

Connecting People with Jobs

Improving Active Labour Market Policies in Spain

Lessons from a Qualitative Assessment



Connecting People with Jobs

Improving Active Labour Market Policies in Spain

LESSONS FROM A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Member countries of the OECD.

This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

Please cite this publication as:

OECD (2025), *Improving Active Labour Market Policies in Spain: Lessons from a Qualitative Assessment*, Connecting People with Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/745e0cdd-en>.

ISBN 978-92-64-83443-9 (print)
ISBN 978-92-64-55781-9 (PDF)
ISBN 978-92-64-73596-5 (HTML)

Connecting People with Jobs
ISSN 2616-4132 (print)
ISSN 2616-4140 (online)

Photo credits: Cover ©Kzenon/Shutterstock.com.

Corrigenda to OECD publications may be found at: <https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/support/corrigenda.html>.

© OECD 2025



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. By using this work, you accept to be bound by the terms of this licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Attribution – you must cite the work.

Translations – you must cite the original work, identify changes to the original and add the following text: *In the event of any discrepancy between the original work and the translation, only the text of the original work should be considered valid.*

Adaptations – you must cite the original work and add the following text: *This is an adaptation of an original work by the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this adaptation should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its Member countries.*

Third-party material – the licence does not apply to third-party material in the work. If using such material, you are responsible for obtaining permission from the third party and for any claims of infringement.

You must not use the OECD logo, visual identity or cover image without express permission or suggest the OECD endorses your use of the work.

Any dispute arising under this licence shall be settled by arbitration in accordance with the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) Arbitration Rules 2012. The seat of arbitration shall be Paris (France). The number of arbitrators shall be one.

Foreword

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) are a cornerstone of efforts to support people in accessing quality employment, especially those facing greater barriers in the labour market. When well designed and effectively implemented, ALMPs can help address structural challenges, strengthen labour market resilience, and promote inclusion across society. In a context of evolving labour market demands, significant labour and skill shortages, and a need to ensure that all people can benefit from good quality employment, understanding what works, for whom, and under what conditions is essential.

The OECD is carrying out a set of reviews of labour market and social protection policies to encourage greater labour market participation and promote better employment opportunities, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged who face the greatest barriers to finding quality jobs. This includes a series of country studies, *Connecting People with Jobs*, which provide an assessment of how well each country's ALMPs and public employment services (PES) help all groups to move into productive and rewarding jobs, and policy recommendations for improving their effectiveness. This report on Spain is the twentieth in that series.

Spain has made important progress in strengthening its labour market in recent years, supported by substantial investments in ALMPs. Ensuring that these investments translate into effective and inclusive support for jobseekers, people at risk of losing their jobs and employers, requires strong institutions, robust monitoring and evaluation, and a commitment to mutual learning across the Spanish territory, between regions and between programmes.

This report presents the findings of a structured qualitative assessment of selected ALMPs¹ managed by the State Public Employment Service (SEPE) and the regional PES under Spain's Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). The project, carried out by the OECD in co-operation with the Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission (SG REFORM) and funded via the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument (TSI), aimed to enhance the capacity of Spain to identify good ALMP practices and strengthen ALMP design and delivery within the Spanish National Employment System.

The assessment presented in this report is based on a set of qualitative criteria that capture the full cycle of a well-functioning ALMP, from evidence-based design and effective outreach, through implementation and delivery of support, to monitoring and evaluation. The assessment combines an internal assessment carried out by teams in charge of the management and implementation of the ALMPs in Spain, with an external analysis conducted by the OECD. The assessment is carried out across nine criteria designed to encompass all the critical elements that contribute to a well-functioning ALMP.

The report identifies good practices at the criterion and programme levels and provides recommendations to guide the design and implementation of future ALMPs, supporting knowledge exchange across the Spanish National Employment System. The findings were discussed in depth during a mutual learning event held in Madrid on 6 February 2025, bringing together key stakeholders, including SEPE, regional PES, the State Foundation for Training in Employment (FUNDAE), the European Commission and the OECD.

By supporting structured comparison and informed dialogue, this report aims to promote a coherent and evidence-based approach to employment policy across Spain.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Sofia Dromundo Mokrani and Olga Rastrigina in the OECD's Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, with inputs from Ariane Aumaitre Balado as an intellectual service provider to the OECD, and under the supervision of Theodora Xenogiani. Editorial assistance was provided by Assa Fofana and Natalie Corry.

The project was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD, in co-operation with the European Commission. Co-operation with the Government of Spain, through the State Public Employment Service (SEPE), and the Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission (SG REFORM) has been instrumental in the project, with María Belén Rebollo Moral, Almudena Jaspe Rodríguez, Patricia Cediél García, María Dolores Novella Domínguez, and Melitona Real Yustres from the Sub-Directorate General for Active Labour Market Policies of SEPE and Elisa Gomez Aleman from the European Commission.

The project benefitted from input to self-assessment questionnaires, discussions, in-person and virtual consultations and a mutual learning event with diverse stakeholders from across the Spanish National Employment system and beyond, between March 2024 and March 2025. These included representatives from all Public Employment Services and some collaborating entities: Andalusian Employment Service, Balearic Islands Employment Service (SOIB), Basque Employment Service (Lanbide), Canary Islands Employment Service, Cantabrian Employment Service, Employment Service of Navarra (SNE-NL), Extremadura Public Employment Service (SEXPE), State Foundation for Training in Employment (FUNDAE), Government of the Community of Madrid (General Sub-Directorate for Evaluation, Monitoring and Control of Training; Ministry of Economy, Finance and Employment, Directorate-General for Public Employment Service), Ingeus, Public Employment Service of Castilla y Len (ECYL), Public Employment Service of the Principality of Asturias (SEPEPA), Regional employment and training service of the region of Murcia (SEF), Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha (Ministry of Economy, Business and Employment, General Directorate of Employment, Social Dialogue and Occupational Health and Safety), Regional Government of Cataluña (Department of Equality and Feminism), Regional Government of Galicia (Department of Social Policy and Equality; Ministry for Employment Promotion and Equality, General Directorate for Employment Training and Guidance), Regional Government of La Rioja (Ministry for Regional Development, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Dialogue and Labour Relations), SEPE (Provincial Directorate of Ceuta; Sub-Directorate General for Active Employment Policies), Solidarity Foundation "Fundación Amaranta", Spanish Red Cross, and Valencian Employment and Training Service (LABORA).

Table of contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Foreword | 3 |
| Acknowledgements | 4 |
| Executive summary | 7 |
| 1 Scope and methodology for the qualitative assessment of ALMPs | 9 |
| 1.1. The qualitative assessment covers a range of active labour market programmes | 10 |
| 1.2. The assessment employs a comprehensive methodology | 14 |
| 1.3. The assessment framework is structured along nine key assessment criteria | 16 |
| 2 Evidence-based design of ALMPs | 19 |
| 2.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 20 |
| 2.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 21 |
| 2.3. Good practices identified | 23 |
| 2.4. Policy directions: Avenues for future ALMP design | 25 |
| 3 Engaging service providers | 27 |
| 3.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 28 |
| 3.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 29 |
| 3.3. Good practices identified | 31 |
| 3.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening service provider engagement in future ALMPs | 35 |
| 4 Identification and outreach to target population | 37 |
| 4.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 38 |
| 4.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 39 |
| 4.3. Good Practices Identified | 41 |
| 4.4. Policy directions: Avenues to ensure comprehensive identification and proactive outreach to target population in future ALMP | 44 |
| 5 Assessment and referral of participants | 45 |
| 5.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 46 |
| 5.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 47 |
| 5.3. Good practices identified | 48 |
| 5.4. Policy directions: Avenues for effective assessment and referral of participants in future ALMP | 52 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 6 Integrated and holistic support | 53 |
| 6.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 54 |
| 6.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 55 |
| 6.3. Good practices identified | 56 |
| 6.4. Policy directions: Avenues for offering integrated and holistic support in future ALMP | 59 |
| 7 Case management and follow-up support | 61 |
| 7.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 62 |
| 7.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 63 |
| 7.3. Good practices identified | 64 |
| 7.4. Policy directions: Avenues for effective case management and follow-up support in future ALMP | 66 |
| 8 Partnerships with employers | 68 |
| 8.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 69 |
| 8.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 70 |
| 8.3. Good practices identified | 72 |
| 8.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening partnerships with employers in future ALMPs | 75 |
| 9 Monitoring and evaluation | 77 |
| 9.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 78 |
| 9.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 79 |
| 9.3. Good practices identified | 81 |
| 9.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening monitoring and evaluation in future ALMPs | 84 |
| 10 Criteria specific to the objectives of the recovery and resilience plan | 86 |
| 10.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment | 87 |
| 10.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results | 88 |
| 10.3. Good practices identified | 89 |
| 10.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening the contribution of future ALMPs to overarching policy objectives | 91 |
| References | 92 |
| Annex A. Standardised descriptions of good practices at the programme level | 95 |
| Notes | 108 |

TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1.1. Summary of the 38 assessed ALMPs | 12 |
| Table 3.1. Main criteria used in Castilla-La Mancha for selecting service providers for territorial projects for vulnerable groups and training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | 33 |
| Table A A.1. The list of identified good practices | 95 |

Executive summary

The Spanish labour market has made considerable progress in recent years but continues to face important structural challenges. In 2023, the employment rate among people aged 15 to 64 stood at 65.3%, reflecting an increase of over four percentage points (p.p.) since 2017, despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment has also declined significantly, from 17.3% in 2017 to 12.3% in 2023, though this rate remains well above the OECD average of 5%. Labour market conditions vary markedly across regions. In 2023, unemployment exceeded 16% in regions such as the Canary Islands, Andalusia, and Extremadura, while it remained below 9% in Cantabria, Aragon, and the Basque Country. Still, unemployment rates in all Spanish regions were above the OECD average.

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) play a key role in supporting jobseekers, especially those facing greater obstacles to employment, in accessing quality jobs. Acknowledging this, Spain invests heavily in ALMPs: in 2022, public spending on ALMPs amounted to around 0.7% of GDP, significantly above the OECD average of 0.4%. Given these substantial investments, understanding which ALMPs have proven effective, in which regions, and why, is critical to building a more inclusive and resilient labour market.

The Spanish National Employment System, composed of the State Public Employment Service (SEPE) and the regional Public Employment Services (regional PES), plays a central role in this context. The system ensures the development of employment policies at the national level, with responsibilities for policy design and implementation shared between SEPE and the regional PES. Within their respective territories, regional PES are responsible for developing employment policies, promoting employment, implementing labour legislation, and delivering both common programmes and those designed autonomously to respond to local labour market needs. While the effective implementation of policies takes place mainly at the territorial level, SEPE plays a key role in consolidating the annual employment plans and monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the system as a whole. Despite good progress in recent years, there remains room to strengthen horizontal dialogue and the exchange of good practices across the National Employment System.

It is in this context that SEPE requested technical support from the Reform and Investment Task Force of the European Commission (SG REFORM). This is the final report of the project funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) and implemented by the OECD in co-operation with SG REFORM, titled [“Strengthening policies and governance arrangements within the Spanish National Employment System”](#).

The project aims to strengthen Spain’s capacity to assess the performance of ALMPs through structured benchmarking. To this end, it supported the design and implementation of a qualitative assessment exercise to identify good practices across the Spanish National Employment System, including SEPE and the regional PES, for a selection of ALMPs funded under Components 23 and 19 of the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP).

The qualitative assessment covered 38 ALMPs, 31 managed at the regional level and 7 at the national level. It combined a self-assessment by the teams in charge of management and implementation of the programmes, using a structured questionnaire with benchmarking criteria, with an OECD external assessment based on the review of self-assessment responses, programme documentation and one-to-one consultations with those teams. Anchored in a nine-criterion methodology spanning the full

ALMP cycle from evidence-based design through implementation, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, the assessment exercise provides rich and comprehensive insights, for example on how systematic follow-up can sustain employment outcomes and how a holistic approach that collaborates with social services and third sector entities can enhance employability, foster social inclusion and extend access to complementary support services. This rigorous approach can be applied to any ALMP, supporting ongoing peer learning and policy refinement across the National Employment System.

Building on this comprehensive assessment exercise and the good practices identified (see Table A A.1.) at both criterion and programme levels, the report distils these insights into a set of targeted recommendations. Drawing on successful approaches from selected Spanish ALMPs that could be replicated or adapted, and addressing challenges and gaps identified during the exercise, these recommendations do not constitute an assessment of Spain's entire ALMP system but are grounded on the findings of this focussed exercise. They are formulated at the criterion level and are intended to guide both national and regional PES in shaping the future design and implementation of ALMPs. They include:

- **Evidence-based design:** Embed systematic use of empirical evidence and stakeholder input from the outset by leveraging existing monitoring data and evaluations, conducting labour market analyses to define target groups and service offerings, and facilitating cross-regional peer learning through the Network of Public Centres for Counselling, Entrepreneurship Support and Innovation for Employment (Red COE) to scale up effective models.
- **Engaging service providers:** Strengthen service quality and innovation through transparent and competitive provider selection; hybrid payment models that balance service continuity with outcome-based incentives; robust quality assurance (including participant feedback and on-site visits); and structured knowledge-sharing networks.
- **Identification and outreach to target population:** Implement a comprehensive, data-driven identification strategy combining PES administrative data, linked registries from other sources, and specialised networks, alongside multi-channel, personalised outreach protocols to maximise coverage and engagement of vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.
- **Assessment and referral of participants:** Adopt a systematic assessment framework combining digital tools, standardised tests, counsellor expertise, and continuous reassessment, and build data-driven referral systems (e.g. through enhanced Send@ functionalities) to personalise interventions and mitigate bias.
- **Integrated and holistic support:** Deliver co-ordinated and individualised itineraries that also address non-employment barriers (childcare, transport, mental health, housing, etc.) through formalised partner networks and interoperable data platforms (e.g. building on SISPE and SEGISS) for real-time information sharing.
- **Case management and follow-up support:** Assign dedicated counsellors, ensuring sufficient human resources and manageable caseloads, with clear minimum service standards and personalised action plans, involve multidisciplinary teams for complex cases, and maintain systematic follow-up with both participants and employers to sustain outcomes.
- **Partnership with employers:** Embed structured employer engagement in programme regulations, including early labour market prospecting, co-designed training, employer-led activities, and inclusive hiring practices, supported by continuous dialogue with business networks and integration of employer input into M&E frameworks.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Reinforce monitoring and evaluation by automating integrated data exchanges to enable comprehensive tracking of long-term employment outcomes alongside non-employment measures such as social integration, well-being and skill acquisition (e.g. via initiatives such as ES_DataLab); embed rigorous impact and cost-benefit evaluations, systematically collect participant and employer feedback, publish findings for accountability, and invest in staff capacity building.

1

Scope and methodology for the qualitative assessment of ALMPs

This chapter provides an overview of the 38 selected active labour market programmes under Components 23 and 19 of the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) that are assessed in this report. It also presents the methodology and the qualitative framework used for the assessment and the key criteria that guided the assessment process.

1.1. The qualitative assessment covers a range of active labour market programmes

Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) play a key role in supporting jobseekers to transition into quality employment. Aiming to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic and foster sustainable and resilient economic development, the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) introduces new targeted investments, some of which focus directly on ALMPs. Component 23 of the RRP, titled “New public policies for a dynamic, resilient and inclusive labour market”, seeks to address structural weaknesses in the labour market and support vulnerable groups, including young people, women, and the long-term unemployed. Complementing these efforts, Investment 3 “Digital Skills for Employment” of Component 19 “National Digital Skills Plan” aims to reinforce ALMPs by enhancing the digital skills of both employed and unemployed individuals. Given that the allocation of RRP funds is conditional upon achieving predefined performance indicators, it is essential to establish a clear assessment framework for the programmes developed under the RRP to determine whether these programmes have met their objectives and identify best practices that could be replicated across the Spain’s National Employment System.

The qualitative assessment carried out in this report focusses on a selection of programmes under Components 23 and 19 of the RRP. This section provides a brief overview of these programmes, which cover a broad variety of interventions targeting different population groups, providing a broad spectrum of services and operating at different administrative levels. Some of the programmes (7 out of 38) are managed by the State Public Employment Service of Spain (*Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal, SEPE*) at the national level, while others (31 out of 38) are managed by regional authorities at the regional level. Table 1.1 provides a concise summary of these programmes, grouped under seven broad categories of RRP investments.

The assessed regional level programmes, together with three developed at national level, focus on vulnerable groups, and provide a comprehensive range of services to address different needs of these target groups and overcome barriers to employment:

- **C23.I04: Territorial programmes for vulnerable groups** (16 programmes, 15 managed at regional level and 1 at SEPE level through its Provincial Directorate). Territorial programmes for vulnerable groups are designed to support the long-term unemployed and those groups facing significant barriers to employment, including people with disabilities, migrants, young people, and people with very low education levels. These projects provide personalised and individualised itineraries, which include guidance and accompaniment, orientation programmes, job search assistance, training, support through scholarships, hiring incentives and ongoing monitoring. Most of these programmes are managed by the regions, with the exception of one programme in Ceuta, which is managed by SEPE.² The participating regions have the flexibility to adopt their own legal frameworks for these initiatives or use SEPE’s regulation as a reference.
- **C23.I02.P02: Training with commitment to hiring and insertion of women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation** (13 programmes, 12 managed at regional level and 1 at SEPE level through its Provincial Directorate). The programmes for women victims of gender-based violence focus on improving their employability and facilitating their entry and integration into the labour market. The programmes offer women integration itineraries in two phases. During the first six months, participants engage in personalised social inclusion activities, followed by six months of alternating training, which includes a commitment from employers to offer subsequent employment. Participants receive guidance and support throughout their employment. Most of these programmes are managed by the regions, with the exception of one programme covering Ceuta, Melilla and selected provinces of Spain, which is managed by SEPE.³ The regions have flexibility to design their own regulations for implementing their programmes or can use as a reference SEPE’s regulation.

- **C23.I02.P01: Support for women in rural and urban areas** (*5 programmes, 4 managed at regional level and 1 at SEPE level through its Provincial Directorate*). The programmes offer women from rural and urban areas personalised and individualised itineraries aimed at their training and job insertion, while promoting equality and non-discrimination in access to employment. These itineraries include employability assessment, career counselling, job search assistance, information, training and development of transversal competences and skills, including digital literacy. The programmes also offer incentives for participation, facilitate job placement and provide ongoing employment support. The targeted women should preferably live in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants. Of the participants, 35% should complete itineraries focussed on developing skills for green jobs, another 35% on digital skills, and at least 20% should achieve professional integration. The programmes are governed by Order TES/1 121/2021 of 11 October, which establishes the common legal framework for their operation. Four of the assessed programmes are managed by the regions, while one programme in Ceuta is managed by SEPE.

The other four programmes, managed by SEPE at the national level, assessed in this report focus on providing training to various groups, including young people, women and workers who need to upgrade their skills to adapt to economic changes, with a particular emphasis on developing green and digital skills:

- **C23.I01.P01: TándEM programme.** The TándEM programme offers young people under 30 practical training in alternation with employment in public sector entities, associations, foundations and other non-profit entities, focussing on the skills essential for the green and digital transition, while promoting social inclusion and territorial cohesion. At least 25% of the programme is dedicated to climate-related skills that contribute to creation of green jobs, and a further 25% focusses on digital skills. Projects typically last from 12 to 18 months and consist of two phases: (1) an initial training phase, including guidance, counselling, professional information and business training, lasting three to six months, during which participants receive a daily study grant; and (2) for the remainder of the project, employment through a contractual modality that allows part of the working day to be used to complete job-related training. At the end of the project, young participants receive technical assistance and individual support to help them find jobs or become self-employed.
- **C19.I03: Digital literacy for women hired under the Plan for the Promotion of Agricultural Employment -PROFEA-.** This programme aims to improve the digital literacy of women who are currently employed or have been employed in the last ten years in seasonal jobs under the Plan for the Promotion of Agricultural Employment (PROFEA)⁴ to increase their employability and enable them to participate fully in society. The programme provides free and voluntary face-to-face training on digital skills to female agricultural workers living in rural areas, mostly from multi-ethnic backgrounds, particularly those over 40, with low to medium levels of education, family responsibilities and difficulties in accessing training. The training is aligned with the European Framework of Digital Competences for Citizenship⁵ and consists of five modules of a minimum duration of 25 hours each. Participants receive a certificate upon successful completion of the training or of at least 75% of the course.
- **C19.I03: Training for digital transformation -TIC- (SEPE-FUNDAE).** The TIC programme provides state-wide training to help workers develop and improve their professional skills related to technological change and digital transformation, with a focus primarily on people working in productive sectors. Priority for training is given to specific groups, including women, people under 30 or over 45, people with disabilities, low-skilled workers, the long-term unemployed, SME employees, part-time and temporary workers, and those affected by redundancy procedures (*Expediente de Regulación de Empleo, ERE*) or temporary suspension of employment (*Expediente de Regulación Temporal de Empleo, ERTE*). Unemployed persons registered with the PES may account for up to 30% of the total number of participants, while employees of public administrations and beneficiary entities may each constitute up to 10% of the participants. The training covers

basic, intermediate or advanced digital skills and is delivered face-to-face, online or in a mixed mode. Each training course has the duration required for the acquisition of technological competences in the sector to which it refers, with a minimum duration of 25 hours.

