

Age management in Spain

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Spanish law sets forth a general principle of equality, which forbids all forms of discrimination. According to Article 14 of the Spanish Constitution, Spaniards are equal before the law and may not be subjected to any discrimination by reason of birth, race, age, sex, religion, opinion or any other personal or social circumstances.

More explicitly, Article 17 of the Workers' Statute prohibits such discrimination in employment relationships in stipulating that collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), pacts or decisions of the employer that directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of age are null and void, as are acts of positive or negative discrimination by the employer during employment.

However, Spain does not have specific protection for age-based harassment, in line with other grounds of discrimination such as sex, race, religious belief and sexual orientation. An age harassment claim has to be brought as a claim of direct age discrimination. Moreover, there has not been any recent modification in the legislation to include age discrimination more explicitly.

Despite of this, currently ageing policies are a priority in Spain but there are still challenges derived from having one of the longest life expectancies and an aging society. Some of the challenges that Spain has ahead are the reform of the long-term care model, job improvement and social recognition of caregivers, the fight against all types of age discrimination, maximizing the participation of older people in all areas of society and ensuring that people can pursue their life project regardless of their age are. To address them, Spain has a wide strategic approach.

In 2021, Spain presented a new National Sustainable Development Strategy in the UN High Level Political Forum to accomplish the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. In that strategy, ageing is a mainstreamed dimension.

In January 2021 a Dependency Shock Plan 2021-2023 was approved by the national and regional government, to increasing the financing of the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency in 623 million € for 2021 and establishing the commitment of the same increase for 2022 and 2023.

The Spanish Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan is a national project defining the roadmap for the modernization of the Spanish economy, for the recovery of economic growth and job creation, for a robust, inclusive and resilient economic rebuilding after the Covid-19 crisis, and to respond to the challenges of the coming decade. Its eighth lever policy is Emergency Plan for the care economy and reinforcement of inclusion policies, which includes in one of its components (#22) the improvement of the long-term care system.

With a longer-term perspective, the Spanish government published the report “Spain 2050” a national strategic development plan. Policy proposals are designed around nine challenges and one of them is preparing our Welfare State for a longer living society.

This report presents some of the main progresses done by Spain in relation to ageing and older people.

National ageing situation

In 2021, according to the National Institute of Statistics, the population in Spain has reached 47,344,649 inhabitants. Of them 50.99% are women and 49.01% are men. Comparative data shows an upward trend coming from 46,562,483 inhabitants in 2010, reaching an estimation of 48,746,399 inhabitants by 2030 and 49,377,094 by 2040.

Within this demographic context, the share of people aged 65 and over is increasing, being currently 19.7% of the total population. Almost 6% of them are 80 years or older. Regarding life expectancy at birth in Spain, it went from 83.5 in 2019 to 82.4 in 2020, with a clear effect of the pandemic. Life expectancy is higher in women (86.2) than in men (80.6). There is a sex-related difference of more than 5 years in life expectancy at birth and of almost 4 years at 65 years.

Spain occupies third position in world life expectancy after Japan and Sweden facing some specific challenges as the great dispersion in geographical distribution. In this sense, there are some regions with a high share of older population and extended rural areas (Asturias, Castilla y León, Galicia) and other regions with younger population and higher concentration in bigger cities (Andalucía, Madrid, Catalonia). Some other regions with less population density have a high number of very small municipalities very dispersed in their territory (Aragón, Navarra). In rural and unpopulated areas, the provision of services for older people has more difficulties than in other more populated regions.

As far as ageing rate concerns, it was almost 126% (125.92%) in 2020. This rate is even higher among women rising to 147%. Another challenge is that more than 50% of people living alone in Spain (around 4.6 million people) are older than 65.

On the other hand, it must be underlined that the economic crisis derived from the measures needed to control the Covid-19 pandemic caused Spain's GDP fall by 10.2% in 2020, according INE (National Institute of Statistics).

It should also be noted that the importance of the tourism sector in the Spanish economy, (11% of GDP), has caused the effects of the lack of mobility during the pandemic to have a higher differential effect than in other European countries. The successful vaccination process and the rapid recovery of economic activity are already having important effects, with the forecast for GDP growth in Spain in 2021 of 6.2% and 6.3% in 2022, according to the European Commission.

In terms of policy and distribution of responsibilities in ministerial departments, we want to highlight the change established after the last general elections. Currently the IMSERSO is within the Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda, and therefore at the centre of the social policy, opening many possibilities for mainstreaming ageing in the rest of national policies.

We can highlight the importance of IMSERSO, as the main coordination institution in the Government for ageing-related policies, as well as for promoting autonomy for people in dependency situation. Along with the IMSERSO, as the social services competences are transferred to the Autonomous Communities, the work is done in permanent coordination with territorial governments.

Currently, we observe a clear international momentum to support ageing-related policies. In Spain, this momentum is very strong and ageing and long-term care are on the first line of the political agenda. Recently, the Government published the report “Spain 2050” a long-term national strategic development plan. This document makes policy proposals for the coming years around nine national challenges, and one of them addresses directly the population ageing: to prepare our welfare state for a longer-living society.

Spain is moving towards a whole-of-government model where ageing policies are not only linked to pensions, health and long-term care. Instead, age and ageing will be considered in all the policies. This is a model based in rights, where the older persons decide about their lives, can participate and access the social environment and economic activity; and they are not withdrawn from some rights because they are older, they live in long-term care facilities or because they need care. This is also a model based on evidence, policy decisions must be based on data to make sure not only that the diagnosis of the situation is accurate but also that the most efficient and effective measures are put in place. This is a model also based on social innovation, capable of identifying the best experiences in the country to improve the long-term care system for the older people, with the aim of increasing their quality of life and well-being, as well as their autonomy and self-determination and the free exercise of all their rights.

Age situation in education

In Spain, Public Educational System is divided into six different age groups regarding teachers:

- < 30 years old,
- 30-39 years old,
- 40-49 years old,
- 50-59 years old,
- 60-64 years old,
- > 65 years old (up to 70 years old – forced retirement)

In 2005/2006 these were the percentages of teachers according to age groups in public education:

< 30 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60-64 years old	> 65 years old	Unknown
8.41%	20.82%	28.74%	21.24%	2.02%	0.37%	18.40%

In 2012/2013 these were the percentages of teachers according to age groups in public education:

< 30 years old	30-39 years old	40-49 years old	50-59 years old	60-64 years old	> 65 years old	Unknown
5.05%	26.05%	27.62%	28.28%	2.46%	0.33%	10.20%

As you can observe in the given information, most of the teachers are between 40-59 years old in both cases. Actually, this percentage is increasing. This means there is a lack of young workers in this area.

On a side note, one of the biggest difficulties teachers older than 40 can find is the implementation of TIC programmes in compulsory education. This is the reason why training TIC courses have been developed within the last years to help workers to acquire these new educating methods. One of the Universities that have taken the lead in this initiative is UNED, the Spanish National University of Distance Education, which offers TIC courses where teachers can develop not only their IT skills, but also their productivity and their personal management.

Source:

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