royal Decree of October 26, 1901 (32) the <i>Escuelas de párvulos</i> are considered as the first grade of primary education.
Early 20th century	Following a phase of expansion at the beginning of the century, a strong slump in provision follows during the Spanish Civil War.
1945	Primary Education Act: early education is a non-compulsory stage of school.
1960s	Increasing maternal employment leads to a renewed expansion of the ECEC sector. In 1966, however, no more than 25% of the 2 to under 6 year-olds attend an ECEC setting.
1970	The General Education Act confirms the voluntary nature of early education, but divides it into two phases: (1) childcare centres for 2 to 3 year-olds and (2) preschool classes in primary schools (or 'kindergartens' in big cities) for 4 to 5 year-olds.
From 1975	Expansion of the now state-funded early childhood education system
1978	The Spanish Constitution allows for cooperation with the Church in the field of education and authorises subsidies for Catholic ECEC settings.
1980–1990	Experimental plans for the new ECE settings that the 1990 Education Act then embraces
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education Act: introducing the basic right to education – ECEC settings for under 3 year-olds and 3 to under 6 year-olds are integrated and organised in two cycles.
1991	Transfer of responsibility for ECEC from the National Government to the Autonomous Communities regarding the regulation of the curriculum for the first cycle (0–3).

¹ **Editors' note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports for countries with a school starting age at 6 (as in Spain): **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds.

² Ministry of Education 1985

1995	The Act on Participation, Evaluation and Governance (9/1995) gives ECEC settings more autonomy.
2002	Law on improving the quality of education
2004/05	Gradual introduction of waiving parental fees for 0 to 3 year-olds in ECEC centres
2006	Education Act confirms the integrated approach towards early childhood education.
2008	The Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport (MEPSyD) launches the <i>Educa3 Programme</i> aimed at expanding the provision of places for the 0–2 age group and improving programme quality through complementary continuing professional development activities for staff working with the youngest children.
2021	The amended 2020 Education Act comes into force.
2022	The Royal Decree 95/2022 regulates the general and pedagogical principles of ECEC as well as organisational requirements and basic curricular and competence requirements.
2023	Establishment of a Ministry of Youth and Childhood (<i>Ministerio de Juventud e Infancia</i>)

Sources: Ancheta-Arrabal 2018; Willekens and Scheiwe 2020; Eurydice 2023 1, 4, 14.1

ECEC system type and auspices³

Responsibilities for the education system in Spain are shared between the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (*Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional*) and the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities. The Ministry is responsible for the overall organisation of the education system, while management and operation are the responsibility of the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities. In this respect, the structure of the Spanish early childhood education and care system can be described as both integrated and decentralised.

ECEC settings for under 3 year-olds (1st cycle, ISCED 01) are primarily the responsibility of the municipalities, except in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, where responsibility falls within the remit of the Department of Social Policy (*Consellería de Política Social*). ECEC settings for the over 3 year-olds (ISCED 02) are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training or the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities. In the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, the Ministry of Education has oversight of both cycles (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 175).

A new Ministry of Youth and Childhood (*Ministerio de Juventud e Infancia*) was established in November 2023 (Government of Spain 2024). It is responsible for proposing and carrying out government policy on matters of young people and the protection of minors. The main aim is to promote children's wellbeing and to address the inequality gap.

General objectives and legislative framework

Overarching principles are the right to education, equal access and freedom of choice for parents regarding the institution. The overall aim of early childhood education is to promote the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children in close cooperation with the family. Respect for cultural diversity and preparation for active participation in society and public life also play a major role.

³ The Eurydice country report on ECEC in Spain provided orientation on legal and regulatory aspects. All other sources are clearly indicated within the text and in the references section.