- **C23.I03: Training programmes for people employed in the tourism sector -TURISMO-(SEPE-FUNDAE).** The TURISMO programme provides state-wide training, primarily for people working in the tourism sector and other related strategic sectors of national interest,⁶ with the aim of improving and developing professional skills that will enable workers to adapt to changes in the production system and seize opportunities for career advancement and personal growth. At least 30% of the training is dedicated to climate-related skills, and a further 30% to digital technology skills. The programme prioritises the participation of the people affected by redundancy procedures (ERE) or temporary suspension of employment (ERTE) and workers benefiting from micro-credits. The training can be delivered face-to-face, online or in a mixed mode. The duration of the training programmes is determined by the Catalogue of Training Specialities of the National Employment System.⁷

Table 1.1. Summary of the 38 assessed ALMPs

| Management level | Territorial scope | Programme name | Responsible entity that participated in the survey and consultations |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| C23.I04.P01: Territorial projects for vulnerable groups | | | |
| Regional | Andalucía | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups | Andalusian Employment Service |
| Regional | Asturias | Integrated itineraries of active inclusion oriented to the labour insertion of vulnerable people | Public Employment Service of the Principality of Asturias (SEPEPA), |
| Regional | Islas Baleares | Territorial projects for vulnerable groups for people aged 30 and over, long-term unemployed | Balearic Islands Employment Service (SOIB) |
| Regional | Pais Vasco | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: unemployed people over 45 years old | Basque Employment Service (Lanbide) |
| Regional | Canarias | TIGOTAN 2.0 Project San Juan de la Rambla itinerary | Canary Islands Employment Service |
| Regional | Cantabria | SAMIR territorial project for particularly vulnerable groups | Cantabrian Employment Service |
| Regional | Castilla y Len | Vulnerable groups in disadvantaged urban environments | Public Employment Service of Castilla y Len (ECYL) |
| Regional | Castilla-La Mancha | Subsidies for the implementation of actions to improve employability and integration aimed at vulnerable groups | Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha, Ministry of Economy, Business and Employment, General Directorate of Employment, Social Dialogue and Occupational Health and Safety |
| National | Ceuta | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups | SEPE Provincial Directorate of Ceuta |
| Regional | Extremadura | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: people with disabilities. | Extremadura Public Employment Service (SEXPE) |
| Regional | Galicia | Collaboration agreement between the Ministry of Employment and Equality and the European Network to combat poverty and social exclusion | Regional Government of Galicia, Ministry for Employment Promotion and Equality, General Directorate for Employment Training and Guidance |
| Regional | La Rioja | Opening the doors to the IT world | Regional Government of La Rioja, Ministry for Regional Development, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Dialogue and Labour Relations |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Territorial projects for vulnerable groups | Government of the Community of Madrid, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Employment |

| Management level | Territorial scope | Programme name | Responsible entity that participated in the survey and consultations |
|--|--|--|--|
| Regional | Murcia | Territorial project for rebalancing and equity for people with disabilities | Regional employment and training service of the region of Murcia (SEF) |
| Regional | Navarra | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups | Employment Service of Navarra (SNE-NL) |
| Regional | Valencia | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups | Valencian Employment and Training Service (LABORA) |
| C23.I02.P02: Support for women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | | | |
| Regional | Asturias | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Public Employment Service of the Principality of Asturias (SEPEPA) |
| Regional | País Vasco | Training and insertion programme with commitment to hiring for women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Basque Employment Service (Lanbide) |
| Regional | Canarias | Job placement project "Opening doors, opening opportunities" | Canary Islands Employment Service |
| Regional | Cantabria | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Cantabrian Employment Service |
| Regional | Castilla y Len | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Public Employment Service of Castilla y Len (ECYL) |
| Regional | Castilla-La Mancha | Socio-occupational insertion with commitment to hiring of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Regional Government of Castilla-La Mancha, Ministry of Economy, Enterprise and Employment, Directorate General of Vocational Training in the Workplace |
| Regional | Cataluña | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Regional government of Cataluña, Department of Equality and Feminism |
| National | Ceuta, Melilla and the provinces of Zaragoza (Aragón), Barcelona (Cataluña), Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid), Las Palmas (Canarias), Málaga and Sevilla (Andalucía) | Training and insertion programme with commitment to hiring for women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | SEPE, Sub-Directorate General for Active Employment Policies |
| Regional | Extremadura | Itineraries of guidance, counselling and training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence | Extremadura Public Employment Service (SEXPE) |
| Regional | Galicia | Collaboration between the Ministry of Employment and Equality and the Red Cross for training and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation with a commitment to hiring | Regional Government of Galicia, Department of Social Policy and Equality |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Government of the Community of Madrid, General Sub-Directorate for Evaluation, Monitoring and Control of Training |
| Regional | Murcia | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | Regional employment and training service of the region of Murcia (SEF) |
| Regional | Navarra | GAIA project "Training for women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation" | Employment Service of Navarra (SNE-NL) |
| C23.I02.P01: Support for women in rural and urban areas | | | |
| Regional | Andalucía | Support for women in rural and urban areas | Andalusian Employment Service |
| National | Ceuta | Support for women in rural and urban areas | SEPE Provincial Directorate of Ceuta |

| Management level | Territorial scope | Programme name | Responsible entity that participated in the survey and consultations |
|---|---------------------|--|--|
| Regional | La Rioja | IN ITINERE LAB: a mobile laboratory to support the improvement of women's employability | Regional Government of La Rioja, Ministry for Regional Development, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Dialogue and Labour Relations |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Support for women in rural and urban areas | Government of the Community of Madrid, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Employment, Directorate-General for Public Employment Service |
| Regional | Valencia | Support for women in rural and urban areas | Valencian Employment and Training Service (LABORA) |
| C19.I03, C23.I01, C23.I03: National level programmes | | | |
| National | All territory | Digital literacy for women hired under the Plan for the Promotion of Agricultural Employment | SEPE, Sub-Directorate General for Active Employment Policies |
| National | All territory | TIC: Training for digital transformation | SEPE- FUNDAE |
| National | All territory | TándEM: Training in alternation with employment for young people | SEPE, Sub-Directorate General for Active Employment Policies |
| National | All territory | TURISMO: Training programmes for people employed in the tourism sector | SEPE- FUNDAE |

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

1.2. The assessment employs a comprehensive methodology

Qualitative assessments are important tools for evaluating complex processes, such as public policies, because they enable to examine in detail the efficiency of the organisation of a policy and its delivery across multiple dimensions. One of the commonly used types of qualitative assessments is self-assessment. Self-assessments are widely used in OECD countries and EU member states in various areas, starting from quality assurance in non-formal training and to assessment of competitiveness of whole economies (OECD, 2021^[1]; OECD, 2021^[2]; OECD, 2022^[3]; Espinoza and Martinez-Yarza, 2023^[4]). Self-assessments are often accompanied by external assessments to validate the collected information and to ensure its quality.

One well-known application of combined self-assessment and external assessment in the area of ALMPs is the PES Network Benchlearning exercise, which merges benchmarking with mutual learning (European Commission, 2021^[5]). The aim of the PES Network Benchlearning is to support each PES to improve their own performance through a structured and systematic reflection on their performance against the performance of an ideal PES as well as to learn from good practices in other PES and adapt them to the national circumstances.

The methodology used in this report also combines self-assessment and external assessment, adjusting the content of the framework to the assessment of specific ALMPs. The objective of the framework is to provide a detailed assessment of the mechanisms behind the programmes' performance, their quality and efficiency and ability to meet objectives. The framework aims to provide a flexible tool that helps to assess a wide range of ALMPs in a comprehensive and systematic way following them from the initial planning stage to final outcomes.

1.2.1. Self-assessment

Self-assessment is performed by individuals, groups or organisations which participate directly in the implementation of a process that is being assessed (e.g. an ALMP). Self-assessment offers a chance to step back from everyday work and to reflect on how the programme has been implemented and how it could be improved. The goal of self-assessment is to identify strengths and weaknesses of the assessed

programme and to determine areas for potential improvement. Self-assessment is especially suited to assist stakeholders (e.g. SEPE and regional PES) in improving their own performance and steer their programmes in the course of implementation.

In-depth and rigorous self-assessment requires allocation of some time and staff resources within an organisation. Nevertheless, internal evaluators are best positioned to carry out this task as they have the advantage of a greater familiarity with the institution and the programme and have easier access to information. Self-assessment also pays off in the long run as it brings some additional benefits. If adopted on regular basis, self-assessment helps creating a long-lasting culture of continuous aspiration for improvement within the organisation. Self-assessment can encourage learning and provision of feedback within the organisation among employees involved in different projects and functions and can benefit the programme and the organisation as a whole.

In the context of this project, self-assessment was carried out through a detailed questionnaire prepared by the OECD and shared with SEPE, regional PES or other responsible institutions managing the assessed programmes. The questionnaire is structured by key policy dimensions or criteria (see Section 1.3). Each of them uses clearly formulated descriptions of theoretical excellence or benchmarks, which are based on previous literature, research findings and case studies. These detailed descriptions reflect basic principles of how a “well-functioning” ALMP should work.

For each policy dimension or criterion, the respondents were asked (i) to describe the practices of the programme that are relevant for the criterion and (ii) to situate the assessed programme with respect to the benchmark in a scale from 0 to 5 (“self-assessment score”). The grades of the scale are intuitive and reflect different levels of development of the programme. For example, the highest self-assessment score (5) means that the practices of a given programme correspond fully to the described “benchmark for excellence” for a specific criterion. The lowest score (0) corresponds to the situation when the described practice does not exist at all for a given programme. The intermediate scores correspond to situations in between: e.g. (1) there are concrete ideas to develop this practice; (2) first steps were made to develop this practice; (3) some elements correspond to the benchmark; (4) most elements correspond to the benchmark. The difference between the self-assessment score of a specific programme and the benchmark shows the proximity of a particular dimension of a programme to the benchmark for excellence.

Self-assessment relies on the expertise and insights of the relevant staff from the institutions responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the assessed ALMPs. Ideally, self-assessment should make references to the available supportive evidence such as concepts, handbooks, surveys, evaluations, reports, studies, process descriptions, etc. SEPE and each regional PES appointed a contact person responsible for conducting the self-assessment of a selected ALMP, either individually or with the help of a team. Completion of the self-assessment questionnaires often required collaboration between several staff members who possess different expertise, thus stimulating information exchange and discussion within the organisation.

1.2.2. External assessment

An external assessment is carried out by people not belonging to the administration responsible for the implementation of the assessed policy. External assessment is often seen as more impartial and independent and therefore as more credible than internal assessment. Self-assessments are often accompanied by external assessments to validate the collected information and to ensure its quality. If necessary, external assessments can also be used to clarify information and fill in possible information gaps.

In the context of this project, the external assessment consisted of one-to-one consultations conducted by the OECD with the responsible teams within SEPE, regional PES or other responsible institutions after these teams have filled in the self-assessment questionnaires. In most cases, one consultation was

organised per programme, but there were two exceptions where two programmes were assessed together during a single, longer consultation because they were implemented by the same team and shared many common features.⁸ The consultations followed the same structure as the questionnaires and covered the same aspects as the guiding questions included in the questionnaire. However, the aim of the consultation was not to repeat the questions of the questionnaire but to clarify any unclear information and to deepen the knowledge on the areas of particular interest. The content of each consultation was tailored to the specific programme under consideration, taking into account the information already provided in the self-assessment questionnaire. Consultations were conducted in Spanish (mostly online) and lasted around one hour depending on the amount of information already provided in the questionnaires.

During self-assessment and external assessment each dimension or criterion considered in the framework was assessed separately. First, the teams responsible for self-assessment assigned a self-assessment score to each criterion (on a scale from 0 to 5). Then, these scores were validated by the OECD during consultations and adjusted in line with the obtained supplementary information. The total score was calculated as a simple average across all criteria without using weights because the relative importance of each area is not a priori known.

This scoring system helped both internal and external evaluators to highlight areas of success and identify opportunities for improvement. It provided a structured and comparative foundation for a deeper assessment based on rich qualitative information gathered through open-ended questions in self-assessment questionnaires and consultations. The scores served as a valuable internal reference, complementing the qualitative insights that ultimately guided the identification of good practices.

The results of the assessment were discussed at the mutual learning event organised among regional PES and SEPE in the context of this project. The assessment helped to reflect on the performance of ALMPs in a structured way and to identify good practices that could potentially be transposed to other regions or groups of beneficiaries.

1.3. The assessment framework is structured along nine key assessment criteria

The assessment framework used in internal and external assessments is structured along nine key assessment criteria. These criteria were selected for the assessment exercise based on existing assessment frameworks in the area of ALMPs, previous literature, research findings and case studies. These criteria are broad enough to allow for a comparative analysis of heterogeneous ALMPs, yet comprehensive enough to encompass all the critical elements that contribute to a well-functioning ALMP.

The aim of this qualitative framework is to provide a detailed assessment of the mechanisms behind the programmes' performance, their quality and efficiency and ability to meet objectives. The framework provides a flexible tool that enables assessment of a wide range of ALMPs in a comprehensive and systematic way, following them from the initial planning and design stage to final outcomes, capturing all the elements that make a "well-functioning" ALMP. The assessment helps to reflect on the performance of ALMPs in a structured way and to identify good practices that could potentially be transposed to other regions or groups of beneficiaries.

The nine assessment criteria are as follows:

1. **Evidence-based design.** A fundamental aspect of a well-functioning programme is its evidence-based design, based on comprehensive analysis of historical trends, current labour market conditions, empirical data and lessons from other programmes. It incorporates insights from past successes and failures to ensure effectiveness and mitigate risks. The design process involves collaboration with various stakeholders, including government bodies, employers, employee representatives and researchers, to ensure that a wide range of perspectives and needs are taken into account. It also draws on successful ALMPs from other countries to apply global

best practices locally. Finally, the programme is developed alongside a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, with clear performance indicators and evaluation criteria established from the outset to facilitate ongoing tracking of progress and subsequent evaluation.

2. **Engaging service providers.** Effective ALMPs engage service providers through a careful selection process, strategic contracting and ongoing quality assurance. The selection process is transparent and rigorous, giving priority to providers with proven expertise, compliance with legal and ethical standards, a track record of successful performance and use of innovative practices. The payment model is designed to attract and motivate high-quality providers by linking payments to concrete outcomes, such as jobseekers securing quality jobs, and by adapting them to the diversity of beneficiaries to promote effectiveness and inclusiveness. Ongoing monitoring through regular assessments, using both quantitative data and qualitative feedback from participants, ensures that high standards are maintained. In cases of non-compliance or underperformance, corrective actions are taken promptly, which may include retraining staff, changing service delivery methods or revising the contract with the service provider.
3. **Identification and outreach to target population.** To ensure effectiveness, it is essential that a programme identifies and reaches its target population through a multi-dimensional outreach strategy. The comprehensive identification strategy integrates administrative and survey data to map and track individuals who face significant labour market barriers but could benefit from the programme's support. In particular, an excellent system is able to identify individuals who are not actively engaged with the PES, thus addressing a key gap in traditional outreach efforts. The successful outreach strategy includes personalised communication, such as direct calls or emails, providing detailed programme information and responding to individual queries. Comprehensive application support simplifies the process and provides assistance with paperwork and digital access, which is crucial for those with limited literacy or digital skills. To counter the stigma often associated with programme participation, the programme uses success stories and positive messages to change perceptions and encourage wider participation. Awareness-raising events are designed to resonate with target audiences and actively encourage participation. In addition, social media platforms are used not only to promote the programme but also to foster a supportive community where participants can access real-time information, interact with service providers and share experiences with peers.
4. **Assessment and referral of participants.** A well-designed programme has a systematic assessment and referral protocols based on qualitative and quantitative profiling strategies. Job counsellors conduct qualitative assessments of individual needs and skills, while quantitative profiling uses advanced digital tools, including logistic or probit regression and machine learning, to analyse socio-economic factors, educational background, work experience and regional labour market trends among others. The programme includes comprehensive skills assessments such as self-reported evaluations, soft skills tests and innovative methods such as "serious games". The highly personalised referral system ensures that participants receive services and support tailored to their skills and needs, for example, adapted levels of training programmes.
5. **Integrated and holistic support.** An effective ALMP adopts an integrated and holistic approach. It addresses multiple barriers for labour market integration, particularly for vulnerable groups, through a wide range of services, including personalised career support, skills development, essential support services, work experience opportunities, and employment incentives. It establishes a collaborative network with seamless communication and joint planning between different service providers in employment, social, health, and education sectors, ensuring tailored support for each jobseeker. Effective data exchange with partner institutions enables real-time tracking and service adaptation, reduces costs and avoids duplication of services, resulting in a more effective support system.

6. **Case management and follow-up support.** A programme ensures long-term effectiveness by incorporating case management during participation in the programme and follow-up support after its completion, particularly benefiting vulnerable groups and those at high risk of dropping out or returning to unemployment. Case management involves assigning dedicated mentors to provide individualised support during participation in the programme, for example using tailored Individual Action Plans (IAPs) to set clear mutual obligations. Follow-up support includes continued counselling during initial employment, maintaining contacts with clients and employers, and co-ordinating with other service providers to address evolving needs, such as training and childcare, to help retain employment and prevent a return to unemployment.
7. **Partnership with employers.** To increase its reach, relevance and effectiveness, a successful ALMP forms strong partnerships with employers, ensuring participant skills align with labour market demands. Key features of partnerships with employers include strategic outreach to raise employer awareness and position participants as valuable assets, adaptability to evolving employer needs for relevant upskilling and reskilling and fostering employer understanding of participants' diverse backgrounds and challenges. The programme also involves employers directly through activities such as site visits, workshops and employment simulations, which prepare participants for real-world employment and deepen employer engagement, encouraging investment in a skilled and diverse workforce.
8. **Monitoring and evaluation.** A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework plays a crucial role in ensuring continuous improvement and accountability of the programme. This framework includes systematic monitoring of participants' progress, employment rates, skills acquisition or other relevant indicators to facilitate real-time adjustments to the programme's strategic goals and evolving labour market needs. Evaluation goes beyond traditional monitoring by assessing the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its objectives and wider impacts. It uses methods like counterfactual impact evaluation to measure outcomes such as employment, job quality, cost-effectiveness and broader economic and social benefits. The programme actively seeks and incorporates feedback from key stakeholders, including participants and employers, using surveys, interviews and focus groups to remain responsive. Emphasising transparency, the programme publicly shares findings, undergoes independent reviews, and makes adjustments based on monitoring and evaluation results.
9. **Criteria specific to the RRP objectives.** The RRP aims to accelerate the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy, maximise digital transformation benefits, and reduce social, territorial and gender gaps. In this context, ALMPs are guided by four transversal objectives: promoting green jobs and skills, enhancing digital literacy, reducing territorial and social disparities by targeting vulnerable groups and deprived areas, and empowering women to ensure gender equality in the labour market. ALMPs align with one or more of these RRP objectives by targeting specific groups, regions, sectors and skills, translating these objectives into specific, measurable, time-bound, ambitious and realistic targets. These targets are monitored through regular and transparent reporting of relevant statistical data. While addressing all four objectives is not mandatory, a focussed commitment to a specific objective with well-defined targets and initiatives is essential.

The subsequent chapters of the report are structured around these assessment criteria, with each chapter dedicated to a single criterion. The opening section of each chapter describes the rationale behind each criterion and introduces the “benchmarks for excellence”, descriptions of ideal scenarios or standards that serve as reference points for what effective ALMPs could strive to achieve. These benchmarks are presented in clearly marked boxes, offering brief and easy-to-understand summaries, and were also included in the self-assessment questionnaire shared with the stakeholders for the internal assessment. The following sections of each chapter present the assessment results of the selected ALMPs, highlight examples of good practices, and provide recommendations for future ALMP design and implementation.

2 Evidence-based design of ALMPs

This chapter examines how evidence was used to inform the design of selected ALMPs in Spain. It begins by explaining why evidence-based design is a key element of effective ALMPs, along with the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter then presents the main findings of the assessment exercise, focussing on whether programmes drew on labour market data, lessons from past interventions, and stakeholder input during the design phase, and whether monitoring and evaluation frameworks were integrated from the outset. It then highlights two good practices and offers recommendations emerging from the assessment to strengthen the use of evidence in future ALMP design.

