



WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

The Spanish government has adopted a range of policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The labour measures include a new regulation on the temporary suspension of workers (Expedientes Temporales de Regulación de Empleo - ERTE), adopted to safeguard jobs and cover all affected workers; the automatic extension of existing benefits; a ban on dismissals and the interruption of temporary contracts to extend their duration; and the extension of unemployment protection coverage. Other measures include the introduction of a minimum living income (IMV); the suspension of evictions; a moratorium on rent and mortgage debt payments; temporary rent deferrals, together with aid for the payment of rent; a guaranteed supply of electricity, gas and water for vulnerable groups; and special measures to support the self-employed and SMEs.

Trade unions are calling on the Spanish government to further support workers by increasing the minimum wage and adopting measures to reduce the differentiated impact of the pandemic and the gaps between women and men, ensuring that companies comply with the obligation to negotiate equality plans and measures, and to promote a work-life balance and more equal responsibility sharing between men and women by increasing investments in the public provision of care services and by reversing economic, social and labour rights cuts that increase inequality and poverty. They are also calling for better management of unemployment benefits and the minimum living income (IMV) as well as government measures to restore the balance in collective bargaining, mainly through the repeal of the labour reforms.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Spanish government has aligned its general budgetary plan with the SDGs and has stated that it aims to ensure that all of its policies contribute to the 2030 Agenda. A comprehensive approach has been taken, promoting all 17 SDGs. The implementation of the SDGs is overseen by the Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda and the State Secretariat for the 2030 Agenda.

In 2021, the government will press ahead with its 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy based on a road map to guide its progress with the Decade of Action leading up to 2030. These documents have been developed in consultation with civil society actors, including social movements and the business sector. No specific dialogue has, however, been held with the trade unions.

The trade unions feel that the transparency on the current level of SDG implementation should be improved, with the presentation of reports on the spending allocated to the SDGs in the general budgets and the inclusion of indicators required to ensure adequate accountability and impact reporting.

There is no bilateral social dialogue between the government and trade unions on the implementation of the SDGs. Some sectoral discussions are, however, in place on areas related to SDGs 5, 8 and 12. Trade unions are calling for the establishment of a specific social dialogue on the implementation of the SDGs in Spain.

TRANSPARENCY



No access to information at all

CONSULTATION



Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners contribute individually to the government's SDG national plan



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Greater efforts are required to reach **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)**: 12.8 per cent of people in employment were at risk of poverty in 2019, and the number of working poor increased by 16 per cent between 2010 and 2019. As regards **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)**, in 2016, 80.6 per cent of the population was covered by at least one social protection benefit. In the context of the social emergency created by the pandemic, a non-contributory social security benefit has been introduced, the minimum living income (IMV), to guarantee a minimum income for those in need. Most applicants, however, fail to qualify for it due to the excessive bureaucratisation and strict eligibility requirements. According to the general budget for 2021, government spending on essential services will see a 10.3 per cent increase on the amount allocated in the 2018 budget, bringing it up to 37.2 per cent of the budget.

More efforts are needed to reach **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels)**. Although more women than men have the highest level of education, their work is generally much more precarious, with high rates of part-time employment, temporary contracts, reduced working hours, lower pay, etc. Women's access to managerial and leadership positions is still limited.

Obstacles remain for Spain to meet the targets under **SDG 8 (decent work for all)**. Although official statistics are lacking, informal employment is estimated to account for between 18 and 24 per cent of GDP. Meeting **target 8.3 (promote policies that support productive activities, decent job creation)** is still a challenge. According to official data, 11 per cent of workers are in precarious work, but the actual levels are estimated to be higher, with almost half of all workers on temporary contracts, working part-time or as false self-employed workers. With regard to **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work)**, the unemployment rate in 2020 was 15.5 per cent, affecting more women (17.4 per cent) than men (13.9 per cent). Young workers below the age of 25 were particularly hard hit, with unemployment rates of 37.1 per

cent among young men and 39.7 per cent among young women. The number of NEETs ("not in employment, education or training") mentioned in **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** was 12.1 per cent in 2019. The indicators on **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** show a high level of collective bargaining coverage, 73.1 per cent in 2016, but a relatively low rate of unionisation, at 13.9 per cent in 2015. Spain has made efforts to meet **target 8.b (develop and operationalise a global strategy for youth employment)** by introducing the 2019-2021 Action Plan for Youth Employment with comprehensive measures to promote and boost employment for young people. These initiatives have, however, proved insufficient.

Progress is still needed to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality)**. In 2017, the top 10 per cent of income earners had a 25.4 per cent share of GDP, whilst the bottom 20 per cent of income earners had a 6.2 per cent share.

To reach the objectives of **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**, a strategic energy and climate framework has been adopted which includes the following: a law on climate change and energy transition; a just transition strategy to minimise the negative impacts of the energy transition on those people and regions affected; a 2021-2030 national plan for adaptation to climate change; a national integrated energy and climate plan that aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2050; and a long-term decarbonisation strategy.

Spain is meeting its obligations under **target 16.10 (protect fundamental freedoms)**, as there is full access to legal and juridical tools for assistance in the event of labour disputes. After years of trade union struggle against the criminalisation of the right to strike under Article 315.3 of the penal code, the article was finally repealed in April 2021.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

To ensure an SDG-led recovery and resilience from the crisis, the trade unions are urging the Spanish government to:

- Change the economic production and labour relations model: strengthen legal frameworks that ensure pay and working conditions that allow for a decent life, securing the right to collective bargaining, the right to organise, and gender equality, and create frameworks to recognise and value care work, along with public policies that promote joint responsibility between men, women, companies and public administrations.
- Strengthen the welfare state: build a solid system of social protection for all, increase public investment and guarantee universal access to healthcare, decent housing and quality public education; ensure a guaranteed minimum income and a public pension system that corrects the gender gap.
- Reform the tax system: raise tax collection levels by placing greater emphasis on wealth and capital gains taxes; reduce the taxation of basic necessities and fresh food and eliminate gender bias from the tax system; and ensure that the tax system supports the ecological transition process.
- Implement recovery plans geared towards promoting sustainable economic growth that creates quality jobs: repeal the 2013 labour and pension reforms; improve the management of the minimum living income (IMV) scheme and widen its scope; and prioritise the implementation of the Action Plan for Youth Employment.
- Adopt policies that enable other countries to achieve sustainable development.



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