The Education Act (*Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, de Educación*), which came into force in 2021, is the basic legal framework for the education system in Spain. Early childhood education is defined here as the first stage of the education system with two cycles: one for under 3 year-olds and one for 3 to under 6 years-olds. Amendments to the Education Act included measures to increase places for children up to 3 years of age and promote gender equality in early education. The implementation process of the new law will last until 2024. Another important legal basis is the Law for Improving the Quality of Education (*Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa*), which, among other things, sets out the objectives of the core curriculum.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory attendance

Spanish legislation (article 15.2 of Organic Law 2/2006 on Education [LOE], as amended by Organic Law 3/2020 [LOMLOE]), guarantees every child over 3 years of age a legal right to a free place in an early childhood education institution for 25 hours per week. Some Autonomous Communities are also extending this entitlement to 1 and 2 year-olds. If public facilities cannot meet the demand for places, then private facilities are subsidised (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 46). Attending an ECEC setting is voluntary for children below compulsory school age. However, the second cycle has become widespread throughout the country, so that, at present, practically 100% of children aged 3–5 years attend an ECEC setting. Compulsory schooling starts at the age of 6.

Main types of provision

In Spain, the system of early childhood/pre-primary education – *educación infantil* (‘infant education’) – is organised in two cycles. Early childhood education may be offered either in **unitary pre-primary schools** – *escuelas infantiles* (‘infant schools’) – for children aged 0–5 years or in **separate pre-primary centres** – *centros de educación infantil* (‘infant education centres’) for the younger age group (0–2/3 years, depending on the Autonomous Community) and pre-primary and primary education centres (*centros de educación infantil y primaria*) for the 3–5 age group, mostly located in the same building as primary schools.

First cycle ECE centres (*primer ciclo*) for children under 3 years of age are usually open between ten and eleven months a year and the opening hours are mostly based on the needs of the families.

Second cycle ECE centres (*segundo ciclo*) for children between 3 years and school entry are open on 178 school days and have the same holiday periods as primary schools. Both cycles can be offered either in separate settings, or together in one self-contained setting, or be attached to a primary school.

Public educational institutions that offer both cycles or only the 2nd cycle are open five hours a day and offer additional care during off-peak hours. In the case of public institutions offering only the 1st cycle, each municipality regulates the opening hours individually; however, children may not be present for more than eight hours a day. The same applies to private facilities.

Currently, the demand for places for under 3 year-olds is greater than the available places almost everywhere in Spain; in the 2nd cycle, demand and supply are balanced (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 63). If there are not enough places available, preference is given to children who have siblings in the facility, who are disabled, whose parents live nearby or who have a low income (Ancheta-Arrabal, in press).

In two Autonomous Communities – the Community of Madrid and the Chartered Community of Navarre – **home-based ECEC provision** is also an option for children aged 0–2 years.

Provider structures

According to national statistics, there were a total of 99,539 groups in 22,510 ECE settings for children under 6 in 2020/21; almost two-thirds of these were under public management. 10,192 settings offered first cycle education; slightly more than half of which were private whereas of 14,106 settings offering second cycle education, only 25.9% were private (INE 2023, D1).

Table 1

Spain: Number of ECEC settings, groups and enrolled children by provider type, 2020/21

Provider type	Number of settings	Relative share by provider type in %	Number of groups	Relative share by provider type in %	Number of children	Relative share by provider type in %
Public	14,697	65.3	63,766	64.1	104,4503	64.4
Private	7,813	35.7	35,773	36.9	57,7595	35.6
Total	22,510		99,539		162,2098	

Quelle: INE 2023, D1

In 2023/24, the number of **first cycle ECE centres** had increased overall to 9,169. Just over half (4,620) were publicly funded and 4,549 were privately run settings (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2023, 19). In 2020/21, 1,651 of the private settings were private-subsidised and 2,764 private non-subsidised (Eurydice 2023, 2.8).

Participation rates in regulated ECEC settings

The proportion of children under the age of 3 attending ECEC settings has increased since 2005 from 37% to almost half of the children (48.6%) in 2022. The proportion of children aged 3-6 years, which was already very high in 2005 at 94%, rose to 96.1% by 2022.