2.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

A fundamental aspect of a well-designed programme is the incorporation of existing evidence. This approach ensures that policies are grounded in what has been proven to work, thereby mitigating the risk of inefficacy or unintended consequences. Effective programme design relies on a solid foundation of empirical data derived from systematic observation, measurement, experimentation, or evaluation, rather than theoretical predictions or anecdotal evidence. Evidence includes an analysis of historical trends, current labour market conditions, and the effectiveness of similar programmes in similar or other contexts. Programme design should involve a comprehensive review of past programmes, identifying what worked, what failed, and the reasons behind these outcomes. By harnessing evidence, particularly from previous robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercises, policy designers can create more targeted and impactful ALMPs.

Additionally, benchmarking ALMPs with those in other OECD countries can offer fresh perspectives for policy design. This comparative analysis helps in identifying best practices and innovative approaches that have been successful elsewhere, potentially adapting them to the specific context.

Effective and efficient programme design also relies on formal and informal co-operation between key stakeholders involved in the ALMP system (Lauringson and Lüske, 2021^[6]). Such collaboration ensures a holistic approach, incorporating various perspectives and expertise. For example, involving social partners can yield valuable insights into the needs of jobseekers, employees, and employers, thereby fostering more valid, acceptable, and effective ALMP design. Denmark exemplifies how the input from social partners significantly influences policy design (OECD, 2021^[7]). Moreover, co-operation and co-ordination between the stakeholders in ALMP systems have been crucial for quick and well-designed responses to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Austria, for instance, researchers were involved in re-designing the ALMP package since the very beginning of the crisis through a standing research committee.

Lastly, designing policies in tandem with their monitoring and evaluation frameworks is crucial. This ensures that variables for data collection, data collection mechanisms, staff and skill requirements, and potential evaluation methodologies are considered in advance, making subsequent monitoring and evaluation activities more feasible. By establishing performance indicators and evaluation criteria in advance, an ongoing feedback loop can be maintained throughout the programme's implementation, fostering continuous improvement and adaptation based on real-time data and outcomes (see Chapter 9 on monitoring and evaluation).

Box 2.1. Benchmark for excellence: ALMP design

A benchmark ALMP stands out for its evidence-based design, informed by solid facts and findings. It is based on a comprehensive analysis of historical trends, current labour market conditions and challenges, empirical data and the lessons learned from other programmes. It learns from the results of previous and similar programmes, identifying what worked, what failed, and the reasons behind these outcomes. This approach ensures that programmes are grounded in what has been proven to work, thereby mitigating the risk of inefficacy or unintended consequences.

The design process involves collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including government bodies, employers, and employee representatives, and researchers. This ensures that the programme considers a diverse range of perspectives and needs. Additionally, this programme looks at successful ALMPs in other countries and uses these global insights for local use.

Furthermore, the best practice is designed alongside with its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan. This simultaneous development ensures that the programme establishes clear performance indicators and evaluation criteria from the beginning, which makes it easier to keep track of progress and effectiveness later on.

2.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

2.2.1. Use of evidence in programme design

The programmes assessed usually had **three layers in their design**. Initially, the broad content and objectives of the programmes were set at the national level. Subsequently, if regions were responsible for the management they could further refine and detail this framework. Finally, service providers contributed by suggesting specific actions and methodologies within the established programme guidelines.

A good practice observed in the design of the broad content at the national level was the use of **lessons learned from previous technical assistance projects and expert consultations**, such as the TSI project “[Support to the implementation and monitoring of the measures included in the Youth Employment Shock Plan and in the Reincorporation Plan](#)”, supported by the European Commission and the World Bank. These efforts helped identify effective approaches from previous interventions, shaping the development of programmes targeting vulnerable groups. Drawing on these insights ensured that the national-level content and objectives of the programmes incorporated elements that had been tested and validated in similar contexts.

At the regional level, most programmes **built upon past experiences**, particularly in areas such as counselling, training, and personalised itineraries, to refine and improve service delivery. Some programmes explicitly integrated evidence from past ALMPs to strengthen their design. In some cases, previous successful initiatives were adapted and expanded, incorporating elements such as more comprehensive support services, enhanced participant incentives, or stronger links with employers. In other instances, regions sought to replicate effective models that had been successfully implemented elsewhere, either in other regions or at the national level.

For certain programmes, particularly those targeting women victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking, the lack of previous large-scale initiatives meant that **programme design relied more heavily on the expertise of service providers**. Given their specialised knowledge and hands-on experience,

these providers played a key role in shaping the programmes, ensuring that interventions reflected the needs and realities of the target population.

Labour market data was also used to analyse trends and define target groups more precisely. Data from National and regional statistics institutes, employment observatories, and other data sources helped identify which groups faced the highest barriers to employment and where interventions were most needed. In some cases, **data from past programme monitoring efforts** – such as those conducted under the European Social Fund (ESF) – provided useful insights. However, the application of these monitoring results in designing new programmes was not systematic, and **rigorous evaluations, such as counterfactual impact evaluations, remained rare**. This lack of structured evidence limits the ability to identify and replicate the most effective programme elements, reducing the potential for continuous improvement in ALMP design.

2.2.2. Stakeholder collaboration in programme design

The extent of stakeholder involvement in programme design varied significantly across the assessed programmes. In most cases, **PES led the design process with limited external consultation**, primarily due to time constraints in programme development. Even **collaboration within PES itself was not always present**. For example, regional PES provide confidential support services for victims of gender-based violence, facilitated by specialised counsellors. While these dedicated services exist, collaboration between these specialised units and the PES teams responsible for designing and implementing the new programmes under the RRP was infrequent. Exceptions where this collaboration did happen proved highly beneficial, making the interventions more relevant and effective in addressing the specific needs of this group. The lack of structured collaboration with external stakeholders and across different PES departments and units, limits the ability of ALMPs to fully align with participant needs and labour market realities.

However, in some programmes, stronger stakeholder engagement was observed, particularly through **social dialogue structures and advisory bodies**. Some regions formally consulted trade unions and employer organisations before finalising programme designs, ensuring that the perspectives of both workers and businesses were reflected. In a few cases, social dialogue councils played a role in reviewing programme proposals, allowing social partners to influence decisions on target groups, service models, and support measures.

Dialogue and collaboration between PES and service providers were also instrumental in programme design. Consulting organisations working with specific vulnerable groups, such as NGOs and social services, was a particularly effective practice, helping to adapt activation strategies to the realities of jobseekers facing significant barriers. Additionally, in programmes targeting women victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking, law enforcement agencies and gender equality bodies were involved in the design phase, providing insights into the specific protection and integration challenges faced by women victims of violence.

2.2.3. Integration of monitoring and evaluation frameworks in programme design

All programmes incorporated **some form of M&E framework** at the design stage, primarily through the monitoring system established **under the RRP** (see Chapter 9). This ensured that basic tracking mechanisms were in place from the outset to monitor participant progress and programme implementation. However, the RRP framework primarily serves as a monitoring tool and **lacks a structured evaluation component**. While it facilitates the collection of quantitative data on participant flows and completion rates, it does not include mechanisms to assess whether observed outcomes – such as employment after programme completion – are directly attributable to participation rather than other external factors.

Beyond the RRP framework, some programmes integrated **additional M&E design elements to improve tracking and accountability**. In some cases, regions designed their own **data collection tools**, expanding the type of information gathered beyond the standard RRP indicators. Another good practice was the inclusion of **operational guidelines** for service providers, ensuring that data collection and reporting processes were structured and aligned with programme objectives. Some programme designs also incorporated structured follow-up mechanisms, requiring service providers to maintain participant records beyond programme completion, facilitating longer-term outcome tracking.

2.3. Good practices identified

The following two examples, presented in Box on good practices 1 and Box on good practices 2, stand out for aligning closely with the benchmark for evidence-based ALMP design. The first example illustrates how the regional employment service in Extremadura systematically incorporated monitoring data, participant feedback, and service provider insights from earlier programme cycles to refine its support for vulnerable groups. The second highlights how the TIC and TURISMO programmes managed by SEPE in collaboration with FUNDAE embedded structured social dialogue and sectoral input into every stage of programme design. These cases offer concrete illustrations of how empirical evidence and stakeholder collaboration can lead to more responsive and well-targeted ALMPs.

Box on good practices 1. ALMP design for territorial projects for vulnerable groups in Extremadura

Empirical basis for programme design

The programme's design was informed by the results of previous ALMPs conducted by the Extremaduran Public Employment Service (SEXPE) for job seekers with disabilities. Specifically, insights were gathered from programmes initiated in 2018 and 2021, each spanning 12 months and implemented through competitive grant procedures for non-profit organisations within the region. These programmes had counselling and professional guidance as its main component, but they also included upskilling actions.

The design process was informed by the detailed monitoring of these past programmes. The analysis focussed on the extent to which the set objectives were achieved, as described in comprehensive reports on the execution of actions provided by service providers. These final reports included an examination of the participants' profiles, including age, gender, type of disability, and the targeted occupations. Moreover, the reports assessed the main activities of the programmes, pinpointing areas of success and failure. They helped identify potential areas for improvement, ensuring that each iteration of the programme was more finely tuned to meet its objectives.

Stakeholder collaboration

The design of the programme targeted at vulnerable groups in Extremadura was notably enhanced by the active involvement of various stakeholders, which included service providers implementing previous similar programmes, as well as the direct users of the programmes.

Service providers were key in providing insights into the barriers to employability faced by individuals with disabilities. Their feedback was crucial in identifying and refining areas of the programme needing enhancement. For example, feedback from the 2018 programme cycle indicated a significant gap in employer awareness and understanding of disability issues. This led to the introduction of supported employment actions in the 2021 programme, which offered personalised advice and support to help

individuals with disabilities and special difficulties find, retain, and progress in mainstream employment in the open labour market. Additionally, based on feedback from these providers, significant enhancements such as the inclusion of actions to develop generic and transversal competencies, along with digital skills, were integrated into the new programme.

Participants also had a substantial influence on its design through their feedback. Surveys conducted among participants, offered direct insights into their satisfaction levels and the relevance of the skills they acquired.

Monitoring and Evaluation Design

The monitoring and evaluation framework in Extremadura was designed from the outset and extends beyond the standard M&E framework common to all programmes for vulnerable groups developed under the Recovery and Resilience Mechanism (RRM). Key to this approach was the enhancement of an existing SEXPE computer application, initially used for basic data collection, which now captures a broader range of both quantitative and qualitative data. This enhanced application is intended to become a regular tool for SEXPE, with future developments planned to allow for more in-depth analysis of the qualitative and textual data gathered.

Additionally, the M&E design is supported by the “Manual for Action Development,” provided by the SEXPE to all service providers. This manual offers instructions on all actions to provide within the programme and how to monitor them effectively. It serves as an essential tool for ensuring consistent and thorough tracking of the programme’s progress and effectiveness. This combination of the design of a data collection tool and clear operational guidance establishes a robust framework for M&E.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 2. Stakeholder collaboration in the design of the TIC and TURISMO programmes throughout the territory (SEPE FUNDAE)

The design of the TIC and TURISMO programmes, managed by SEPE in collaboration with the State Foundation for Training in Employment (FUNDAE), exemplifies a good practice, showcasing an evidence-based approach underpinned by robust stakeholder collaboration. This practice is deeply embedded in FUNDAE’s structure, where the integration of a wide array of perspectives ensures that the programmes are well-aligned with current labour market needs and trends

Governing board composition – FUNDAE

The governing board of FUNDAE plays a pivotal role in the approval and strategic oversight of training programmes. It comprises representatives from the General State Administration and regions including Andalucía, Aragón, Asturias, Baleares, Canarias, Cantabria, Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Cataluña, Extremadura, Galicia, La Rioja, País Vasco, Madrid, Murcia, Navarra, and Valencia. The board also features the most representative trade unions and employer organisations. These include the *Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CCOO)*, *Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT)*, *Confederación Intersindical Galega (CIG)*, *Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (CEOE)*, and *Confederación Española de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa (CEPYME)*. This diverse

composition ensures that a broad range of regional and economic interests are considered in decision making.

Role of sectoral commissions (“Comisiones Paritarias Sectoriales”)

At the heart of FUNDAE’s collaborative framework are the sectoral commissions, which are crucial in the design, programming, monitoring, and evaluation of training programmes. These commissions, formed through agreements in state-level collective bargaining, comprise representatives from trade unions and employer organisations. They identify training needs directly from the workplace, ensuring that the training provided is responsive to the evolving demands of the economic sectors.

Over three decades, these commissions have significantly contributed to the design and dissemination of training programmes across various sectors. Currently, there are 91 sectoral joint commissions and one sector-specific paritary structure for the digital economy, highlighting the extensive coverage and specialised attention to detailed sectoral needs. Their main function is to establish sectoral training priorities, which are then incorporated into a sectoral reference plan detailing the training specialties available for each sector through state-level on the job training programme calls.

These commissions also play a mediating role in resolving disputes between companies and legal worker representatives over scheduled training, ensuring smooth implementation and adaptation to on-ground realities. Furthermore, they actively participate in trend studies and training evaluations, offering insights into sectoral evolutions and potential skill gaps.

Good practice in ALMP design

The good practice in the design of ALMPs like TIC and TURISMO through the co-operation with FUNDAE is evident in its foundation on empirical analysis, historical trends, and the real-time challenges of the labour market. By drawing on the lessons learned from other programmes and incorporating feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, these programmes not only adhere to the benchmarks for good practice but also set a standard for incorporating comprehensive stakeholder insights, significantly reducing the risk of inefficacy from the design stage.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

<https://blog.fundae.es/aprendizaje-permanente/2024/01/29/comisiones-paritarias-sectoriales-sistema-formacion-empleo/>.

2.4. Policy directions: Avenues for future ALMP design

2.4.1. Strengthen the use of empirical evidence in programme design

While many programmes build on past experiences, the systematic use of empirical evidence remains limited. Building on the foundations laid by the Spanish Strategy for Active Support to Employment (*Estrategia Española de Apoyo Activo para el Empleo, EEAAE* (2021-2024)), which promotes the use of evidence and data in ALMP planning, future ALMPs should:

- Ensure that new programme designs systematically incorporate learnings from previous ALMPs, particularly by leveraging existing monitoring data and evaluations to refine interventions.
- Enhance the use of labour market data analysis to inform ALMP design, including defining target groups, service offerings, and programme scope based on employment trends, occupational demand, and local economic conditions.
- SEPE can play a key role in facilitating cross-regional peer learning, enabling regions to exchange on their practices and lessons learned and scale up effective ALMP models, ensuring that

successful approaches are adapted and implemented more widely. Existing mechanisms such as the Network of Public Centres for Counselling, Entrepreneurship Support and Innovation for Employment (*Red de Centros Públicos de Orientación, Emprendimiento, Acompañamiento e Innovación para el Empleo, Red COE*) can support this exchange by systematising the identification and dissemination of good practices across the National Employment System.

2.4.2. Enhance stakeholder collaboration in programme design

Stakeholder engagement in programme design was often limited, reducing the alignment of ALMPs with labour market realities. Future programmes should:

- Strengthen collaboration across departments and units within PES and ensure the involvement of specialised teams and employment counsellors in programme design, particularly those working directly with specific jobseeker groups (e.g. women victims of gender-based violence, long-term unemployed, etc.).
- Ensure that consultations with employer organisations and trade unions systematically inform programme design at all levels, to better align training and employment services with real workforce demands and worker needs. At the state level, structured consultations already take place through the General Council of the National Employment System (*Consejo General del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*), a tripartite consultative body established under Article 10 of Law 3/2023. However, for programmes managed at the regional level or for design elements under the responsibility of regional PES, such consultations are not always systematic. These consultations should be initiated during the early stages of programme design and co-ordinated by the PES units responsible for programme planning and design. Leveraging existing social dialogue structures or establishing dedicated advisory meetings can ensure that stakeholder input informs key design elements such as target groups, programme content (e.g. training), and delivery approaches.
- Ensure that service providers, NGOs and social services are engaged from the outset, particularly in programmes targeting vulnerable groups, to design interventions that are tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. PES should initiate this engagement through structured consultation formats- such as joint planning workshops or targeted focus groups- co-ordinated by programme designers.

2.4.3. Incorporate M&E framework design from the outset

While all programmes included some form of monitoring, evaluation was rarely integrated at the design stage. Building on the integrated evaluation model outlined in the EEAAE (2021-2024) and its implementation through Annual Employment Policy Plans, further efforts are needed to ensure that evaluation planning is systematically embedded from the outset and fully operationalised across the National Employment System. Future ALMPs should:

- Establish clear guidelines for data collection and reporting, ensuring consistency across geographical areas and service providers. These guidelines should define the types of data to be collected and ideally incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data on participant outcomes during and beyond programme completion (for at least 12 months), as well as measures to capture broader dimensions such as well-being and social integration.
- Move beyond basic monitoring by embedding evaluation components from the outset, defining a clear evaluation plan to assess programme impact, effectiveness, and efficiency. This should include specifying evaluation objectives and indicators during the design phase, selecting appropriate methodologies (e.g. counterfactual impact evaluations), identifying responsible actors (internal or external), and allocating sufficient resources to carry out the evaluation.

3

Engaging service providers

This chapter examines how selected ALMPs in Spain engaged service providers to deliver high-quality services. It begins by outlining the rationale for assessing service provider engagement and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter highlights variations in service provider selection methods, payment models, and the mechanisms in place to monitor service quality across programmes. It identifies good practices that illustrate competitive procurement and outcome-based payments, and concludes with recommendations grounded in the evidence reviewed to strengthen service provider engagement in future ALMPs.

3.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

Whether ALMPs are managed by SEPE or regional PES, the implementation falls to various service providers. The calls for tenders typically target a broad range of entities, including autonomous bodies, public business entities, trading companies (wholly or majority-owned or controlled by a local authority), foundations, and other non-profit institutions, as well as both public and private training providers.

Therefore, a key criterion for designing effective ALMPs is the establishment of clear rules for selecting service providers, establishing robust contractual agreements, and ensuring the quality of the services they provide. This approach guarantees that resources allocated to the programme are used as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

When selecting service providers, it is essential to establish criteria that are both rigorous and transparent. The selection process should not only be fair and competitive but should also increase the chances of engaging providers capable of delivering high-quality programmes to all prospective clients (target groups) and across the Spanish territory. Potential criteria for service provider selection may include various qualifications and standards. For instance, providers might be required to demonstrate expertise or specialisation in areas relevant to the respective ALMPs, such as a successful demonstrable experience in youth support if the programme targets young people. Adherence to all relevant legal and ethical standards, including labour laws, non-discrimination policies, and data protection regulations, is also crucial. Other indicative criteria could involve a history of past performance and references, such as success rates in previous projects and endorsements from reputable institutions. Providers showcasing innovative approaches might also be considered. Each programme may require a unique set of criteria tailored to its specific objectives and context.

Designing an appropriate payment model for service providers is a crucial aspect of ALMPs. The challenge is to create a model that both attracts service providers and incentivises the achievement of desired outcomes. Outcome-based payment models are recommended, as they have proven effective in motivating providers to offer superior services compared to traditional fee-for-service models (Langenbucher and Vodopivec, 2022^[8]; Vodopivec, 2023^[9]).⁹ These models work by setting clear, measurable goals and tying remuneration to their accomplishment. This approach not only encourages providers to perform efficiently but also aligns their efforts directly with the program's objectives. Payment variation based on client employability could also be implemented; for example, more challenging cases like hard-to-place clients could warrant higher payments. Moreover, to ensure that these outcome-based models do not lead to the neglect of the most vulnerable jobseekers, it is essential to include safeguards such as minimum service requirements.

Finally, ongoing monitoring of service providers is crucial to ensure that they consistently meet the established quality standards. This involves regular assessments, potentially through both quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback from programme participants. In cases where standards are not met, prompt and appropriate corrective measures should be implemented. This could involve additional training for the staff who provide the services, adjustments in service delivery methods, or, in extreme cases, reconsideration of the service provider's contract.

Box 3.1. Benchmark for excellence: engaging service providers in ALMPs

A benchmark ALMP excels in engaging service providers through careful selection, strategic contract establishment, and ongoing quality assurance. This model ALMP incorporates a transparent and rigorous selection process, potentially including criteria such as prioritisation of providers with proven expertise in relevant fields, compliance with legal and ethical standards, and a history of innovative and effective practices.

The programmes payment model strategically focusses on attracting and motivating high-quality service providers, ensuring that their incentives align with the programme's goals. Payments are linked to concrete results (i.e. jobseekers moving to good quality jobs), and adapted based on the diversity of beneficiaries, promoting both effectiveness and inclusiveness in contracts and public procurement processes.

Ongoing monitoring of service providers is a key aspect. Regular assessments, using both quantitative data and qualitative insights, such as feedback from programme participants, ensure consistent high-quality standards. In cases of non-compliance or underperformance, the programme promptly implements corrective actions, which may include staff retraining, modifications in service delivery methods, or, in extreme circumstances, revisions to the service provider's contract.

3.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

3.2.1. Selection of service providers

Approaches to selecting service providers varied significantly across programmes, with differences in the degree of competition, transparency, and criteria used in provider selection.