Table 2

Spain: Enrolment rates in ECEC centre-based settings by age and duration of attendance, 2005–2022

Year	Weekly hours of attendance	Under 3 year-olds in %	3 years to minimum compulsory school age, in %
2005	1 to 29 hours	24	53
	Over 30 hours	13	41
	No enrolment in ECEC	62	6
2010	1 to 29 hours	19	45
	Over 30 hours	18	48
	No enrolment in ECEC	63	7
2015	1 to 29 hours	19.1	46.6
	Over 30 hours	20.6	45.4
	No enrolment in ECEC	60.3	7.9
2022	1 to 29 hours	25.9	51.6
	Over 30 hours	22.7	44.5
	No enrolment in ECEC	51.4	4.0

Source: Eurostat 2023b, slight deviations from 100 % due to rounding

In 2021, almost all 3 to under 6 year-olds attended an ECEC setting, as did more than half of 2 year-olds. *Table 3* shows the number of children and attendance rates by age.

Table 3

Spain: Number and enrolment rates of children in 1st and 2nd cycle ECE centres by age, 2021

Age	Number of children In 1 st cycle ECE centres	Enrolment rates in 1 st cycle ECE centres, in %	Number of children in 2 nd cycle ECE centres	Enrolment rates in 2 nd cycle ECE centres, in %
Under 2 years	173,880	24.7		
2 year-olds	214,873	56.2		
3 year-olds	224	0.1	384,361	94.1
4 year-olds			416,436	96.5
5 year-olds			430,815	97.2

Source: Eurostat 2023f, g

In 2022/23, attendance rates were 14.7% for children under age 1, 49.6% for 1 year-olds, 71.3% for 2 year-olds and 95% for 3-year-olds (children with special educational needs included) (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2023, 20).

In 2023/24, a total of 1,600,564 children were enrolled in ECE centres, 490,308 children in first cycle institutions and 1,110,256 children in the second cycle (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2023, 5).

Financing and costs for parents

In 2019, 0.47% of GDP was spent on the 2nd cycle of early childhood education (OECD 2023). In 2021, 34% of public expenditure on education was spent on early childhood education institutions, primary schools and special education (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2023, 12).

In general, the providers of **1st cycle ECE centres** set the fees themselves, linked to criteria such as family income, the number of siblings already in the setting or the number of hours the child spends there. Sometimes maximum fees are set by the Autonomous Communities. The maximum cost for full-time attendance can vary from below €100 to well over €200 per month, depending on the Community and the benefits for which a family may be eligible.

Attendance at public **2nd cycle ECE centres** is free of charge except for meals. However, private settings charge fees; these may be subsidised by the education authorities of the Autonomous Communities.

The financing of public institutions is generally the responsibility of the state. The Ministry of Education allocates funds to the Autonomous Communities for the operation of ECE centres. They enjoy a high degree of financial autonomy and decide themselves on the exact distribution of the budgets. The municipal authorities receive funds for establishing and maintaining ECE facilities from taxpayers' money as well as budgets from the state and the communities. Private facilities that have a contract with the local education authority and meet certain criteria can also be subsidised by state funds.

To address the disparities between Autonomous Communities in terms of access to a place for under 3 year-olds, funding was made available by the national government through the *Educa3-Programme* – although this was used differently by the Autonomous Communities (Ancheta-Arrabal and Zhang 2016).



In 2022, a couple with two children spent about 5% of net household income on childcare costs⁴ (OECD.Stat 2023).

Staff to child ratios and group size

In both cycles, the children are divided into same-age groups. If there are not enough children of one age, mixed-age groups are formed. If possible, the same ECEC professional accompanies the children through an entire cycle.

The maximum number of children in a group and per professional is regulated as shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4

Spain: Maximum number of children per group/professional in ECE centres by age

Age	Max. number of children per group/per professional
Under 1 year	8
1 to 2 years	10 to 14
2 to 3 years	16 to 20
3 to 4 years	25
4 to 5 years	25
5 to 6 years	25

Source: Eurydice 2023, 4.2

In the community of Madrid, one home-based ECEC provider ('day mother, day father') must have at least completed the advanced vocational training cycle in Early Childhood Education (ISCED level 5), and can care for four children. In the Chartered Community of Navarre, the respective minimum requirement is a training in caring for children under the age of 3 years, or experience/specific training in caring for minors. Regarding the staff to child ratio, the maximum number of children per educator is four which can be increased to five in exceptional and justified circumstances (Eurydice 2023, 4.4).