Some programmes relied on **direct agreements, engaging providers with specialised experience** in serving the programme's target groups. This approach allowed for rapid mobilisation and ensured that service providers had relevant expertise, particularly in areas requiring highly specialised support. However, because this method did not involve an open selection process, it limited transparency and competition, potentially excluding alternative high-quality providers.

Other programmes used a **non-competitive concurrence approach, where providers were selected on a first-come, first-served basis**, provided they met minimum eligibility requirements. This method facilitated quick allocation of funds and reduced administrative burdens, but it also posed risks. High-quality providers who applied later in the process could be excluded once the allocated budget was exhausted. To mitigate this, some programmes introduced rules that capped the number of participants each provider could serve, ensuring a more diverse range of service providers.

In contrast, some programmes opted for a **competitive tendering process, where service providers were assessed based on predefined criteria** such as project quality, pricing, technical expertise, prior experience, and recognised quality management certifications (e.g. ISO 9 001 or EFQM). While this approach was more resource-intensive, it ensured a transparent and merit-based selection process, often leading to higher-quality service provision. Competitive tendering was particularly effective in aligning service provision with programme goals, as it encouraged providers to demonstrate their capacity to deliver tailored, results-oriented support. A key good practice observed was the inclusion of **selection criteria that directly aligned with the specific objectives of each programme**. For example, some programmes prioritised service providers with strong employer partnerships to enhance job placement opportunities,

while others valued a proven track record of supporting the target groups to ensure service providers had the necessary expertise to deliver tailored and effective interventions.

3.2.2. *Payment models*

Different payment models influenced the incentives of service providers and helped to shape programme outcomes. Some programmes relied on **service-based payments**, where providers were compensated for delivering specific services, such as counselling or training, at predefined rates per hour or per participant. **Payments were often linked to meeting minimum service requirements**, such as a set number of hours or modules, ensuring that all jobseekers, regardless of their employability challenges, received adequate support. This model provided financial stability for service providers and facilitated upfront resource allocation. In certain cases, advance payments were also granted to help service providers cover initial operational costs, particularly in programmes targeting disadvantaged groups that required more comprehensive support. However, because payments were tied to service completion only, this model did not necessarily encourage providers to prioritise employment outcomes.

Other programmes adopted **outcome-based payment models**, where provider compensation was linked to participants achieving measurable labour market outcomes. Some programmes **linked payments to job placement** alone, while others incorporated **retention-based payments**, rewarding providers when participants remained employed for a specified duration (e.g. 180 days). Additionally, certain programmes set a **minimum integration threshold**, requiring the service provider to secure employment for a specific proportion of participants to receive full payment. For instance, if fewer than a given share of participants (e.g. 50%) found jobs, payment reductions or penalties were applied. This approach aligned provider incentives with employment outcomes but also introduced risks. Strict employment targets could lead providers to prioritise jobseekers who are easier to place, potentially discouraging them from working with individuals facing significant barriers to employment. To mitigate this risk, some programmes adjusted payment structures by offering tiered incentives, where providers received partial payments for shorter job retention periods or for placements in part-time rather than full-time roles.

Many programmes implemented **hybrid payment models, combining both service-based and outcome-based payments** to balance service provision with employment objectives. The distribution of payments between these components varied widely. Some programmes allocated a larger share to service delivery to ensure stable provider engagement, while others placed greater emphasis on rewarding employment outcomes. These choices often reflected the programmes' specific objectives. A particularly effective practice observed in some programmes was the use of **staged disbursements**, where payments were made incrementally based on service completion, job placement, and job retention over time. This structure ensured that providers remained engaged beyond initial job placements and continued supporting participants through their transition into stable employment.

In some cases, providers were credited for the overall programme's success and received full contracted payment if participants secured employment, even if they had not completed the entire programme itinerary. While this prevented rigid programme requirements from delaying job integration, it also risked shifting provider focus towards rapid job placement rather than delivering more comprehensive support. To address this, some programmes allowed **participants who had secured employment to continue benefiting from remaining support services** within their personalised itineraries, ensuring sustained career development beyond initial job placement.

Ultimately, payment models that combined financial stability for providers with incentives to achieve sustainable employment outcomes were best positioned to encourage high-quality service delivery and effective labour market integration

3.2.3. Quality assurance

Across all programmes, **regular contact between the public institution managing the programme and service providers** was a standard practice, ensuring ongoing oversight and co-ordination. This included frequent calls, email exchanges, and in-person meetings, allowing for continuous dialogue and problem-solving throughout programme implementation. In some cases, review committees were established, bringing together representatives from the public administration and service providers to discuss progress, address challenges, and share best practices. In addition, service providers were required to comply with the monitoring framework established under the RRP, which mandated systematic data collection on service provision and participant progress (see Chapter 9).

Beyond the RRP framework, several additional quality assurance measures were implemented to assess the effectiveness of service delivery. **On-site visits** were a widely used tool, allowing public authorities to directly evaluate the quality of services provided. In some cases, these visits were conducted unannounced to capture a more realistic picture of service delivery. Some programmes also included a review of participant case files during these visits to verify compliance with programme requirements.

Participant feedback mechanisms were another key element of quality assurance, with many programmes collecting direct input from jobseekers through surveys or interviews. This feedback helped identify potential gaps in service provision and areas for improvement. Some programmes went further by implementing multiple rounds of surveys at different stages of participation, ensuring that evolving experiences and challenges were captured.

Where performance issues or non-compliance were identified, **corrective actions were taken**. These ranged from requiring service providers to adjust service delivery methods to, in more serious cases, imposing financial penalties. In programmes with stronger quality assurance mechanisms, providers were given structured options to address identified weaknesses through additional training or operational adjustments before more severe measures were applied.

3.3. Good practices identified

The following two examples, presented in Box on good practices 3 and Box on good practices 4, illustrate effective approaches to selecting and incentivising service providers. The first highlights how Castilla-La Mancha used competitive tendering processes with well-defined and targeted criteria to ensure the selection of high-quality providers. The second showcases a strategic payment model in Extremadura that links disbursements to both service delivery milestones and employment outcomes. Together, these cases demonstrate how thoughtful provider engagement can contribute to stronger ALMP implementation and results.

Box on good practices 3. Selection of service providers in Castilla-La Mancha: A model of competitive tendering

Castilla-La Mancha exemplifies good practice in selecting service providers through a competitive tendering system ("*concurrentia competitiva*") for both vulnerable groups and women victims of gender violence programmes. This system awards subsidies based on publicity and equal competition. Applications submitted by service providers are assessed according to criteria established in the regulatory bases, with points attributed to different criteria, ensuring a transparent and merit-based selection process.

For each programme, different eligibility criteria and minimum requirements were established depending on the programme's goals. The call for the vulnerable groups programme was open to placement agencies, which are organisations specialised in labour market guidance and intermediation. This choice aims to maximise the programme's success in improving employability and insertion of its participants. Meanwhile, the call for the programme for women victims of gender violence was open to both public and private, for-profit and non-profit organisations, given the complexity of the programme and the group involved. For this latter programme, financial solvency was an eligibility requirement for service providers to apply, as well as having experience in similar programmes.

The scoring system is carefully designed to ensure that high-quality providers are retained, enhancing the chances of the programmes' success (see Table 3.1). Some similar criteria are applied to both programmes. Firstly, ensuring the quality of the technical offer and analysing the coherence, proposal, and methodology is inherent to both programmes. More concrete criteria are also found in both programmes, such as ensuring sufficient human resources and having some monitoring tools. Partnerships and networks are also a relevant criterion for both programmes, but given their different objectives, for vulnerable groups, it focusses on partnerships with employers, while in the programme for women victims, it relates more to having a network of entities specialised in this target group to collaborate and expand the services that can be provided to these women.

There are also some criteria specific to each programme that allow adaptation to the specific objectives and needs of the target population. For instance, the geographical scope is critical for the programme targeting vulnerable groups, while innovative soft skills workshops are essential for the programme addressed to women victims of gender violence.

All in all, through its clearly defined criteria for selecting service providers, Castilla-La Mancha maximises the chances of success of the programmes. The selection process ensures that important aspects of the programme are considered from the outset. The selection principles align well with the criteria assessed in this report, such as partnerships with employers or holistic support (through the selection criterion "partnerships and network"), monitoring and evaluation (through the selection criterion "monitoring of participants"), and the alignment with RRP objectives (for instance, through the geographical selection criterion that tackles territorial cohesion for vulnerable groups programme).

Table 3.1. Main criteria used in Castilla-La Mancha for selecting service providers for territorial projects for vulnerable groups and training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation

| Vulnerable groups programme (200 points) | Women victims of gender violence programme (100 points) |
|---|---|
| Similar selection criteria across both programmes: | |
| Methodology and technical quality of the proposal* | |
| Up to 20 points assigned based on the methodology and processes used in the development of the programme. It includes the tools available for market analysis, existing agreements for the labour market integration of participants, online tools for user satisfaction, and complaint procedures. | Up to 50 points assigned based on the coherence, rationality, structure, and detailed description of services and methodologies (content of the proposal, partnerships and networks, monitoring tools, innovation, etc.). |
| Partnerships and networks | |
| Up to 10 points assigned to service providers that present partnerships or agreements with employers who show interest in hiring people participating in the programme: 1 point for each agreement. | Up to 5 points assigned for having an established network and co-ordination with public and private entities supporting victims of gender-based violence and the complementary use of other resources (in addition to services provided by the entity). |
| Sufficient human resources allocation | |
| Up to 15 points assigned based on the ratio participants/technical staff (e.g. 90 participants/staff corresponds to 3 points while 70 participants/staff corresponds to 9 points). | Up to 20 points for assigning more technical staff than the minimum required by the programme (e.g. 1 additional staff member corresponds to 5 points, while 4 correspond to 20 points). |
| Monitoring of participants | |
| Up to 5 points assigned for having online tools and procedures for monitoring user satisfaction, complaints, and suggestions. | Up to 3 points assigned for ensuring the provision of detailed monitoring and evaluation processes, including quarterly and annual reports. |
| Unique selection criteria for each programme: | |
| Increment in labour market integration commitment: Up to 30 points assigned for committing to exceed the minimum 10% of labour market integration required: 1 point for each p.p. increase. | Economic offer: Up to 30 points assigned, with the cheapest offer scoring highest. Calculation is proportional based on the reduction from the maximum allowed bid price. |
| Previous labour market integration rates: Up to 5 points assigned based on the percentage of participant labour market integration over the last year (e.g. 1 point if between 10% and 20% and 5 points if above 50%). | Innovation: Up to 4 points assigned for detailed, well-founded proposals specifically addressing soft skills workshops aimed at empowering women. |
| Geographical coverage: Up to 45 points based on the territorial coverage of the project, with points increasing for broader geographic coverage. Additional bonus points are given for covering depopulated areas (based on the area's population density and risk of depopulation). | |
| Quality certificates: 5 points assigned for having recognised quality certifications like ISO 9001 or EFQM. | |

Note: *The total amount of points attributed in the criterion "Methodology and technical quality of the proposal" may include some other criteria mentioned below in the table, such as having established partnerships and networks and having monitoring tools.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations, and the administrative specifications outlined in the calls for tenders.

Box on good practices 4. Strategic payment model for enhancing service delivery and employment outcomes in Extremadura

The payment model implemented in Extremadura for the programme aimed at supporting vulnerable populations, specifically individuals with disabilities, exemplifies a good practice that effectively aligns the incentives of service providers with the ambitious goals of the ALMP.

Payment Model

Under this payment model, service providers receive up to EUR 6 000 for each participant who successfully completes a tailored itinerary designed to improve their employment prospects. The breakdown of the payment is as follows:

- **Itinerary completion payment:** Service providers are allocated EUR 4 900 per participant, which supports a range of services:
 - EUR 3 000 for core activities such as counselling, skill acquisition, and participation in job search teams.
 - EUR 1 200 for job training actions.
 - EUR 600 for scholarships and financial aids to assist with their participation.
 - EUR 100 for essential operational costs like facilities and supplies.
- **Labour market integration bonus:** An additional EUR 1 100 is provided for each participant who secures stable employment post-program, aimed at covering expenses associated with successful job placements. To qualify, employment (or self-employment) must last for at least three months at a minimum of 50% of full-time hours.

Payment disbursement and compliance enforcement

Payment is disbursed in stages linked to specific milestones:

- Initial Payment: 50% is released upon approval of the grant.
- Second Payment: 35% follows once at least 35% of participants have completed their itineraries.
- Final Payment: The remaining 15% is disbursed once all programme objectives have been met.

Compliance is actively enforced through payment reductions:

- Total non-compliance: requires full reimbursement of the payment by service providers if fewer than 80% of the itineraries are completed or if fewer than 50% of the job placement objectives are met. Note that the programme has a specific objective to achieve at least a 15% job placement rate for individuals with disabilities.
- Partial non-compliance: occurs when at least 80% of the itineraries are completed, but the overall objectives fall short of 100%, or when at least 50% of the job placement commitments are met without reaching the full objectives. In such cases, the principle of proportionality is applied, adjusting the repayment obligation of the received funds in proportion to the unmet commitments, both for itineraries and job placements.

Overall, the payment model in Extremadura effectively promotes timely and objective-aligned service delivery. The structure of payments encourages providers to focus not only on completing tasks but on achieving stable employment outcomes for participants. This model connects disbursement to the achievement of specific milestones, which helps to ensure that programme delivery is both timely and

meets set objectives. Additionally, the model incorporates penalties for non-compliance, reinforcing accountability and ensuring efficient use of public resources.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations, and the administrative specifications outlined in the calls for tenders.

3.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening service provider engagement in future ALMPs

3.4.1. *Enhance the transparency and competitiveness of the provider selection processes*

Service provider selection varies significantly across programmes, with some approaches prioritising speed over quality. While direct agreements and non-competitive procedures can be effective and necessary in certain contexts, increasing transparency and competition can improve service quality and encourage innovation. Future ALMPs should:

- Prioritise competitive selection where feasible, by ensuring provider qualifications, experience, and alignment with programme objectives are systematically assessed through an open and merit-based process. A structured assessment framework with a well-designed and transparent scoring system should be in place to reflect programme priorities, ensuring that evaluation criteria are both strategic and adaptable to specific contexts.
- Ensure sufficient administrative capacity and realistic timelines: Competitive selection processes require dedicated human resources to manage calls for tenders, assess applications, and oversee implementation. Allocating sufficient personnel and ensuring that the timeline for fund allocation is realistic will allow for a fair, transparent selection process while avoiding excessive programme delays. At the same time, leaner and more efficient procurement can be promoted through tools such as shared contract management systems across programmes, digital platforms to automate repetitive tasks, and standardised templates to reduce administrative burden.
- Strengthen and adapt selection criteria to include not only general quality standards (e.g. general experience, compliance with regulations, financial solvency) but also programme-specific elements that enhance service delivery. Criteria should be flexible enough to account for the diverse objectives of ALMPs, allowing programmes to prioritise aspects such as employer partnerships, experience with specific target groups, and a network of collaboration with complementary service providers.

3.4.2. *Improve the balance between service continuity and outcome incentives in payment models*

Payment models influence provider incentives and programme effectiveness. While service-based payments ensure service continuity, outcome-based payments drive sustainable employment. Future ALMPs should:

- Expand hybrid payment models, combining service-based payments for service provision with well-calibrated incentives for employment outcomes, to balance service continuity and performance.
- Ensure that outcome-based payments are well structured to incentivise not only job placement but also retention. For instance, rather than a single payment made at job placement, staged payments can be made at different employment retention milestones (e.g. three months post-placement, six

months post-placement) to encourage long-term sustainability. For participants with more complex needs, outcome-based payments could also be linked to verifiable milestones such as obtaining qualifications, improving digital literacy, increasing confidence (captured through validated self-assessment tools), or enhancing social skills (measured using structured assessment tools).

- Introduce safeguards to prevent the neglect of vulnerable jobseekers by requiring minimum service standards. These standards should, at a minimum, align with the rights established under the Employment Law 3/2023 and the Royal Decree 438/2024 on the Common Portfolio of Services (*Cartera Común de Servicios del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*), and, where appropriate, go beyond them to ensure tailored, high-quality support for those facing greater barriers to employment.
- Implement payment variation based on client employability (low employability to high employability), to counteract cherry-picking and ensure support for those facing greater barriers. Hard-to-place participants could warrant higher payments, encouraging providers to work with individuals who require more intensive assistance, an approach that was not observed in the programmes assessed but could strengthen inclusiveness.

3.4.3. Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms

Ensuring high-quality service provision requires mechanisms that promote accountability and continuous improvement.

- Programme managers/co-ordinators should maintain regular and close contact with service providers, fostering ongoing dialogue to identify and address challenges timely and effectively. Monitoring frameworks should include both quantitative and qualitative data collection, such as that used under the RRP framework, to systematically track programme performance and participant progress.
- Expand the use of on-site visits to service providers, including both scheduled and unannounced evaluations, to obtain a realistic assessment of service quality and compliance.
- Systematically integrate participant feedback mechanisms, conducting multiple surveys at different programme stages to regularly track service provision and participant satisfaction, ensuring a more responsive approach to service delivery.
- Implement structured corrective measures to address underperformance in service provision. These measures should range from requiring service adjustments to, where necessary, applying financial penalties or reconsidering contracts in cases of persistent non-compliance.

3.4.4. Encourage innovation and knowledge sharing among service providers

To improve service quality and adaptability, ALMPs should foster an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among service providers. Future programmes should:

- Encourage innovation in service delivery by allowing providers to propose flexible methodologies, new training approaches, and digital solutions tailored to jobseeker needs, and by providing appropriate incentives to pilot and scale successful innovations.
- Promote structured mechanisms for knowledge sharing and best practice exchange through peer-learning networks, forums, and collaborative initiatives. Facilitating interactions between service providers will help disseminate successful approaches and improve service quality across different programmes.
- Support continuous improvement and learning among service providers through training opportunities, capacity-building initiatives, and facilitating engagement with research and policy institutions.

4

Identification and outreach to target population

This chapter examines the identification and outreach strategies employed by the assessed ALMPs in Spain to reach and engage their target population. It begins by highlighting the importance of designing comprehensive and proactive strategies, particularly when aiming to reach vulnerable groups, and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter then outlines the various approaches observed across programmes in their efforts to identify and engage potential participants. It presents good practices that rely on a combination of identification and outreach methods and take into account the particular circumstances of vulnerable groups. Finally, the chapter concludes with a set of recommendations to support the comprehensive identification and proactive outreach in future ALMPs.

4.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

The labour market challenges faced by certain groups, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021^[10]), have long been an area of concern. In response, Spain has focussed its RRP investments in ALMPs on providing sustained support to these vulnerable groups, addressing a range of challenges they face. However, these vulnerable groups are often the least likely to register for ALMPs or approach PES on their own due to various barriers, lack of information, no incentives to approach the PES or misconceptions. Thus, it becomes imperative to not only identify people needing the specific ALMP but also proactively reach out to the people who most need the support that the programme offers (OECD, 2021^[11]; OECD, 2023^[12]; Dromundo, Lüske and Tuccio, 2023^[13]; OECD, 2021^[14]).

To ensure effectiveness, ALMPs should specifically target vulnerable individuals who are most likely to benefit from such programmes. This entails identifying those who, despite facing significant challenges in the labour market, have the potential to improve their employment prospects substantially through the support offered by these programmes. Using administrative data from different registers, supplemented by survey data where administrative coverage is limited, allows ALMP providers to identify, map, and track individuals requiring support but not actively engaging with PES. For instance, Estonia's Youth Guarantee Support System, launched in 2018, exemplifies this approach. It utilises a tool enabling municipalities to identify youths not in education, employment, or training. By linking data from nine registers, it detects those in need, thereby facilitating targeted support and encouraging engagement with PES and other relevant institutions (Kõiv, 2018^[15]; OECD, 2021^[11]).

Once identified, several outreach channels can be employed to engage these groups.

Direct outreach to potential participants through personalised communication, such as calls or emails, is effective (Van Gestel et al., 2022^[16]; OECD, 2023^[12]). This approach should not only inform individuals about the programme but also provide an opportunity to address any specific queries or concerns.

Assistance with applying for participation in a specific programme is crucial, including simplifying the application process, offering paperwork guidance, or providing digital platforms for easier access. This assistance makes the process more accessible, especially for those facing barriers like limited literacy or digital skills. The IMV Information Bus in Spain exemplifies this approach by offering both direct outreach and application assistance, acting as a mobile social services office and providing detailed information about the Minimum Income Benefit (*Ingreso Mínimo Vital*, IMV), including eligibility criteria and application processes, catering to a diverse range of specific needs (OECD, 2023^[17]).

Efforts to reduce the stigma associated with programme participation are equally important. This can be achieved through positive messaging and success stories, which help to change perceptions and encourage participation by illustrating the benefits and normalising the use of such services.

Awareness-raising events are a critical component, serving not just to inform eligible individuals about the availability of the programme, but also to actively encourage their application or registration. These events can be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the target demographic, ensuring maximum relevance and impact.

Furthermore, leveraging social media plays a pivotal role in modern outreach strategies. Social media platforms can be used not only for advertising the programme but also for creating communities of support and engagement. Through these platforms, potential participants can access real-time information, interact with service providers, and even share their experiences with peers. This approach not only broadens the reach of the programme but also fosters a sense of community and support among participants.

A best practice example in outreach is found in Finland's Ohjaamo centres. These one-stop-shops for youth services collaborate with municipal social workers to proactively engage with early school leavers and marginalised youth. These centres host outreach events in youth-frequented spaces, with youth

workers playing a pivotal role. Their efforts are complemented by the use of social networks, crucial for reaching this demographic (Dromundo, Lüske and Tuccio, 2023^[13]).

Box 4.1. Benchmark for excellence: Identifying and reaching out to ALMP participants

A benchmark ALMP effectively identifies and reaches out to its target participants. This outreach can be specifically designed within the programme or be part of a broader strategy implemented by PES. The programme uses a system that integrates administrative and survey data to map and track individuals who, despite facing significant labour market barriers, could potentially improve their employment prospects through the support offered by this programme. An outstanding feature of this system is its ability to pinpoint individuals who are not actively engaging with PES, thereby addressing a key gap in traditional outreach efforts.

The programme's outreach strategy is multi-dimensional encompassing diverse channels including:

- Personalised communication, such as direct calls or emails, offering potential participants detailed programme information and addressing any individual queries or concerns.
- Comprehensive application assistance, simplifying the process and offering support with paperwork and digital access. This aspect is especially vital for individuals facing barriers like limited literacy or digital skills, making the programme more inclusive and accessible.
- Actions to counteract the stigma often associated with programme participation: the ALMP utilises success stories and positive messaging, changing perceptions and encouraging broader participation.
- Awareness-raising events, designed to resonate with and actively encourage the target demographic groups to participate in the programme.
- Leveraging social media platforms not only for advertising the programme but also for fostering a supportive community. Through these platforms, participants can access real-time information, interact with service providers, and share experiences with their peers.

4.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

4.2.1. Participant identification

The assessed programmes used different approaches to identify participants depending on the target population, eligibility criteria and available data sources.

Some programmes relied exclusively on PES **administrative data**, such as records on registered unemployed and unemployment benefit recipients, for participant identification. This approach proved effective in identifying groups likely to be registered in PES databases, such as the long-term unemployed, jobseekers above a certain age or those in specific geographical areas. Where possible, administrative data screening included specific eligibility criteria, such as age or skill level, to refine target profiles in line with programme objectives. In many cases, employment offices prepared a preliminary list of eligible participants and sent it to service providers for final selection. In particular instances where administrative data could precisely define the narrow target group, for example through a specific classification code for female workers employed under the Agricultural Employment Promotion Plan, the identification process was both straightforward and efficient.

In programmes targeting women victims of gender-based violence, the identification of potential participants involved handling of sensitive personal data. To ensure appropriate and secure access to this data, some programmes engaged special **gender-based violence tutors** from the PES in the identification process. These tutors are career counsellors specially trained to work with women victims of gender-based violence and are the only professionals in the PES authorised to access victims' data. This approach ensured that only designated professionals handled sensitive personal data, thereby guaranteeing privacy and data protection.

The programmes targeting particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, such as people with disability, young people, or women victims of gender-based violence, relied strongly on **networks of specialised service providers** for identification. These organisations, with their deep expertise and strong links to specific target groups, played a crucial role in identifying people who may never have registered as jobseekers. In very specific cases, such as identifying victims of human trafficking or sexual exploitation, some programmes worked with specialised courts and police departments to reach those who could not be identified through more traditional channels.

To maximise the coverage of prospective participants, many programmes **combined administrative data screening with other identification methods**, such as networks of specialised entities or collaboration with social services. Many programmes adopted a joint strategy, where the PES used administrative data to identify potential participants within their registers, while specialised service providers complemented this approach by leveraging their networks to reach the target group through more tailored efforts. In these cases, the establishment of data sharing protocols was essential to facilitate efficient and secure data exchange.

In few cases, programmes **did not involve proactive identification** of participants by the PES or service providers. Instead, individuals interested in the programme self-registered to be considered for selection. In this setting, collaboration between the PES and service providers to identify participants was only initiated if the number of self-registered participants was insufficient.

4.2.2. Outreach strategies

The assessed programmes used a variety of strategies to reach potential participants, with most of them relying on **individualised contact** to ensure that the identified target group was reached and had access to information about the programme. Personalised outreach provided participants with tailored information about the programme and helped to address their specific questions. Many programmes used a combination of communication tools, including phone calls, WhatsApp messages, and emails to facilitate interactive two-way communication. In some cases, registered letters with pre-scheduled appointments were used to make sure that targeted individuals were reached and confirmed receipt of the information. Individual outreach was a preferred strategy when broader campaigns were not desirable due to the protection and privacy requirements of the target group, such as victims of gender-based violence.

A good practice in individual communication was to **establish a clear protocol** for contacting potential participants. For example, the outreach efforts were structured to include a certain number of contact attempts via phone calls at different days and times to maximise the likelihood of a response. If no response was received, a follow-up message with programme information was sent. The content of these communications was carefully designed to increase the motivation of individuals to participate in the programme.

In addition to individualised contact, many programmes organised **broader outreach campaigns** through websites, social media, posters, leaflets, and other types of advertisement in social spaces. These campaigns helped to disseminate information about the programmes, raise awareness, reduce stigma and reach additional participants who had not been identified through direct contact. Some of these initiatives made an explicit attempt to use social media platforms to foster a sense of community around the

programme. Where broad public outreach was not appropriate due to the sensitive nature of the target group, for example victims of gender-based violence, programmes opted for outreach campaigns among specialised institutions with established links with these populations. By combining individual outreach with broader campaigns, programmes adopted a multi-faceted approach that helped to maximise coverage and ensure engagement.

To complement outreach efforts, some programmes also provided **application assistance**, which proved valuable when participants had to self-register for the programme, rather than being automatically enrolled through employment offices or service providers. This support was particularly important for those facing administrative barriers or for participants with limited literacy or digital skills. For example, some programmes helped participants to obtain specific documentation, such as social service reports needed to certify their status and eligibility for the programme. By providing tailored assistance, these initiatives ensured that bureaucratic hurdles did not prevent eligible individuals from accessing support.

4.3. Good Practices Identified

The following two programmes, presented in Box on good practices 5 and Box on good practices 6, illustrate comprehensive approaches to identification and outreach to potential programme participants. The first example from Asturias showcases a strategy that combines multiple identification and outreach methods to broaden coverage. The second example from País Vasco focusses on a tailored approach for victims of gender-based violence, emphasising the responsible use of sensitive data, privacy protection and stigma reduction. Both cases demonstrate how carefully designed identification and outreach strategies improve coverage and foster participant engagement.

Box on good practices 5. Identification and outreach for vulnerable groups in Asturias

Asturias represents a good practice in participant identification and outreach for vulnerable groups due to its comprehensive and systematic approach in this area. The programme specifically targets unemployed individuals, particularly those who are long-term unemployed or inactive (the latter being required to register as jobseekers to participate). Participants must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Have no mandatory secondary education (*Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, ESO*);
- Receive Minimum Income Benefits (either regional or national);
- Belong to a vulnerable group, including individuals over 45 with little or no formal education, immigrants facing language barriers, women victims of abuse or trafficking, people with disabilities, unemployed individuals under 30 with little or no formal education, members of minorities such as the Roma community, homeless individuals, people with addictions, and former prisoners.

In order to reach this target population, the region's strategy involves the integration of administrative data from employment offices and social services; as well as the collaboration from third-sector entities to identify potential participants. Furthermore, the outreach strategy, including both individualised contacts and broader campaigns, was designed using practices from behavioural economics to maximise its impact.

Participant Identification

Asturias employs a combination of administrative data and networks of specialised entities to identify potential participants for this programme. This combination of approaches can help ensure that a large proportion of the target group is reached, including those who may not yet be registered as jobseekers. The identification process includes:

- **Administrative data screening:** Employment offices screen their administrative data to identify potential participants
- **Collaboration with social services:** Through an existing agreement between employment and social services at the regional level, the social services databases are used to identify and reach beneficiaries of the regional minimum income scheme who can also benefit from the programme
- **Partnerships with third-sector entities:** Strong collaboration with specialised third-sector organisations allows for the identification of individuals who might not yet be registered with public services but are in contact with these entities. The programme allows participants to register as jobseekers just before its start, extending the reach beyond the employment services databases.

Outreach Strategies

Asturias employs a multi-faceted outreach strategy that combines individualised contact with broader social media campaigns and information dissemination about the programme through third sector and local entities, such as local social services offices. This approach maximises the means used to reach potential participants at the same time that it diversifies outreach efforts.

- **Individualised contacts** are structured so that potential participants are contacted up to three times at different days and times to maximise the chances of receiving a response. If participants do not answer, a follow-up WhatsApp message containing information about the programme is sent. The content of these communications is designed using principles from behavioural economics to ensure engagement and effectiveness. The messaging aims to be both truthful and compelling, motivating individuals to participate.
- **The outreach on social networks** focusses on Meta (a social media conglomerate including platforms like Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp) and is tailored to reach individuals who have not yet engaged with public or private entities. The filtering on social media targets individuals in vulnerable social situations and unemployment.
- **Dissemination of the programme** takes place through information sessions conducted for technical staff in the Social Services of the Principality of Asturias, as well as for municipal social services managers, to facilitate the referral of individuals who might be interested in the programme and meet the eligibility criteria.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 6. Extensive identification and outreach actions against stigma for victims of violence in País Vasco

The programme targeting victims of gender-based and sexual violence in País Vasco stands out for its extensive identification strategy and its outreach actions aimed at countering stigma.

Extensive Participant Identification

Identification in the programme is led by gender-based violence tutors from Lanbide (the regional PES). These professionals are career counsellors who are specially trained to work with women identified or recognised as victims of gender-based violence, and are the only professionals in Lanbide that have access to victims' data. This specialised personnel ensures that women do not have to recount their stories multiple times, which is a significant advantage in preserving their privacy and dignity. The fact that these tutors handle the identification process is crucial, as it protects the privacy and data of potential participants, with only the tutors having access to this sensitive information. This focus on privacy and data protection is essential for this vulnerable group.

Tutors are in charge of identifying participants through Lanbide's administrative data, among women who are registered as jobseekers and are identified in the system as victims of violence or trafficking. Women who are not initially registered as jobseekers can also join the programme, but need to register before the start. In this case, they would be assigned a personal tutor in charge of accompaniment.

In addition to identifying women through Lanbide, the programme's strategy acknowledges the challenge of reaching the entire target population, particularly victims of sexual violence who may be outside public networks and systems. Therefore, the programme also engages with specialised entities – experts in working with women facing violence, trafficking, or sexual exploitation – to identify women beyond Lanbide's network. This collaboration expands the programme's reach, ensuring that it connects with those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Outreach Actions Countering Stigma

Another key feature of the programme is its outreach strategy, which strongly takes into account the need of protecting the participants and reducing the stigma associated with programme participation. To achieve this, the programme frames its communication as part of a broader strategy rather than focussing on the violence component. This positive framing allows the programme's communications to focus not on the participants' status as victims, but on their achievements and progress within the programme, such as the completion of training courses. This approach not only protects the participants but also empowers them by emphasising their successes and contributions, thereby helping to counteract the stigma often associated with being a victim of violence.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

4.4. Policy directions: Avenues to ensure comprehensive identification and proactive outreach to target population in future ALMP

4.4.1. Develop a comprehensive identification strategy

- Adopt a comprehensive identification strategy combining different methods, such as administrative data screenings, surveys, networks of specialised entities and collaboration with social services, to maximise the coverage of prospective participants.
- Use PES administrative data on registered unemployed and unemployment benefit recipients to identify individuals who may be eligible and well-suited for participation in specific ALMPs. Refine the screening by leveraging available PES data (e.g. on age, education, skills, location, previous work experience, etc.), to match selected profiles with programme characteristics.
- Where possible, leverage other sources of administrative data, for example from the population, social security, social services, healthcare or education registries, to identify wider range of participants, including vulnerable groups that face multiple barriers beyond employment and are not registered with the PES. Build on the experience and foreseeable applications of existing initiatives such as [ES DataLab](#) to facilitate secure access to linked administrative microdata from various public institutions.
- If identification requires handling sensitive personal data, ensure that strict privacy and data protection measures are in place. For example, when targeting victims of gender-based violence, involve specialised gender-based violence tutors within the PES to carry out identification, as they are specifically trained and authorised to handle such data.
- Collaborate with specialised service providers to identify particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, drawing on providers' networks and expertise working with these populations.

4.4.2. Design a multi-faceted outreach strategy

- Use direct personalised outreach to provide potential participants with tailored information about the programme and to address their specific questions. Employ multiple communication channels to facilitate fluid two-way communication and ensure that information reaches its intended recipients.
- Establish a structured contact protocol to maximise response rates, ensuring that potential participants are contacted several times at different times before they are deemed unreachable.
- Organise broader outreach campaigns through websites, social media, and other forms of advertising to raise awareness and reach a wider pool of potential participants. When working with sensitive target groups, opt for outreach campaigns through specialised institutions that have established trust and direct access to these populations.
- Use positive messages and success stories to reduce stigma and encourage participation.
- Leverage social media platforms to foster a sense of community around the programme, increasing engagement, motivation and information sharing.
- Based on the requirement for personalised attention adapted to participants' needs (as stated in the Royal Decree 438/2024 on the Common Portfolio of Services (*Cartera Común de Servicios del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*), provide comprehensive online or in-person application assistance where needed, to ensure that administrative barriers do not prevent eligible individuals from accessing the programme.

5

Assessment and referral of participants

This chapter examines how selected ALMPs in Spain conducted assessment of participants profiles and referred them to suitable support services and measures. It begins by discussing the importance of comprehensive assessment methods and tailoring referrals accordingly, and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter then reviews the different approaches adopted across programmes to assess participants needs and personalise interventions. It presents good practices that facilitate consistent in-depth assessment leading to robust referrals. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for establishing effective assessment and referral protocols in future ALPMs.

5.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

Once individuals are engaged in the programme, to conduct a thorough assessment, or profiling, of participants' profiles and needs and subsequent referral protocol becomes central to providing ALMPs tailored to the needs and circumstances of each participant. A comprehensive assessment of participants' needs, level of qualifications, skills, socio-demographic background, experiences, interests etc is crucial to ensuring that they receive the appropriate support and are referred to suitable services and measures, thereby enhancing labour market integration.

Assessment processes can vary in the way in which the participants are contacted, the professionals involved, and the tools and mechanisms used. They may involve quantitative and qualitative profiling (Desiere, Langenbucher and Struyven, 2019^[18]). Qualitative profiling might include the judgement of professionals (i.e. job counsellors) who assess individuals' skills and needs based on direct interactions. Quantitative profiling, on the other hand, uses data-driven models to predict labour market disadvantage. A balanced approach that combines data, counsellor insight, and comprehensive profiling strategies, facilitates more effective and targeted support delivery.

Traditionally, professionals like job counsellors have been instrumental in evaluating participants' employability. However, there is a growing trend towards using digital tools to enhance this assessment. Advanced statistical profiling tools employ techniques such as logistic or probit regressions and machine learning to predict a jobseeker's likelihood of finding employment. These tools analyse a wide array of data, including socio-economic characteristics (like age and gender), education, skills, detailed work experience, care responsibilities, health-related factors, access to transportation, motivation levels, and regional labour market trends. However, it's important to recognise that the tools primarily providing a probability of long-term unemployment, represent just the first step in the assessment process. They should be complemented with other approaches for a more holistic view.

A critical aspect of this assessment is understanding a participant's skills and competencies to effectively support them in job search, career management, training etc. Skills profiling tools are invaluable as well, ranging from self-reported assessments (e.g. Austria, Estonia) to tests of soft skills (e.g. Germany), knowledge assessments (e.g. France, Catalonia), "serious games"¹⁰ (Laumer, Eckhardt and Weitzel, 2012^[19]) and comprehensive assessments leading to accreditation (e.g. the Netherlands) (OECD, 2024^[20]; Carcillo and Scarpetta, 2024^[21]).

If the assessment is conducted comprehensively, incorporating a wide array of factors and tools, the information obtained significantly improves the subsequent referral of beneficiaries to the most suitable services, measures, and support types within the programme. This could involve increasing meeting frequency, adapting training programme levels, providing support to tackle barriers beyond employment, facilitating access to various workshops, and more. Such individualised and targeted approaches in ALMPs can potentially increase their effectiveness.

Box 5.1. Benchmark for excellence: Assessment and referral within ALMPs

A benchmark ALMP possesses a systematic assessment and referral protocol. The programme employs an assessment approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative profiling strategies. Through qualitative profiling, professionals, such as job counsellors, play a pivotal role in assessing individual needs and skills. Quantitative profiling complements this by using advanced digital tools. These profiling tools may leverage logistic or probit regressions and/or machine learning techniques, analysing an extensive array of data, including socio-economic factors, educational background, work experience, and regional labour market trends.

In addition, a key feature of a benchmark ALMP is its comprehensive skills assessment, which may include self-reported evaluations, tests of soft skills, and knowledge assessments, incorporating innovative methods like “serious games”.

The programme’s referral system is highly personalised, ensuring that each participant is directed to services, measures, and support that are not only included in the programme but can also be adapted to best align with their skills and needs. This could involve increasing meeting frequency, adapting training programme levels, providing support with barriers beyond employment, and facilitating access to various workshops (i.e. CV writing or communication skills), among others.

5.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

5.2.1. Assessment protocol

Most of the assessed programmes included an **initial diagnostic** phase, using a variety of assessment tools to gain a comprehensive understanding of each participant’s needs from the outset. While the primary focus was often on employability, many programmes took a broader approach, considering a range of areas that influence labour market integration, such as family responsibilities, psychological support needs, financial situation, etc. This holistic assessment ensured that participants receive tailored support that addresses both work-related and personal challenges.

Some programmes incorporated assessments after the first set of interventions or implemented **continuous evaluation**. This approach allowed for a more dynamic understanding of participants’ evolving needs, provided greater flexibility and enabled ongoing monitoring of progress. Such iterative assessments helped to adjust support as needed, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective throughout the participant’s journey.

Across the studied programmes, assessments often integrated a **wide range of data** sources to build a comprehensive profile of each participant. These data typically included socio-economic characteristics, educational background, work experience, local labour market trends, housing and health status, psychological support needs, family circumstances and personal interests. By consolidating this structured information into a single profile, programmes created an accurate and multi-dimensional snapshot of the participant’s situation, facilitating more targeted and effective interventions.

In contrast, programmes with a primary focus on training tended to have **limited or no assessment beyond an initial selection process**. In such cases, assessment was usually aimed at checking eligibility criteria for participation. Some training programmes designed the selection process to target a relatively narrow and homogeneous group of participants with similar skills and needs. Although this approach

reduces the scope for tailoring interventions to individual circumstances, it does simplify and streamline the enrolment process.

5.2.2. Skills assessment methods

The studied programmes used a **variety of assessment tools** to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' skills. These included self-assessment tools, standardised tests, semi-structured interviews conducted by professional counsellors and digital tools. Combining digital tools with the expertise and professional judgement of counsellors enhanced the accuracy and depth of the assessment, leading to more robust and tailored results.

To ensure consistency and reliability for all participants, many programmes used a **common framework or minimum guidelines** defining the key areas to be assessed and the methods to be used for conducting assessments. In this context, the integration of digital tools played an important role in standardising the assessment process, minimising errors and reducing potential bias due to subjective judgement. Digital platforms helped to create structured assessments, ensuring that all participants were assessed according to the same criteria and methodology.

The **effectiveness of the assessment** was often enhanced by the involvement of specialised service providers with extensive experience of working with specific target groups. These providers used tested methods tailored to the needs of particular populations, ensuring that the assessments were relevant and appropriate. Some programmes provided training for those carrying out the assessments to ensure that they followed established guidelines effectively and accurately. Several programmes highlighted the importance of continuously refining assessment tools to ensure that lessons learned from past experience contribute to the development of more effective methods and lead to the most impactful outcomes.

5.2.3. Referral protocol

In most programmes, the results of the assessments were directly linked to **tailored interventions** designed to meet the specific needs and skills of each participant. These interventions were structured as personalised itineraries or action plans, which set out clear expectations, objectives and the steps needed to improve employability. Participants were referred to tailored actions which included different types of training, professional development alternatives or support pathways with different levels of intensity.

The programmes often incorporated **clear guidelines** to ensure a direct and structured link between assessment results and personalised interventions. In some cases, digital tools – whether regional, national (such as Send@) or a combination of both – were used to streamline referrals, improve efficiency and ensure consistency in matching participants with appropriate opportunities.