Curricular framework

The curriculum for early childhood education is compulsory for both cycles, whereby on the basis of the Education Act which came into force in 2021, the framework for the 1st cycle is drawn up by the government in cooperation with the Autonomous Communities. For the 2nd cycle, the Ministry of Education draws up a core curriculum and describes the objectives and content as well as evaluation criteria, which are subsequently supplemented or adapted by the education authorities. This adaptation by the Autonomous Communities is nevertheless handled very differently: some draw up the same education plan for both cycles, others a separate one for each cycle and still others only one for the 2nd cycle.

The Education Act (2/2006 with amendments of 2020) sets out the organisation and pedagogical principles of both education cycles. Subsequently, the Royal Decree 95/2022 sets out the regulations and content of early education in more detail. These refer, for example, to supporting children's development in multiple dimensions (physical, emotional, sexual, affective, sociological, cognitive and artistic) as well as promoting personal autonomy, a positive self-image and education in civic values (Ancheta-Arrabal, in press).

⁴ The calculation is based on the following fictitious model: two parents working full-time (average income); two 2 and 3 year-old children in full-time care; relevant care allowances included.

Objectives of the early childhood curriculum include acquiring key skills and competences in the following domains (Eurydice 2023, 4.3):

- Getting to know their own body as well as others' and learning to respect differences
- Observing and exploring their family, natural and social environment
- Progressively acquiring autonomy in their regular activities
- Developing their emotional and affective capacities
- Interacting with others on an equitable basis and progressively acquiring basic guidelines for coexistence and social relations, as well as practising the use of empathy and peaceful conflict resolution, avoiding any kind of violence
- Developing communication skills in different languages and forms of expression
- Being introduced to logical-mathematical skills, to reading and writing, and to movement, gesture and rhythm
- Promoting, applying and developing social norms that foster equality between men and women.

The professionals are free to choose their own materials and methods, with an emphasis on play.

In the second year of the 2nd cycle (5 to 6 year-olds), a foreign language; reading, writing and basic numeracy; information and communication technologies; and visual and musical expression are usually introduced. The teaching of religious content is offered voluntarily by the religious communities. Books and other materials used in the institutions are inspected by the education authorities.

Digital education

The guidelines for the national education plan emphasise the pedagogical use of digital technologies to support learning processes, but without going into more detail about the digital competences to be developed. For example, reading digital books, using digital devices such as webcams and computer games are recommended (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 100).

Nevertheless, there is no consensus among ECE professionals on the suitable level of integration of these technologies. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, the students' own competence with regard to digital technologies (Alberola-Mulet et al. 2021), and on the other hand, that ethical problems are not addressed in the development of digital competencies during their initial professional education (Novella-García and Cloquell-Lozano 2021).

Monitoring – evaluation

Not all Autonomous Communities evaluate both cycles of the early childhood education system.

Child-related assessment

Criteria established by the Ministry of Education and adapted by the Autonomous Communities serve as a reference framework for the assessment of children. At the beginning of the settling-in phase, an initial assessment is carried out within the framework of the respective institution's development plan, followed by continuous assessments. At the end of the year, a final evaluation takes place, which describes the children's skills and abilities. The education authorities schedule three formal evaluations per year, the results of which are communicated to the families in a written report. Observations are the main form of assessing the children, as well as

interviews with the families. Screening instruments may also be used to identify possible developmental delays.

Centre-level internal evaluation

Centre-based self-evaluation measures and their implementation are the responsibility of the ECE centres. In some Autonomous Communities there are also guidelines for self-evaluation, which is usually carried out annually.

External evaluation

External evaluations are the responsibility of the State Inspectorate of Education, the inspection authorities of the respective Autonomous Communities, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation (subordinate to the Ministry of Education), and evaluation authorities of the Autonomous Communities. The National Institute for Educational Evaluation produces a system of educational indicators that are regularly adapted. In 2019, it consisted of 17 indicators in three dimensions (educational environment, financing, educational outcomes).

Inspections carried out by officials from the Education Inspectorate are designed to check compliance with legal regulations and to determine the rights and obligations of all those involved in the learning process. They also examine the day-to-day operation of an educational setting and its education programme. Inspections and evaluations ultimately serve to improve the quality of education; they are also intended to increase transparency and effectiveness. The frequency of implementation depends on the resources of the respective Autonomous Community. In two Autonomous Communities (Cataluña and Valencia; in Andalusia only for the 2nd cycle), the perspectives of children and parents are also included in the evaluation process. Instruments to capture their perspectives have been designed for both self-evaluation procedures and external evaluation by the Education Inspectorate (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 20, 131f).

Inclusion agenda

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The principle of diversity is included in both the new Education Act (2020) and the Education Quality Improvement Act (2013). According to this legislation, all children should receive the support that best suits their needs. Children with special needs usually attend mainstream ECE centres. They are enrolled in a special education setting only when their needs cannot be met in a regular ECE centre. The specific arrangements for this are determined by the regional education authorities.

In 2021/22, 1.3% of children in the 1st cycle had special educational needs and 3.2% in the 2nd cycle (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 2023, 9).

The National Strategy for the Prevention of Poverty and Social Exclusion (*Estrategia nacional de prevención y lucha contra la pobreza y la exclusión social, 2019-2023*) has a special focus on inclusive education and early education for under 3 year-olds, especially for families from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children with a background of migration – children from Roma communities

In 2022, 11.4% of the total population had a non-Spanish citizenship, of which more than two thirds (67.8%) came from countries outside the EU27(2020). In the age-group up to 5 years,

15.1% children were of non-Spanish origin, of which three quarters (75.4%) are from non-EU countries (Eurostat 2023c).

In 1st cycle ECE centres, a total of 160,188 children, were of non-Spanish origin in 2020/2021. Of these, 17.9% came from the EU27(2020) countries, 15.5% from Latin American countries and 23% came from African countries (INE 2023, E5).

There are bilateral agreements with some countries, e.g. Portugal, to promote their family language and thus their culture and identity. For example, in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura there is a "Portuguese Language and Culture Programme" in ECE centres and schools (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 115).

The second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIDS II; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2016) showed that the attendance rate of Roma children in Spain (between 4 years old and school entry) was very close to the European target of 95% (European Commission 2020, 134). However, as ethnic identification is not allowed in Spain, there is no accurate and up-to-date data on the number of Roma in the country. The Council of Europe estimated in 2012 that there were approximately 705,000 Roma (about 1.6% of the population) (Carrasco and Poblet 2019).

Parental leave arrangements⁵

Birth and childcare leave for biological mothers (changed terminology since March 2019) (*permiso y prestación por nacimiento y cuidado del menor*) is granted for 16 weeks, of which six are compulsory and must be taken in full time after the birth. Full salary continues to be paid up to a maximum of €4,495.50 per month if the mother has paid into a social insurance scheme for at least 180 days during the past seven years. Mothers who do not meet this requirement receive a lump sum of €600 per month for 42 days.

Working fathers are granted 16 fully paid weeks of **Birth and childcare leave for persons other than biological mothers** (*permiso y prestación por nacimiento y cuidado del menor del progenitor distinto de la madre biológica*) under the same conditions as mothers (excluding the lump sum). Six weeks after birth are compulsory.

Parental leave (*excedencia por cuidado de hijos*) can be taken as an individual and non-transferable entitlement by either parent for up to three years after the birth. In the first year, the return to the same job is guaranteed. Apart from social security contributions, the time is unpaid. Currently, four of the 17 Autonomous Communities pay monthly lump sums, mainly for low-income parents.

According to a survey by Meil and colleagues in 2021, 89.6% of mothers took childcare leave for their youngest child. In 66.7% of births, an average of 110.1 days of leave were taken. 90% of mothers took these in fulltime. In 2021, 73.7% (in relation to the number of births) persons took "birth and childcare leave for persons other than biological mothers". 51% of fathers took this time – unlike mothers – in different blocks of time. In 2021, 11.1% of people (in relation to the number of births) took parental leave, of which 12.6% were fathers. 19.8% of mothers took an average of 6.1 months off, while 6.5% of fathers took 5.7 months.

⁵ The brief overview in this section is based mainly on the country note for Spain by Gerardo Meil and colleagues in the *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023* (see References).