In comparison, programmes that focussed primarily on training often adopted a more uniform approach, offering standard courses to all participants with **minimal tailoring** to individual needs. While this approach may have limited personalisation, it ensured consistency in training quality, simplified delivery and allowed for scalability. When training was delivered in small face-to-face groups, facilitators had some flexibility to adapt materials to better match participants' skills and learning needs, allowing for some personalisation even within more standardised training settings.

5.3. Good practices identified

The two programmes presented in Box on good practices 7 and Box on good practices 8 illustrate effective approaches to the assessment and referral of participants. The programme in Navarra ensures consistent and fair assessment process and evidence-based referral, focussing on the multidimensional needs of vulnerable participants. Murcia's programme demonstrates how digital tools can facilitate comprehensive

assessment and referral based on clear standardised criteria. Both examples emphasise the importance of thorough assessment and personalised referral in tailoring services to the specific needs and circumstances of participants. In addition, the Box on good practices 9 highlights the use of the digital tool Send@ as part of the referral protocol in several regions, reinforcing evidence-based referral in the design of individualised itineraries.

Box on good practices 7. Comprehensive assessment and referral in Navarra

The approach in Navarra's programme for vulnerable groups stands out due to its comprehensive assessment protocol, which incorporates a multidimensional perspective on labour market exclusion; its systematic skills assessment through the use of digital tools; and the way in which referrals are defined.

Assessment Protocol

Navarra's initial assessment adopts a holistic view of labour market exclusion, considering not only employment-related factors but also social and personal needs, such as housing, health, and psychological support. The rationale behind this approach is that vulnerable individuals often face low motivation and deficiencies in transversal skills, which can lead to the chronic nature of their vulnerability. In addition to possible reductions in self-esteem, their social networks may weaken or become severely limited, further reducing their employment opportunities.

In Navarra's approach, addressing these multidimensional needs is essential before employment-specific actions can be effectively implemented. This holistic consideration ensures that participants are better prepared and supported in their journey towards employment.

Skills Assessment

The programme utilises the digital tool ORIENTASARE for a diagnostic that focusses on five key areas: employment, social skills, training, motivation, and job search. This tool takes into account not only the labour-related aspects but also social and personal dimensions, providing a well-rounded assessment of employability.

All staff from service providers working in this programme use the ORIENTASARE tool and diagnostic process, ensuring consistency and fairness in the assessment of all participants. This standardisation is crucial in guaranteeing equal opportunities, as it ensures that every participant in the programme is evaluated using the same criteria and process.

Referral Protocol

Following the diagnostic, both ORIENTASARE and Send@ (see Box on good practices 9) are employed to help job counsellors establish personalised pathways. These digital tools enable counsellors to identify actions that have previously been effective for individuals with similar needs. This evidence-based approach can be highly beneficial, as it allows for the development of tailored itineraries that address each participant's specific requirements.

Every itinerary includes at least the following components (*Article 14.3 of RD 438/2024*):

1. The identification of professional employment or entrepreneurship alternatives based on an analysis of employment opportunities in Spain, the European Union, and internationally, that match the individual's professional profile.

2. The identification of a training pathway, if necessary, according to the person's profile, which includes the proposal of training actions and/or the accreditation of work experience or non-formal training that is suitable for improving skills and professional qualifications.
3. The identification of active job search activities that the individual, according to their profile, will be required to undertake.

These minimum requirements ensure that key areas are always addressed, and each component is tailored to the individual's personal circumstances.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 8. Use of digital tools for assessment and referral in the programme for women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation in Murcia

Murcia's programme for women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation employs a wide range of digital tools that facilitate an exhaustive assessment and referral process based on clear-cut criteria. Furthermore, the use of these tools is a requirement for entities acting as service providers within the programme, ensuring that all participants undergo the same process for assessment and referral. Among the most important tools used in the programme are POL and Send@. POL, the *Plataforma de Orientación Laboral* (Employment Guidance Platform) of SEF (the regional PES of Murcia), is a digital tool that provides a comprehensive framework for employability assessment, covering a broad range of areas. These include:

- Initial Evaluation Tool: A semi-structured interview tool that assesses personal factors, transversal skills, professional competencies, and the participant's professional profile
- Self-Evaluation Facilitator System (SFI): A self-assessment tool that helps participants evaluate their readiness and capabilities for labour market integration
- Job Search Behaviour Inventory (ICBE): A tool that assesses the job search behaviours of participants
- Perceived Control Expectations in Job Search (ECP-BE): A questionnaire that measures participants' perceived control over their job search outcomes
- Job Search Assistance Questionnaire (CABE): A questionnaire designed to assist in identifying areas where participants may need additional support in their job search efforts

The comprehensive range of elements in the initial assessment, including personal factors, is crucial for a group such as victims of violence, as their specific personal situations, which can significantly impact employability, are taken into account. Moreover, the broad array of tools and resources related to employment included in POL enables the development of a highly individualised diagnostic that considers multiple dimensions of each participant's situation. This thorough approach is key to creating effective and personalised pathways for labour market integration.

The information gathered through the POL system is then used to refer participants to specific services via Send@, an app developed by SEPE (see Box on good practices 9). This tool has been integrated into POL, allowing employment counsellors to use an itinerary search engine to find the best-suited pathways for participants.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 9. Use of the tool Send@ for designing individualised itineraries for vulnerable groups (as in Navarra and Extremadura) and women victims of gender-based violence (as in Murcia)

Send@, a tool for the design of individual itineraries developed by SEPE, is used as part of referral protocols in a number of regions. Examples include Navarra and Extremadura in their programmes for vulnerable groups; and Murcia in the programme for women victims of gender-based violence.

Send@ provides tailored labour market insights on job search and employment opportunities, which employment counsellors rely on when advising jobseekers on their pathways to labour market integration. The app offers guidance on occupations with better employment prospects and identifies potential ALMPs, particularly training programmes, that can enhance the participants' employment prospects. In the context of creating individualised itineraries, Send@ allows counsellors to identify pathways that have been effective for individuals with similar profiles, thereby supporting an evidence-based approach to itinerary design.

An impact evaluation of Send@ (OECD, 2023^[22]) has shown that this tool leads to quicker transitions from unemployment to higher-quality jobs. Individuals counselled using Send@ are not only more likely to gain employment and secure permanent contracts, but they also experience improvements in their career trajectories. Moreover, jobseekers who receive guidance through Send@ tend to secure better-quality occupations relative to their initial target occupations compared to similar jobseekers who were not counselled using this tool.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations; OECD (2023^[22]), *Impact Evaluation of the Digital Tool for Employment Counsellors in Spain: SEND@: Report on the Design and Implementation of an Impact Evaluation of the Digital Counselling Tool for Spain's Public Employment Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fe1ec3c3-en>.

5.4. Policy directions: Avenues for effective assessment and referral of participants in future ALMP

5.4.1. *Establish a systematic, well-structured and fair assessment of all programme participants*

- Use a variety of well-structured qualitative and quantitative assessment methods, combining self-assessment tools and standardised tests with the expertise of professional job counsellors and the advantages of digital tools that make use of a wide range of data and advanced analytical methods.
- Ensure that PES and service providers have access to the same assessment tools (and training to use these tools) to guarantee consistency, fairness and equal opportunities in the assessment of all participants, while minimising potential bias due to personal preferences or error.
- Where possible, adopt a continuous assessment approach, carrying out assessments at different points in time during programme participation, to gain more accurate insights into the evolving needs of participants and to track their progress over time.
- Use feedback collected from participants, service providers and other relevant stakeholders, including academia, to refine assessment tools and adapt them to different participant profiles.
- Going beyond the currently used traditional methods, explore innovative assessment approaches, such as the integration of “serious games” and other interactive digital tools to assess skills and competences in engaging and realistic environments.

5.4.2. *Design a highly personalised referral system for tailored support*

- Use comprehensive assessment results to design referrals tailored to the specific needs and competencies of individuals, including adapting training levels, providing support to tackle barriers beyond employment, and facilitating access to relevant workshops and support services.
- Apply tested evidence-based referral tools. Explore the feasibility of expanding and refining the functionalities of SEPE’s digital tool for employment counsellors, Send@, to identify interventions that have been shown to be effective in the past for participants exhibiting similar characteristics and aspirations, ensuring that referrals are data-driven, maximise the likelihood of success and mitigate the risks of reproducing past biases.

6 Integrated and holistic support

This chapter examines how the assessed ALMPs in Spain provide integrated and holistic support to participants, taking into account the wide range of challenges they may face beyond employment. It begins by emphasising the importance of assessing the capacity of ALMPs to respond to participants' multiple and interrelated needs, and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. It then reviews the range of services offered by the programmes and the role of partnerships, ranging from well-established networks to informal case-by-case solutions, in delivering and co-ordinating these services. The chapter presents good practices that offer a wide range of personalised services and utilise strong collaborative networks of partners. Finally, it concludes with recommendations for delivering a comprehensive package of services tailored to participants' needs in future ALMPs.

6.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

Components 23 and 19 of the Spanish RRP are specifically designed to assist vulnerable groups such as young people, women, long-term unemployed, and individuals facing social exclusion, among others. Many of these groups were significantly affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Spanish labour market.

In this context, effective ALMPs must adopt a holistic approach that comprehensively addresses the multidimensional barriers faced by vulnerable groups. These individuals, who are often far from the labour market, present a wide array of challenges encompassing long-term unemployment, low skill levels, limited work experience, health limitations, and care obligations, among others (Fernandez et al., 2018^[23]). Their distance from the labour market necessitates an integrated and holistic approach to meet their complex needs (OECD, 2021^[11]). This approach demands a strategic combination of various services and measures tailored to address the barriers they may face. These services could encompass offering resources and tools for effective job search (such as career advice, resume writing assistance, and interview preparation), upskilling services (e.g. digital skills training), and support services (e.g. childcare, transportation assistance), work experience opportunities, employer incentives, and other tailored interventions. For instance, initiatives like France's "*1 jeune 1 solution*",¹¹ which targets youths in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, demonstrate the efficacy of a comprehensive package of services, integrating employment incentives, training, apprenticeship, and recruitment support (OECD, 2021^[11]).

This holistic approach also implies that ALMPs need to be implemented within a broader, more comprehensive framework, taking into account other ALMPs and PES support available but also the contributions of various institutions providing social, health and education services. Collaboration between different institutions and joint efforts amongst professionals are crucial to reduce costs and prevent service duplication (OECD, 2023^[12]; OECD, 2021^[14]). The synergy between these services can offer a more streamlined and efficient support system. Therefore, effective networking, co-operation, and data exchange are key to avoiding service gaps and overlaps. Effective data exchange systems allow for real-time tracking of a jobseeker's progress, adjustments in service provision based on emerging needs, and a more co-ordinated approach among different service providers. For instance, if a jobseeker is receiving health services alongside employment training, data sharing between these providers can ensure that the training is tailored to accommodate and complement the individual's health requirements. France's "*accompagnement global*" initiative illustrates the success of a collaborative approach. It pairs jobseekers with a PES counsellor and a local social worker, the former addresses labour market obstacles while the latter tackles social challenges. This initiative has shown to significantly increase the likelihood of stable employment, underscoring the importance of co-operative practices (Pôle emploi, 2018^[24]; OECD, 2021^[11]). Further illustrating the effectiveness of integrated support systems, Finland's Ohjaamo's governance model showcases effective collaboration among stakeholders, bringing together professionals from various sectors under one roof to streamline young people's access to services. This co-ordinated approach not only enhances the efficiency of public funds but also provides personalised support to meet the unique needs of each individual (Dromundo, Lüske and Tuccio, 2023^[13]).

Box 6.1. Benchmark for excellence: Integrated and holistic support in ALMPs

A benchmark ALMP with an integrated and holistic approach is characterised by a comprehensive approach that simultaneously addresses multiple employment barriers for vulnerable groups. This approach combines a broad spectrum of services, including personalised career support, skill development opportunities, essential support services (including childcare and transportation), work experience opportunities, incentives to encourage employers to hire and train, and other tailored interventions.

Central to this approach is the collaborative network it establishes, co-ordinating with other service providers from employment, social, health, and educational sectors. This network features seamless communication and joint planning among these providers. It ensures that each jobseeker receives a well-rounded support package tailored to their specific needs, facilitating the integration of services and a co-ordinated response to the needs of jobseekers.

The benchmark ALMP is further characterised by effective data exchange with partner institutions, ensuring real-time tracking of jobseekers' progress and service adaptation to meet evolving needs. This collaboration between different service providers, including both public and private entities, reduces costs and prevents service duplication, contributing to a more effective support system.

6.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

6.2.1. Types of services

Many of the assessed programmes, such as programmes for vulnerable groups, women victims of gender-based violence and women in rural and urban areas, offered **individualised itineraries** that provided a strong foundation for delivering integrated and holistic support. These itineraries were designed to accommodate a wide range of activities, such as guidance and counselling, orientation programmes, job search assistance, training, acquisition of transversal skills, employment insertion and accompaniment, financial support and so on. The specific services varied across programmes, reflecting their distinct objectives, target groups and regional contexts.

Beyond the commonly provided counselling, training and employment services, some programmes extended their support to cover other **essential services**, such as childcare, transportation assistance and financial support to offset other expenses related to participation. These services played a crucial role in reducing the most common barriers to participation. For instance, childcare support enabled parents with caring responsibilities to participate in programmes, while transportation services ensured that individuals in remote areas with limited public transport could access training centres or workplaces.

More rarely, programmes provided **additional specialised services** such as mental health support, legal assistance or socio-sanitary care. These interventions addressed more complex challenges that could hinder participants' ability to fully engage in training and employment.

Some programmes stood out by designing itineraries that **engaged family members**, where necessary, to address potential familial barriers to inclusion. This helped to create a supportive environment for the jobseeker and ensured that the entire household was aligned in supporting the individual's employment goals.

The programmes managed at the national level assessed in this project focussed primarily on the provision of training and skills development. However, some of them **extended their services beyond training to**

address multidimensional needs of participants. For instance, in some cases training was complemented with professional and entrepreneurial support, or personalised support, such as childcare, provision of digital equipment, translation services or transport solutions.

6.2.2. Networks of partners

Networks of partners play a crucial role in ensuring that jobseekers receive a comprehensive package of support tailored to their individual needs, facilitating both the integration and co-ordination of services. The regional-level programmes used a range of approaches in this respect, ranging from utilising well-established collaborative networks to more informal case-by-case solutions to meet emerging needs of participants.

A good practice observed was the establishment of a **strong network of partners as an integral part of the programme**, enabling close collaboration between employment services, social services and third sector entities. In some cases, programmes also used extensive networks of external partners to refer participants to specialised services when needed. These included healthcare, work-life balance support, services for victims of gender-based violence, legal advice, administrative assistance, access to benefits, specialised training, support for homelessness or substance abuse.

Several programmes built on **existing regional agreements and protocols** to provide holistic support for participants. These included pre-established frameworks for co-operation between employment and social services or between different government departments dealing with, for example, employment, education and equal opportunities.

Other programmes relied primarily on the **existing networks of service providers**. Many of the programmes were implemented by experienced service providers who brought with them years of experience of working with specific target groups. They had already established networks of professionals and services that are crucial for the success of their interventions. Their networks often included social, health and housing services, third sector organisations and employers committed to recruiting people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In cases when the number of participants was relatively small, some programmes opted to address multidimensional needs on a **case-by-case basis** rather than through formalised networks. In such cases, collaboration with other services was activated when specific needs arose. Although these arrangements operated outside formal frameworks and could not be scaled up, they enabled tailored interventions for a small group of participants.

Programmes managed at the national level typically did not have formal networks of partners to optimise the delivery of different services as their primary focus was on the provision of training. Instead, these programmes tended to rely on **high-level partnerships** that focussed on disseminating information, raising awareness among stakeholders, co-ordinating monitoring activities or ensuring alignment of programme content with other relevant institutions and policy frameworks.

6.3. Good practices identified

The examples in Box on good practices 10 and Box on good practices 11 illustrate effective approaches to delivering holistic support through collaborative networks that address the multidimensional needs of participants. The national digital literacy programme for women in the agricultural sector, implemented by SEPE, offers a broad range of personalised services in a relatively standardised training setting, responding to the rural and social challenges faced by participants. Programmes in Extremadura and Canarias ensure comprehensive support by establishing strong networks of partners and data-sharing mechanisms. These good practices underscore the importance of integrated and holistic support in creating a streamlined and efficient support system for jobseekers.

Box on good practices 10. Personalised range of services in the programme for digital literacy for women under the plan for the promotion of agricultural employment implemented by SEPE

The programme offers digital training to women living in rural areas who are engaged in seasonal agricultural work. The participants are primarily women over 40 years old, with low to medium levels of education, and a significant proportion of migrant women. What makes this programme stand out is the broad range of personalised services provided to participants. These services not only adapt to the specific training needs of each individual but also address many barriers that might prevent them from fully participating in the programme. This personalised approach helps ensure that participants can complete the training, potentially reducing dropout rates while creating an environment where they can focus on their training, knowing that their other needs are being taken care of.

Training Services

The programme offers free and voluntary training on digital skills, in a training itinerary composed of five modules, each lasting 26 hours. Participants receive a certificate for successful completion of each module if they successfully complete the training and attend at least 75% of the course. The programme design incorporates the expansion of the training itinerary, evolving from two initial modules to five, as the participants' training needs change. This flexibility allows the curriculum to adapt to participants' varying levels of skills and provides opportunities for those with a higher starting level, or those who progress quickly, to deepen their learning.

Addressing Rural and Social Challenges

Recognising the specific challenges faced by participants living in rural and dispersed areas, many of whom also have family responsibilities, the programme offers a range of personalised support services. These services are tailored on a case-by-case basis, as participants' needs are identified. They include:

- **Childcare Support:** When participants struggle to balance training with childcare responsibilities, childcare services are provided to help them attend the training sessions
- **Provision of Equipment:** For participants who lack the necessary technological equipment, the programme offers laptops, iPads, and mobile phones on loan for the duration of the training. This ensures that lack of access to technology is not a barrier to participation.
- **Translation Services:** Given the high proportion of migrant women among the target group, the programme collaborates with associations that work with immigrants to provide translators when participants have limited Spanish language proficiency. This is crucial for ensuring non-Spanish speakers can fully participate in the programme.
- **Transport Solutions:** While the training is designed to be delivered in locations close to the participants' residences, ensuring personal and family life can be reconciled with the participation in the programme, ad hoc transport solutions are arranged when necessary. Training venues are selected to be easily accessible and include municipal halls, church centres, libraries or driving schools, provided they have internet access and meet minimum standards for comfort and learning.

By addressing a broad range of potential barriers – such as childcare, equipment, language, and transportation – the programme ensures that more women are able to participate and stay engaged in the training. This holistic support system reduces the likelihood of dropouts and fosters a learning environment where participants can focus on their training without being hindered by external

challenges. The personalised services ensure that the programme is accessible to a diverse group of women, particularly those with additional vulnerabilities, such as migrants or those with limited resources. The programme contributes to the empowerment of women and the improvement of their self-esteem, autonomy and personal confidence.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 11. Network of partners in the territorial projects for vulnerable groups in Extremadura and Canarias

Information sharing among key actors in Extremadura

Extremadura's programme on vulnerable groups develops individualised and personalised itineraries for people with disabilities, including joint labour and social counselling, actions for acquiring generic and transversal skills, actions for acquiring digital skills, coaching actions to form job search teams, training actions, in-work support, job mentoring, labour insertion, and job prospection.

The programme includes a collaboration network between the Public Employment Service of Extremadura (SEXPE), the private non-profit organisations responsible for implementing the programme (Service providers), and the Municipal Social Services. The collaboration network is used to provide holistic support to participants, addressing all factors that may hinder vulnerable individuals' access to employment by working jointly in the labour, social, and family contexts.

Within this framework, the municipal Basic Social Services and the General Directorate of Social Policy, Childhood, and Family of the Regional Government of Extremadura provide information to the Service providers through direct contact. Additionally, data related to the development of the itineraries is incorporated by the Service providers into the IT application provided by SEXPE, so that it is recorded in each participant's history through the Integrated Public Information System of the Public Employment Services (SISPE) and can be taken into account when developing other actions outside the programme.

This shared information allows for a combined social and labour approach, considering the participant's social perspective and family environment. This vision enables the creation of more tailored and well-informed personalised itineraries.

Network of Social Agents in Canarias

The programme for vulnerable groups in Canarias focusses on areas with high unemployment rates and targets individuals who are unemployed or at risk of social exclusion, particularly those in need of requalification or who have been long-term unemployed. In Tenerife, one of the islands where the programme is implemented, this initiative is strongly supported by the Network of Social Agents (*Red de Agentes Sociales*), composed of various entities that provide additional support to participants.

This network includes professionals not only from the employment sector but also from social services, health services, and other relevant fields, promoting collaborative and interconnected work among these entities. The aim is to ensure comprehensive support for participants in their journey towards employment and professional development. Although this network is not formally financed, its organisation is crucial in offering a holistic approach to supporting participants.