Current challenges for the ECEC system in Spain

Country expert assessment by Ana Ancheta-Arrabal

In Spain there are currently a number of **support mechanisms for families** in relation to early childhood, but they are quite limited, as they are addressed to support the most vulnerable families in economic terms, i.e. only for those who live below the extreme poverty line, whereas those who live in a situation of moderate poverty are neglected. Moreover, other vulnerable groups, particularly in rural areas, are not receiving the policy priority needed in many different regions, thus resulting in significant disparities for families and their children across the country. Spanish administration of the education sector is mainly decentralised, especially for the first cycle of ECEC, creating significant differences in terms of opportunities and costs between the different Autonomous Communities, as well as wide and persistent regional disparities in key educational and social indicators. It is therefore crucial to address **inequality of access** among vulnerable groups who may find it challenging not only to pay the fees often required, but to get available services (e.g., in rural municipalities). Previous decades have seen even larger disparities in terms of equity of access to high quality ECEC in the individual Autonomous Communities than were traditionally the case (Ancheta-Arrabal and Zhang 2016). Moreover, current efforts are not likely to ameliorate the lack of equitable access in some regions of the country. The differences in quality between ECEC institutions in Spain are also reproduced through the personnel who work in ECEC in terms of inequities in career regulations and working conditions (see the ECEC Workforce Profile for Spain, Ancheta-Arrabal 2024).

As concluded in the SEEPRO-r study in 2018, we can say that the **tension between quality and equity** in ECEC is still relevant and a main challenge to be solved in the diverse territories of Spain. This inequality undermines the principle anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to guarantee education for all children as one of the ratified rights (Ancheta-Arrabal 2011). The incomplete and under-developed societal dialogue surrounding ECEC, which mirrors the discourses at other levels of the education system, still remains a policy challenge in terms of the sector's further development.

ECEC must be accessible to all without any type of discrimination based, for example, on race, colour, ethnic origin, sex, language, religion, economic or social situation. But, especially for the most vulnerable groups in society, including families in poverty, immigrants, the disabled and ethnic minorities, positive discrimination measures should be adopted to eliminate existing discrimination. Right now, discrimination may not officially exist in education legislation and regulations, but the reality is quite different and the fact is that if centres that are not governed by guidelines from the responsible educational authorities, these guarantees are not provided. However, the cultural and educational capital of families should not be a hindrance in guaranteeing learning opportunities or attending to diversity where, for example, in the most problematic situations, access to technology may impede the participation of families (Ancheta-Arrabal et. al. 2022).

Demographic data

Please note: For reasons of comparability, data on children are always reported up to 6 years of age, even if compulsory schooling starts earlier or later in some countries.

Total population

In 2022, the total population in Spain was 47,432,893 and has been increasing steadily for over 20 years (2000: 40,470,182; 2010: 46,486,619; 2020: 47,332,614) (Eurostat 2023a).

Total fertility rate

In 2021, the average total fertility rate in the EU27 (as of 2020) was 1.53. The highest total fertility rate of the 33 SEEPRO-3 countries was in France (1.84), the lowest in Malta (1.13). At 1.19, Spain had one of the lowest rates among the SEEPRO-3 countries (Eurostat 2023d)⁶.

Children under age 6

Table 5

Spain: Number of under 6 year-olds in total population, 2022

Age	Number of children
Under 1 year-olds	337,549
1 year-olds	345,218
2 year-olds	366,776
3 year-olds	384,994
4 year-olds	411,344
5 year-olds	434,163
Total 0 to under 6 year-olds	2,280,044

Source: Eurostat 2023a

In 2022, 2.2% of the total population were children under 3 years of age, 4.8% were children under 6 years of age. During the last two decades these proportions always were only slightly below the respective EU averages. In 2022, particularly the proportion of the under 3 year-olds fell considerably below the EU average.

⁶ Data for **Ukraine** and the **UK** (2021) are from Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/296567/fertility-rate-in-ukraine/> and <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284042/fertility-rate-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>). Data for the **Russian Federation** (2021) are from WorldBankData (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=RU>).

Table 6

Spain: Distribution of under 6 year-olds in population by age compared with EU averages, 2000 to 2022, in %*

Year	Comparison Spain/EU	Under 3 year-olds	3 to under 6 year-olds	0 to under 6 year-olds
2000	Spain	2.8	2.7	5.5
	Ø EU15 ⁷	3.2	3.2	6.4
2005	Spain	3.1	2.9	6.0
	Ø EU25	3.1	3.1	6.2
2015	Spain	2.8	3.1	5.9
	Ø EU28	3.0	3.2	6.2
2022	Spain	2,2	2,6	4,8
	Ø EU27(2020)	2,7	2,9	5,7

Source: Eurostat 2023a, * Own calculations, slight deviations due to rounding

Single households with children under age 6

Almost three quarters (72%) of households with children under 6 in Spain were couple households in 2022. Single parent households accounted for only 2.7% – almost exclusively single mothers (2.2%).

Table 7

Spain: Households with children under age 6, 2022

Household type	Total households	Relative share of all households, in %*
Total households	3,984,600	
Couple households	2,868,300	72.0
Other types of households	1,007,900	25.3
Total single households	108,400	2.7
Single households, women	87,700	2.2
Single households, men	20,700	0.5

Source: Eurostat 2023l, *Own calculations

Employment rates of parents with children under 6 years of age

In Spain, in 2022, the overall employment rate for men (15-64 years) was 78.2% and for women 69.9% (Eurostat 2023k).

In 2022, 60.9% of women and 82.2% of men (18-64 years) with children under 6 were employed. Among the 27 EU-countries (2020), the shares of employed fathers were below the EU-average (87.2%), as were those of mothers (EU-average 63.6%) (Eurostat 2023h, own calculations).

Table 8a

Spain: Employment rates of parents with children under 6 compared with other EU countries, 2010–2022

	2010	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Spain	56.0	77.1
Highest rate of employment in 27 EU countries ⁸	Denmark: 82.7	Netherlands: 93.4
Lowest rate of employment in 27 EU countries	Hungary: 31.7	Latvia: 72.7

⁷ The data for 2000 include the EU15-Länder at that time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK). The 2005 data (EU25) include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2015 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR. Data for EU27 (from 2020) comprise the countries of the EU28 without the UK.

⁸ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK

	2022	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Spain	60.9	82.2
Highest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries ⁹	Luxembourg: 81.9	Sweden: 95.1
Lowest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries	Czech Republic: 42.5	Romania: 78.5

Source: Eurostat 2023h

For the SEEPRO-3 countries that were not part of the EU27(2020) in 2021/2022, data are displayed in *Table 8b*.

Table 8b

Employment rates in non-EU SEEPRO-3 countries, 2021/2022/2023

Countries	Parents with children under 6 years		Overall employment rate	
	Mothers in %	Fathers in %	Women in %	Men in %
*Norway (2022)	82.9	94.3	75.4	80.1
***Russia (2021/2022)	67.1 (2021)	k.A.	55.6 (2022)	70.4 (2022)
*Serbia (2022)	64.4	78.3	57.9	71.0
**Switzerland (2022/2023)	46.9	95.3	60.0 61.1 (2023)	83.5 84.2 (2023)
*Ukraine (2021)	n.d.	n.d.	60.7	69.9
+++United Kingdom (2021/2023) with dependent children	75.6	92.1	++72.3	++79.2
with children under 2 years	72.4	93.1	++72.1 (2023)	++79.4 (2023)
with children 3–4 years	70.7	95.0		

*Eurostat 2023h, 2023k

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⁹ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HR, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹⁰

In 2023, almost one third (31.3%) of children under 6 in Spain were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion was significantly higher than the EU27 average (23.3%) for this age-group. The share of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 26% (EU: 21.6%). In 2020, 6.8% of children under 6 suffered from severe material deprivation – this proportion was higher than the EU27 average of 6.1%. For the total population, it was 3.4% (EU: 4.3%) (Eurostat 2023i, j).

In 2021, the National Alliance for Zero Child Poverty was launched, working in partnership with various social actors to reduce child poverty (Eurochild 2021).

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¹⁰ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation).

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