In the context of this programme, the Network of Social Agents plays a pivotal role by focussing on participants' complex needs, addressing any issues that might arise outside the scope of the formal programme itinerary. The network holds bi-monthly meetings involving most of the social entities on the island, ensuring regular communication and co-ordination. Additionally, each area has a designated contact person, and when a specific need arises, the involved agents convene to review the case and facilitate referrals to the necessary services.

This structure enables a multidimensional approach to addressing participants' needs, involving a variety of agents and fostering collaborative synergies between entities. By co-ordinating efforts across different sectors – such as social services, health, and employment – the network helps ensure that participants receive personalised support that goes beyond just employment-related issues, making it more likely that they can overcome the barriers they face. Furthermore, this comprehensive, community-driven approach not only addresses immediate employment needs but also tackles other social and personal challenges that might otherwise impede their ability to succeed in the labour market.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

6.4. Policy directions: Avenues for offering integrated and holistic support in future ALMP

Building on the provisions established under Employment Law 3/2023 and Royal Decree 438/2024 on the Common Portfolio of Services (*Cartera Común de Servicios del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*), ensure that programmes provide a comprehensive package of services tailored to participants' needs and address multiple barriers to employment in a co-ordinated way. In particular, future ALMPs should:

- Incorporate into the overarching programme design provided by SEPE strong foundations for delivering integrated and holistic support, for example, by including as a core service requirement the provision of individualised itineraries. These itineraries are well suited to accommodate a wide range of activities and can be easily adapted as needed to reflect specific programme objectives, target group needs and local circumstances.
- **Ensure that programme support to cover essential services that reduce common barriers to participation** (foreseen under Article 25 of Royal Decree 694/2017), such as childcare, transportation or financial support, is systematically applied across ALMPs, particularly when targeting vulnerable groups. While these supports are legally established, their implementation remains uneven. Applying them more consistently can help improve access for individuals with caring responsibilities or living in remote or underserved areas.
- **Include additional specialised support**, such as mental health services, legal assistance, socio-sanitary care, addiction services, support with housing or administrative procedures, to address barriers faced by participants with complex needs.
- **Address barriers beyond the individual level** by including into personalised itineraries actions involving family members, where deemed necessary and appropriate to create a supportive home environment that reinforces participant's individual employment goals. These services can be provided directly by PES and service providers or in co-operation with social services.
- **Establish strong and formalised networks of partners** as an integral part of the programme, enabling structured collaboration between employment services, social services, the VET system (Organic Law 3/2022), and third sector entities. This can involve developing new co-operation protocols or strengthening existing ones to facilitate referrals and joint service delivery.

- **Where formal networks are not feasible**, address the multidimensional needs of participants through **case-by-case collaboration**, activating partnerships with relevant services when specific needs arise.
- **Develop effective data exchange mechanisms between partners** and/or extend existing IT systems (e.g. SISPE and SEGISS)¹² and platforms with a particular emphasis on ensuring the interoperability and effective deployment of existing digital tools such as the Personalised Employment Record (*Expediente Laboral Personalizado Único*) and the Unique Social Record (*Historia Social Única*). These platforms aim to compile comprehensive individual records across employment services (in the case of the Employment Record) and across social, health, educational and economic dimensions (in the case of the Social Record), supporting more personalised and integrated assistance. They could also reinforce links between the employment training system (Law 30/2015) and VET resources (Law 3/2022). Promoting interoperability and real-time data sharing across these kinds of tools can significantly improve service co-ordination, avoid duplication, and allow support to be better tailored to the evolving needs of participants.

7

Case management and follow-up support

This chapter examines how case management and follow-up support are provided within the assessed ALMPs in Spain. It begins by discussing the role of these services in improving programme outcomes and promoting sustainable employment, and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter assesses the scope and delivery of case management and follow-up support across the programmes and presents good practices based on structured and systematic approaches. The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for effective case management and follow-up support in future ALMPs.

7.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

Effective ALMPs emphasise the importance of both case management during programme participation and follow-up support after their participation in the programme to maximise positive long-term effects (OECD, 2023^[12]; OECD, 2021^[14]). These services are important for vulnerable groups to reduce the number of dropouts during the programme participation and to ensure stable labour market attachment afterwards.

Case management provides participants with dedicated counsellors (or mentors) who can offer them support and guidance during regular counselling sessions. During these sessions participants discuss their progress, satisfaction with the services and the challenges that they encounter. This provides an opportunity to identify potential problems early on and to offer personalised support to cope with these problems. The frequency of the meetings varies according to the profile of a jobseeker. Vulnerable groups at high risk of dropping out may require frequent face-to-face sessions, whereas less frequent (online) meetings might be sufficient for those with stronger motivation and attachment to employment. Other ways to keep in touch with participants include phone calls, emails, text messages, chats, satisfaction surveys, etc. Individual Action Plans (IAPs) play a pivotal role in this phase, being tailored to each jobseeker's unique circumstances and needs, and setting clear mutual obligations for both the jobseeker and the counsellor.

Follow-up support, or post-placement support, is crucial to ensure sustainable integration into the labour market, especially for vulnerable groups (OECD, 2021^[11]). This includes continued work-focussed counselling during the initial months of employment, maintaining contact with both the new employee and the employer, and co-ordinating with other service providers to address evolving needs, such as continuous training, access to childcare, mobility assistance, or support in prolonging employment contracts. Without systematic follow-up support, groups at risk may return to unemployment within a short period of time due to various barriers that they face. Positive effects of in-work follow-up support to ensure sustainable integration have been observed e.g. in Germany (Staible, 2017^[25]), France and Denmark (Scharle, Weber and Puchwein Roberts, 2014^[26]). Since the beginning of 2021, Estonia has introduced systematic follow-up support to groups at risk of a rapid return to unemployment due to health limitations, lack of work experience, previous long-term unemployment or other employment obstacles (Sotsiaalministeerium, 2020^[27]).

Box 7.1. Benchmark for excellence: Case management and follow-up support

A benchmark ALMP incorporates both case management during programme participation and follow-up support after programme completion to ensure its long-term effects. Such support is especially important and beneficial for vulnerable groups and participants at high risk of dropping out from the programme or at high risk of returning to unemployment shortly after a job has been found.

Case management involves assigning dedicated mentors or counsellors to accompany participants during the programme, discuss their progress and identify challenges early on to offer individualised support and solutions. The frequency and nature of these interactions (e.g. whether to offer face-to-face meetings, online sessions, phone calls, emails, etc.) vary based on the participant's profile. A key element is the use of tailored Individual Action Plans (IAPs), which establish clear mutual obligations for both the jobseeker and counsellor.

In addition, the benchmark ALMP provides follow-up support after participants have entered the labour market. This includes continued counselling during the initial months of employment, maintaining contact with both the new employee and the employer, and co-ordinating with other service providers to address evolving needs, such as continuous training, access to childcare, mobility assistance, or support in prolonging employment contracts. It helps retaining vulnerable groups in employment and prevents their return to unemployment after a short period of time.

7.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

The assessment found that most programmes included some form of case management and follow-up support, although the specific approaches varied depending on the programme's focus and the target group. Programmes targeting vulnerable groups, women victims of gender-based violence, and women in rural and urban areas usually included strong case management and follow-up as this was particularly important to ensure programme effectiveness and to help these participants stay engaged and successfully transition into stable employment. Programmes that focussed primarily on training often faced greater challenges in providing case management and post-programme support as their resources were typically directed towards skills development rather than counselling.

7.2.1. Case management

Many of the assessed programmes offered case management as a core component, **providing tailored, individualised support** by assigning a dedicated counsellor to each participant. The scope and delivery of case management varied across programmes. The most effective approaches were those that incorporated structured, personalised action plans and individual itineraries with clearly defined mutual obligations for both programme participants and their counsellors, serving as a guiding framework for individualised support.

Most programmes **adapted** their communication methods, frequency of sessions and content to meet participants' needs, ensure engagement and reduce the risk of dropout. This flexibility made support more accessible and relevant to individual circumstances. Many programmes allowed participants to choose between face-to-face and online sessions, accommodating those with transport difficulties or caring responsibilities. For individuals without access to digital tools, telephone-based communication was also often available. Some programmes implemented intensive case management for particularly vulnerable groups, offering frequent two-way communication to facilitate early detection of needs and timely intervention. In these cases, participants received individual tutoring sessions with almost daily contact via email, telephone or WhatsApp to ensure continuous support and responsiveness.

Some programmes set **minimum requirements** for case management, such as minimum number of hours or frequency of meetings, to ensure consistent and adequate support. These measures helped to guarantee that all participants received a baseline level of assistance, preventing disparities in support and reinforcing a structured approach to guidance.

Involving **multidisciplinary teams** further strengthened case management. In many programmes, the teams included employment counsellors and social workers to address diverse barriers to employment and provide expertise beyond traditional job search assistance. Selected programmes took a more comprehensive approach and assigned each participant a dedicated counsellor supported by a larger multidisciplinary team of professionals from a range of fields, including psychology, education, legal services, social work, job prospecting, training and entrepreneurship. This approach effectively combined the advantages of building a trusting relationship with a single contact person and access to specialist expertise when needed, increasing the overall effectiveness of case management. This approach was particularly beneficial for vulnerable groups who often faced complex, multidimensional challenges.

7.2.2. Follow-up support

Some programmes integrated **follow-up support as a core component**, ensuring systematic and scheduled contacts between the service provider and the participant. This was often the case in programmes targeting women victims of gender-based violence, where a commitment to hiring and insertion of women into work was part of the programme's components. The follow-up typically involved regular check-ins through various means, such as telephone, email, face-to-face meetings, company visits

or videoconferencing to ensure a smooth transition into employment and facilitate adaptation to work environment. Alternatively, when follow-up was not an integral part of the programme, participants were sometimes **referred back to the PES** after the end of the programme to provide continued support beyond the programme period. In these cases, ensuring that both PES staff and service providers had access to a common platform that contains participant information proved valuable.

In some cases, follow-up support included tailored **actions adapted to the participant's employment status**. For those who had not yet found a job, individual career counselling sessions were provided, focussing on strengthening job search skills, updating CVs, providing career advice, identifying job opportunities, submitting applications and preparing for interviews. For those who had secured employment, ongoing support was provided on job-related tasks and functions, work organisation, communicating with employers, navigating employee portals, and understanding employee rights and responsibilities.

In addition to following up with participants, some programmes also established **follow-up contacts with employers** to understand and address the challenges they faced in integrating new employees into the workplace and to provide guidance on adapting the work environment. This approach was particularly useful when mediation was required as it helped participants and employers to find common ground when difficulties, conflicts or misunderstandings arose in the workplace.

Some programmes set **minimum requirements** for follow-up support, such as the number and frequency of contacts. For example, a good practice was to establish a structured system (e.g. a dedicated document) with a timeline of minimum contact points to record all follow-up activities conducted by the service provider with both the participant and the employer. This included recording information such as means of contact, duration, the participant's work situation, well-being and proposed actions for ongoing support. This approach ensured a consistent standard of follow-up support for all participants and facilitated systematic monitoring of outcomes.

7.3. Good practices identified

The programmes presented in Box on good practices 12 and Box on good practices 13 illustrate structured and systematic approaches to the provision of case management and follow-up support. The programme for vulnerable groups in Asturias offers intensive case management, delivered by two professionals specialising in social and employment interventions, and provides follow-up support adapted to participants' employment status. The programme for women victims of gender-based violence in Madrid demonstrates the use of a dedicated follow-up document that establishes a clear framework and minimum standards for monitoring and supporting participants' labour market integration. Both examples highlight the value of case management and follow-up support in improving programme outcomes and supporting job retention.

Box on good practices 12. Case management and follow-up support for vulnerable groups in Asturias

The programme for vulnerable groups in Asturias provides a systematic framework for case management, offering comprehensive support both during participants' personalised employment pathways and after they have secured a job. This approach ensures intensive case management tailored to individual needs, while also supporting participants to remain in the labour market.

Case Management

Participants are assigned mentors according to the programme's technical guidelines. The mentors consist of two specialised professionals: one focussing on social intervention to provide ongoing support to participants, and another specialising in employment intervention, responsible for engaging with companies and facilitating job placements.

Throughout the personalised employment pathways, the programme ensures comprehensive support through two main components:

- **Individual tutoring and follow-up:** Weekly individual sessions are held to provide guidance and monitor progress. Flexibility is built into the frequency of these sessions to adapt the pace of the programme to the participant's needs, while ensuring a minimum number of sessions during the first two months. This approach strikes a balance between tailoring the programme to individual needs and ensuring all participants receive consistent levels of support.
- **Group workshops:** These sessions focus on personal recovery and the development of personal, social, communication, and professional skills essential for employment. At least two group sessions are held weekly, depending on the phase of the participant's employment pathway.

During the specific training phase, additional follow-up is conducted through weekly contacts with training centres. This close monitoring ensures consistent oversight of attendance, progress, challenges, and the needs of the participants.

Follow-Up Support

The follow-up support actions take place after the completion of the personalised employment pathways and are adapted to the participant's employment status:

- **For those who have not yet found employment:** Individualised career counselling sessions are offered, focussing on strengthening job-search skills, updating CVs, providing career advice, analysing job opportunities, sending applications, preparing for job interviews, and more
- **For those who have secured employment:** Ongoing follow-up and support are provided at the workplace, addressing job-related tasks and functions, work organisation, communication with employers, navigating employee portals, and informing participants about their rights and obligations as workers
- **Intermediation with employers:** The programme maintains regular communication (biweekly or monthly) with the employers to ensure that participants are adapting well to their new roles. Support is provided to resolve any issues related to tasks, company protocols, and workplace communication. This proactive approach also helps prevent potential conflicts and ensures smoother integration into the workplace.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 13. Follow-up framework for women victims of gender-based violence in Madrid

The Madrid programme for women victims of sexual and gender-based violence includes a continuous, adaptive follow-up support framework tailored to the circumstances of each participant. This framework ensures a structured timeline for minimum contact points and uses a Follow-Up Document to keep a record of interactions and provide structure to the follow-up process.

Once participants are employed, continuous support and follow-up are provided to facilitate employment retention. The programme includes a document called the “Accredited Document of Follow-Up for Employment Integration” (*Documento Acreditativo de Acompañamiento a la Inserción*), which records the follow-up activities conducted by the service providers with both the participant and the employer, particularly when job placement was secured through mediation or a commitment by the employer. Follow-up is scheduled at one month, three months, and six months after employment. This document includes:

- Records of all calls made.
- Updates on the participant's well-being and work situation.
- Duration of the follow-up.
- Proposed actions for ongoing support.

The primary means of communication for follow-ups are phone calls and emails, given that participants may have limited availability while working.

In addition to these scheduled follow-ups, additional follow-ups are conducted as needed, both with participants and employers. If challenges arise during the integration process, corrective measures are implemented to help ensure the participant remains in employment. These measures can include providing the participant with information, psychological support, and guidance, as well as helping them develop workplace skills.

This framework guarantees a minimum standard of follow-up for all participants, ensuring that everyone has access to this service. The Follow-Up Document provides structure and clear minimum criteria, resulting in a comprehensive approach to monitoring and supporting participants. Moreover, maintaining regular contact with both the participant and the employer helps to resolve potential conflicts and address emerging needs, further promoting long-term employment retention.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

7.4. Policy directions: Avenues for effective case management and follow-up support in future ALMP

To maximise the benefits of programme participation, reduce dropout rates and support sustainable integration into the labour market, future ALMPs should build on the provisions established under Employment Law 3/2023 and Royal Decree 438/2024 on the Common Portfolio of Services (*Cartera Común de Servicios del Sistema Nacional de Empleo*).

7.4.1. Integrate case management as a core programme component

- Assign a dedicated counsellor or mentor to each participant to provide tailored support through regular counselling sessions, with the frequency and mode of interaction adapted to individual needs. This requires ensuring sufficient human resources and maintaining manageable caseloads so that counsellors can deliver personalised guidance effectively.
- Use personalised action plans or individual itineraries to establish clear mutual commitments between programme participants and counsellors, building on the existing Activity Agreement ([Acuerdo de Actividad](#)) as the formal framework to define rights and obligations, ensuring structured guidance and accountability.
- Define minimum standards for case management within each programme, such as mandatory hours and frequency of meetings, to ensure consistent and adequate support for all participants.
- Involve multidisciplinary teams early in the case management process, for jobseekers facing multiple barriers to employment, to support the dedicated counsellor in providing comprehensive and specialised support. These teams may include professionals from psychology, education, legal services, social work, job prospecting, training and entrepreneurship, to jointly assess individual situations and design support plans that address multidimensional needs and complex barriers to employment.

7.4.2. Ensure robust follow-up support after programme completion

- Implement systematic follow-up mechanisms of at least six months to maintain regular contact with participants after the end of the programme, to ensure a smooth transition into employment and to support job retention.
- Establish minimum standards for follow-up support within each programme, including a defined frequency and number of post-programme meetings, to ensure consistency across participants and to enable effective monitoring of outcomes.
- Establish follow-up with employers to proactively address work-related challenges and provide mediation for conflict resolution, thereby supporting successful integration and job stability.
- Provide continued access to key support services in line with Article 25 of Royal Decree 694/2017, such as counselling, additional training, childcare support or transport assistance, during the follow-up period, to address emerging needs and strengthen employment sustainability.

8

Partnerships with employers

This chapter examines how selected ALMPs in Spain established and maintained partnerships with employers to support participants' integration into the labour market. It begins by outlining the rationale for assessing employer engagement and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter analyses the different approaches taken across the programmes assessed in terms of outreach strategies, efforts to align programmes with employer needs, promotion of inclusive hiring practices, and the direct involvement of employers in programme activities. It highlights good practices identified during the assessment and concludes with recommendations to strengthen employer collaboration in future ALMPs.

8.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

The primary objective of ALMPs is to connect its participants with suitable employment opportunities. For this purpose, ALMP participants' profiles and skills need to align with the needs of employers. Therefore, establishing robust links and partnerships with employers is crucial to increase the reach, relevance and effectiveness of ALMPs.

A crucial initial step involves raising awareness among employers about the existence of the programme. This includes proactive outreach and communication strategies to inform potential employers about the programme and its participants. Awareness-raising activities can include marketing campaigns, presentations at industry events, and engagement through professional networks. The goal is to understand employers' needs and position ALMP participants as valuable potential employees who can meet these needs. Providing information to employers about the programme and establishing a relationship of trust and mutual understanding can boost employer engagement and lead to job opportunities for participants.

Once awareness and engagement among employers is established, the next step to maximise the effectiveness of an ALMP is to understand and adapt to employers' needs. Partnerships with employers enable a more comprehensive view of the job market and better identification of the specific skill sets and qualifications that employers are seeking. By aligning the upskilling and reskilling components of ALMPs with these needs, the programmes can significantly enhance the employability of participants. Tailoring programmes in this manner also demonstrates to employers a commitment to meeting their requirements, fostering a more productive partnership.

Partnerships with employers also involve improving their understanding of the unique needs and potential of programme participants. This includes educating employers about the diverse backgrounds, challenges, and strengths of participants, which might require tailored approaches in the workplace. By facilitating this understanding, ALMPs can help create more inclusive work environments and encourage employers to adopt flexible practices that accommodate diverse employee profiles. This mutual adaptation benefits participants in securing and sustaining employment and equips employers with a broader perspective on workforce diversity and its advantages (OECD, 2022^[28]).¹³

An exemplary practice in this context is "job carving," a method that rearranges tasks to create tailored employment opportunities, particularly for individuals with constraints in fulfilling certain tasks (Geyer, Scoppetta and Davern, 2019^[29]). A notable instance of successful job carving is found in Malta, where The Lino Spiteri Foundation (LSF)¹⁴ implements job-carving for people with disabilities. The Foundation operates both bottom-up, starting from the jobseeker's capabilities, and top-down, from the employer's perspective, to create or adapt roles. This approach has led to the creation of specialised roles, such as administrative assistants in accounting firms, specifically designed for people with disabilities. This method not only fosters inclusivity but also meets practical business needs, demonstrating the mutual benefits of adaptive employment strategies in ALMPs.

Integrating activities that directly involve employers within ALMPs emerges as a key strategic approach (OECD, 2022^[30]). Firstly, it equips participants with practical skills and experience in interacting with potential employers, such as through mock interviews or workplace simulations. This direct exposure to real-world employment scenarios is invaluable in preparing them for the labour market. Secondly, involving employers in the programme, for instance, through site visits or participatory workshops, allows them to gain a deeper understanding of the programme's functioning and its target population. Such engagement not only enlightens employers about the capabilities of the participants but also fosters a sense of investment and partnership in the development of a skilled workforce.

An illustrative example is Spain's "Launching Pads for Employment and Entrepreneurship"¹⁵ programme (Dromundo, Lüske and Tuccio, 2023^[13]). A key characteristic of this ALMP is forging strong connections

with companies and entrepreneurs to address the challenges of hiring vulnerable groups. Employability maps are created, enabling participants to actively engage with employers, understand their needs and available vacancies, and thereby proactively position themselves in the labour market. The Launching Pads further enhance this interaction through various activities: workshops where companies visit the Launching Pads to discuss their needs and familiarise themselves with the programme and its participants; networking events with professionals, entrepreneurs, and experts; and employment forums. These initiatives not only provide participants with valuable opportunities to create their own professional networks but also enable employers to understand the unique potentials of these individuals, thereby fostering a mutually beneficial environment for both job seekers and employers.

Box 8.1. Benchmark for excellence: Partnership with employers

A benchmark ALMP can be distinguished by its effective partnerships with employers, crucial for aligning participant skills with labour market demand. Its key features include:

- Strategic outreach and communication to raise awareness among employers about the programme, effectively positioning participants as valuable assets to the labour market.
- The programme adapts to the evolving demands of employers, ensuring that upskilling and/or reskilling components of ALMPs are relevant and in-demand, thereby enhancing the employability of participants while meeting employer needs.
- The programme builds understanding among employers about the diverse backgrounds and unique challenges of participants, advocating for tailored workplace strategies that accommodate and leverage these differences for mutual benefit.
- The programme incorporates activities that directly involve employers, such as site visits, interactive workshops and real-world employment simulations (including mock interviews and workplace scenarios). These initiatives not only prepare participants for real-world employment scenarios but also foster employer engagement deepening their understanding of the programme's goals and participant capabilities and encouraging investment in developing a skilled workforce.

8.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

8.2.1. Outreach and communication strategies

Employer outreach and communication efforts were implemented in most programmes, though their intensity and scope varied. Many programmes relied on **employer prospecting visits**, during which staff engaged with businesses to introduce the programme, discuss hiring needs, and highlight participant profiles. In some cases, these efforts were complemented by **broader outreach campaigns**, including business seminars and networking events to promote recruitment.

A particularly effective approach was observed in programmes where outreach strategies were **tailored to specific employer concerns and hiring motivations**. In some instances, outreach materials such as infographics, success stories, and targeted communication materials helped illustrate the value of hiring programme participants. **Professional social networks**, such as LinkedIn, were also leveraged in some cases to reach businesses more effectively.

8.2.2. Aligning with employer needs

Employer engagement in ALMPs is most effective when it is structured around labour market analysis and employer prospecting, allowing programmes to align their services with employer needs. Many programmes **collected data and conducted comprehensive labour market studies**, analysing statistical data, sectoral reports, and employer surveys to ensure that training and itineraries respond to real hiring needs. In certain cases, these efforts have led to structural changes, such as the introduction of new training specialties to address identified skill shortages.

Beyond analysing labour market trends, some programmes conducted **direct employer prospecting, where dedicated staff engaged employers** to map hiring opportunities and gather information on workforce needs. Prospecting was most effective when integrated early, allowing training components to be adjusted based on employer input. Delayed employer engagement may reduce job placement success, as participants' skills may not align with current hiring needs. Some programmes also used employer prospecting to secure **hiring commitments**, where businesses agree in advance to recruit participants. While such commitments can smooth transitions into employment, they can be difficult to secure as businesses may be reluctant to commit due to uncertain hiring needs or legal concerns. Nevertheless, in programmes that actively maintain employer relationships throughout programme delivery, hiring commitments are more easily upheld as employers feel engaged in the broader process.

Some programmes took employer engagement a step further by integrating them into programme design and delivery. **Employers were not only consulted but also actively co-designed** training content, ensuring that the skills taught align with evolving market needs. Other programmes **involved employers in training** implementation itself, allowing participants to learn directly in workplace settings.

8.2.3. Promoting employer inclusive practices

Some programmes actively promoted more **inclusive hiring practices**. A key approach observed was embedding employer outreach within corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, encouraging businesses to engage based on shared social commitments.

Programmes also addressed preconceived biases and concerns employers may have about hiring from disadvantaged groups. **Awareness-raising efforts** highlighted participants' resilience, adaptability, and diverse professional profiles, shifting the focus from perceived barriers to the value these workers can bring to businesses. In some cases, direct engagement with employers helped dispel misconceptions about specific target groups, such as women victims of gender violence or individuals with disabilities, increasing their likelihood of recruitment.

To further encourage inclusive hiring, some programmes **informed employers about financial incentives**, such as subsidies, tax incentives, or social security reductions available for businesses hiring specific vulnerable groups. Moreover, some programmes prioritised **engaging employers already committed to inclusive hiring**. Instead of broad, untargeted outreach, these programmes focussed on businesses with diversity policies, work-life balance measures, or prior experience hiring vulnerable groups, increasing the chances of sustainable employer partnerships.

8.2.4. Direct employer involvement in programme activities

Employer participation in ALMP activities was found to be highly beneficial, particularly when companies were engaged beyond traditional job-matching efforts.

Some programmes fostered **direct interactions between employers and participants** through company visits, job fairs, and networking events, where job seekers gain first-hand exposure to hiring processes, workplace expectations, and sector-specific requirements. Speed-dating-style recruitment sessions were

also used in some programmes, allowing employers to conduct on-the-spot candidate assessments while enabling participants to showcase their skills.

Beyond recruitment events, some employers contributed to career preparation and professional development by delivering **sector-specific training workshops**, where they offered practical insights into hiring expectations, technical skills, and soft skills that are particularly valued in their industries. Some employers also **engaged corporate volunteers and mentor participants, provide interview coaching, and offer job search support**, helping job seekers refine their applications and improve their employability. Additionally, some employers participated in **social and well-being support activities**, helping participants build confidence, resilience, and workplace readiness – particularly relevant for vulnerable job seekers who may face additional barriers to employment.

Some programmes went further by **involving employers directly in training delivery**, ensuring that skill development aligns closely with industry needs. In certain cases, businesses provided on-the-job training opportunities, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience in real workplace settings.

However, direct employer involvement was not always feasible. In some programmes, particularly those serving vulnerable populations such as victims of gender-based violence, privacy concerns had to be carefully balanced with employer engagement efforts. In these cases, employer interactions were **designed to be voluntary**, ensuring that participants could choose whether to take part in activities that involved direct exposure to potential employers.

8.3. Good practices identified

The following two examples, identified during the assessment exercise and presented in Box on good practices 14 and Box on good practices 15, showcase effective approaches to engaging employers throughout the design and delivery of ALMPs. The first example, from La Rioja, illustrates how a partnership between an NGO and a technology company enabled tailored training and direct pathways to employment in the IT sector. The second example highlights how the Red Cross in Cataluña and Madrid builds inclusive and sustained collaboration with employers to support the labour market integration of women victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking. These cases reflect different but complementary strategies for strengthening employer involvement and improving employment outcomes.

Box on good practices 14. Partnership with employers in the programme “Opening the Doors to the IT World” in La Rioja

The “Opening the Doors to the IT World” programme in La Rioja exemplifies an innovative approach to building effective employer partnerships in ALMPs. By integrating employers as service providers and thus into the programme’s design and implementation, and focussing on practical, market-driven training models, the programme not only enhances participant employability but also meets the evolving needs of the labour market.

Strategic employer involvement from the start

Employer involvement is integral from the outset, influencing both the design and the selection of service providers. La Rioja incorporates employer involvement as a key criterion for selecting service providers. The programme is specifically designed to enhance the employability of vulnerable groups but also to address local hiring challenges. This dual-focussed approach led to the selection of a collaborative partnership between the NGO YMCA, renowned for its support to vulnerable groups, and NEXGEN S.L., a pioneering technology company, to implement the programme. This strategic choice

ensures that the programme not only fosters participant development but also meets the specific staffing needs of employers.

Direct involvement of employers in the design and implementation of the programme

One of the most innovative aspects of this project is the direct involvement of employers like NEXGEN, which acts both as an employer and a service provider. This engagement ensures that the training is directly relevant and responsive to market needs. Furthermore, NEXGEN commits to providing internships and potential employment opportunities, creating a seamless transition from training to employment for participants.

Training methodology: practical, innovative, and responsive

The programme is designed in a “boot camp” style and is based on a “learning by doing” methodology. This practical approach ensures that the training is not only theoretical but also applies newly obtained knowledge in real-world settings, closely mirroring actual work environments. The methodology also seeks to enhance group dynamics and prepares participants for team-based and goal-oriented work settings. The programme is dynamically designed to adapt to the evolving needs of the technology sector, ensuring that participants gain skills in high-demand areas. By designing and implementing training that directly addresses the requirements of employers in the IT sector, the programme bridges the gap between training and actual job requirements.

Awareness raising and mutual benefit

By being intricately involved in the programme, NEXGEN S.L. gains a deep understanding of the unique challenges and strengths of vulnerable groups. This involvement not only raises awareness about the potential of these individuals but also demonstrates how, through targeted training and support, participants can successfully secure positions in the competitive and skilled IT sector – a field typically unexpected for such groups.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 15. Effective collaboration with employers for programmes targeting women victims of gender violence and human trafficking in Cataluña and Madrid

Employer outreach, communication, and inclusivity efforts

In both Cataluña and Madrid, the Red Cross implements strategies to reach out to employers about the programme and its participants. It organises meetings with target companies offering positions compatible with participants' profiles. These meetings aim to inform employers about the programme's objectives, characteristics, and the profiles of the participants. By engaging with employers, their human resources or corporate social responsibility departments, they explore various avenues of collaboration and involvement in different phases of the programme.

Both programmes also raise awareness among employers about the diverse backgrounds and specific challenges of participants. Companies are informed about participants' skills, circumstances, and needs, including work-life balance. This helps employers appreciate the value of a diverse workforce.

In Cataluña, this outreach is complemented through the development of communication materials that highlight success stories and the mutual benefits of hiring participants. Practical workshops and roundtables on relevant industry topics further support knowledge exchange and build stronger connections with employers.

In Madrid, a dedicated business collaboration team of ten people disseminates information to both established and new companies, with one staff member focussing solely on prospecting for the programme for victims of violence. Madrid's Red Cross also participates in the Women's Institute's initiative "Companies for a Society Free of Gender Violence", which engages 86 companies in promoting the social and labour integration of women victims of violence. These initiatives, alongside efforts to identify companies with equality plans, enhance collaboration opportunities.

Adapting to labour market needs

In both regions, the Red Cross adapts its programmes to meet the changing needs of the labour market by conducting ongoing labour market analysis. Dedicated prospecting teams in both Cataluña and Madrid actively gather insights directly from employers, assess sector-specific trends, and identify emerging employment opportunities and required skills. This information informs the design of training itineraries to ensure that participants are equipped with relevant competencies that match the demands of local employers. The result in both regions is a highly responsive programme that adapts itineraries to match current labour market demands.

Fostering employer engagement

Both programmes create direct opportunities for employers to engage with participants. These interactions include workshops, speed-dating sessions, and company visits, allowing employers to interact with participants in meaningful ways. Such activities ensure that employers are actively involved in the programme and support participants' transition into the labour market.

In Cataluña, many corporate social responsibility actions, such as lectures, training, and speed dating, involve employers voluntarily coaching participants. These employers do not necessarily recruit participants later; instead, they provide valuable feedback, talks, and technical-professional monographs to help participants align with current labour market needs. Additionally, hiring companies either visit the programme's facilities or welcome participating women to their premises for recruitment activities like speed dating, where companies lead the selection process in situ.

In Madrid, companies are involved in a variety of activities designed to support participants' personal and professional development. They organise sessions to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being, helping participating women to manage emotions and build resilience. Additionally, companies offer workshops on personal branding and job search strategies, where participants learn to project their strengths and prepare for interviews. Work placements are also provided, allowing participating women to gain practical experience in job-specific roles. The annual Employment Fair in Madrid further facilitates interactions, offering participants the chance to meet employers, explore job offers, and participate in on-the-spot interviews.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

8.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening partnerships with employers in future ALMPs

8.4.1. Establish employer partnerships as a core component of ALMPs

Employer engagement was often left to the discretion of service providers or implementing entities, leading to variability in employer involvement across programmes. To ensure stronger and more consistent partnerships between employers and those delivering ALMPs (including PES and service providers), future ALMP should:

- Define clear employer engagement requirements in programme regulations and guidelines. This could include requiring dedicated employer prospecting activities (to identify, engage and build relationships with potential employers), formal employer consultation processes, employer-led programme activities, or co-designed training components.
- Encourage long-term partnerships rather than ad hoc employer involvement, by promoting continuous collaboration between ALMP delivery actors and business networks, chambers of commerce, and sectoral employer associations.
- Integrate employer engagement indicators into programme monitoring and evaluation frameworks, to track participation levels, hiring outcomes and employer satisfaction.

8.4.2. Strengthen labour market analysis and employer prospecting

Labour market analysis and employer prospecting are key to ensuring that training pathways align with demand, yet they were not systematically integrated into all programmes. Future ALMPs should:

- Expand the use of real-time labour market data by systematically leveraging job vacancy data analysis, employer surveys, and sectoral studies to anticipate skill needs, building on existing efforts such as the Occupations Observatory ([Observatorio de las Ocupaciones](#)) of SEPE and comparable initiatives co-ordinated by regional public employment services.
- Ensure that labour market analysis and employer prospecting occur at the early stages of programme design, allowing programme content to be adjusted to actual and local labour market needs.
- Encourage structured employer prospecting efforts, if resources allow, with dedicated staff responsible for engaging with employers, mapping hiring needs, and securing employer commitments. These efforts could build on the employer support services already regulated under Royal Decree 438/2024, including job vacancy management, recruitment advice, and offer promotion through channels such as the EURES network.

8.4.3. Integrate employers into programme design and delivery

Strong partnerships, where employers actively contribute to programme design and delivery, increase the chances that participants develop the right skills and are well-prepared for job opportunities. Future ALMPs should:

- Systematically involve employers in shaping programme content, in particular upskilling and reskilling components, to ensure that qualifications and skills developed match hiring requirements and reflect demand needs.
- Encourage structured employer-led activities, including recruitment-oriented interactions-such as job fairs, company visits, and interview simulations- to familiarise participants with hiring expectations and sectoral demands, as well as career preparation and professional development

activities- such as technical workshops, industry-specific certifications, and sector-based mentoring- to strengthen employability and job search skills.

- Expand employer-led training initiatives, such as on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and internships, to enhance participants' real-world experience and job readiness.
- Promote models where employers act as both training providers and hiring entities, particularly in high-demand sectors where workforce shortages exist.

8.4.4. Foster more inclusive hiring practices

To improve labour market access for disadvantaged groups, ALMPs should go beyond job-matching and actively promote inclusive hiring practices among employers. Future ALMPs should:

- Replicate successful employer engagement practices, such as raising awareness of workforce diversity benefits, leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, informing businesses about financial incentives (e.g. tax benefits and social security reductions), and prioritising engagement with companies already implementing diversity and work-life balance policies.
- Go beyond current practices by introducing approaches not observed in the assessed programmes, such as job carving, where roles are adapted to match the capabilities of job seekers while meeting business needs. Successfully implemented in other contexts, this method could create new employment opportunities for individuals facing specific constraints, such as a cognitive and/or physical disability, and foster more adaptive workforce solutions.

8.4.5. Ensure employer engagement is tailored to different target groups

Employer engagement strategies should be adapted to the needs of different participant groups to ensure meaningful involvement and avoid creating unintended barriers to participation. For vulnerable groups, such as victims of gender-based violence, employer-led activities should be voluntary, allowing participants to opt in based on their comfort level.

9

Monitoring and evaluation

This chapter examines how selected ALMPs in Spain integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks. It begins by outlining the rationale for assessing M&E systems and presents the benchmark used for the qualitative assessment. The chapter analyses the extent to which programmes established mechanisms to monitor participation and outcomes, used feedback to improve delivery, evaluated their impact on participants, and promoted transparency and accountability. It highlights good practices identified during the assessment and concludes with recommendations to strengthen M&E frameworks in future ALMPs.

9.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

Public policies, including ALMPs, must be introduced in a setting where transparency and accountability are promoted, and effectiveness and efficiency are analysed. This is where monitoring and evaluation play a crucial role. Monitoring and evaluation not only provide the objective evidence necessary for policymakers to adapt or terminate inefficient policies and promote policies that meet the changing labour market needs effectively and efficiently, but also ensures that public money is spent on policies that produce the desired outcomes. The results generated from monitoring and evaluation enable to establish a process of continuous feedback for ongoing improvement of ALMPs based on the evidence generated (OECD, 2022^[31]; OECD, 2022^[30]; OECD, 2023^[32]).¹⁶

Monitoring and evaluation, though distinct in function, are complementary in their purpose to generate the evidence necessary to assess the success of a programme. Monitoring is an ongoing process of gathering and analysing information about a programme to ensure that it is progressing as planned, that activities have been implemented and deadlines are being respected, that participants and staff are satisfied and that objectives are being met. Such monitoring makes it easier to identify different kind of issues with the design, implementation, and results of ALMPs and enables quick reactions and the provision of appropriate solutions.

In tandem with monitoring, evaluation activities focus on determining how effectively the programme has been implemented, whether it meets its objectives, whether there are causal links between the programme and its results, and if its benefits outweigh its costs (OECD, 2020^[33]; OECD, 2020^[34]). They serve as a systematic review of an ongoing or completed programme, encompassing its design, execution, and outcomes (OECD, 2022^[35]). Evaluation demands a higher investment of time and resources compared to conventional monitoring indicators but is nonetheless critical to ensure programme's effectiveness.

Although numerous evaluation types exist and they can be classified in multiple ways, one proposed categorisation is as follows (OECD, 2023^[17]; OECD, 2020^[33]):

- Formative evaluations: Ex-ante assessment whether a programme or intervention is feasible, appropriate, and acceptable before it is fully implemented. Mostly appropriate to assess the evaluation criteria “Relevance”.
- Process evaluation: Determines whether programme activities have been implemented as intended. Conducted to assess the “Coherence” criteria. As part of this evaluation, user experiences could be incorporated to better understand the effectiveness of programme implementation from the perspective of those directly involved.
- (Intermediate) outcome evaluation: Measures intermediate programme effects in the target population by assessing the progress in the outcomes or outcome objectives that the programme is to achieve.
- Impact evaluation: Assesses programme effectiveness in achieving its ultimate goals.
- Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit evaluation: Examines the programme's outcomes (cost-effectiveness) or impacts (cost-benefit) in relation to the costs of implementing the programme and, if possible, the opportunity costs for beneficiaries (e.g. foregone earnings) as well as indirect costs on non-beneficiaries (e.g. negative externalities).

These diverse types of evaluations are integral to a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for ALMPs. Crucially, the insights derived from these monitoring and evaluation processes directly inform and refine programme design and implementation (see Chapter 2).

Box 9.1. Benchmark for excellence: Monitoring and evaluation of ALMPs

The benchmark ALMP is distinguished by its comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, designed to ensure continuous improvement and accountability. This framework includes:

- **Systematic monitoring:** The programme incorporates a systematic process for ongoing data collection and analysis. Monitoring includes tracking participant progress, employment rates, skills acquisition, and other relevant indicators. The aim is to establish a feedback loop, facilitating real-time adjustments to the programme to maintain alignment with strategic goals and evolving labour market demands.
- **Evaluation:** Evaluation in the benchmark ALMP goes beyond traditional monitoring measures. This involves assessing (internally or in collaboration with independent experts) the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its objectives and its broader impact, using methodologies such as counterfactual impact evaluations. The focus is on measuring the (causal) impact of the programme on outcomes such as employment, job quality, its cost-effectiveness, as well as understanding the broader economic and social benefits of the programme.
- **Stakeholder feedback integration:** The programme actively seeks and incorporates feedback from key stakeholders, including participants and employers. Methods like surveys, interviews, and focus groups are used to gather this feedback, ensuring that the programme remains responsive, and participant focussed.
- **Transparency and responsive adjustments:** The programme emphasises transparency in its reporting processes and implements accountability measures. This includes publicly sharing findings, undergoing independent reviews, and making adjustments to the programme based on monitoring and evaluation results.

9.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

9.2.1. Systematic monitoring

All assessed programmes were subject to **the monitoring framework established under the RRP**, which mandates the collection of common indicators to track participant progress. Implementing authorities submit bimonthly reports detailing programme implementation, participant characteristics, and service provision. The data collected typically included **detailed tracking of all services and actions undertaken by participants** (e.g. guidance sessions, assistance from job search teams, trainings, and other supportive actions). Each service or action was documented with its start and end dates, duration, the service provider in charge, and the location where it was delivered. This structured approach allows for comprehensive tracking of programme activities and ensures that service provision aligns with programme objectives.

However, for some programmes such as those targeting vulnerable groups, the RRP framework had a limitation: it did not require the systematic monitoring of labour market integration outcomes. This drawback has led some programmes to implement independent employment tracking mechanisms to address this gap. For most other programmes, such as those targeting women victims of gender-based violence and those supporting women in rural and urban areas, **employment outcomes were tracked** due to the direct

link between service provider payments and successful job placements. In these cases, employment contracts were tracked, including the start and anticipated end date, the type of contract, the occupation, and the location where it was performed, along with the employer's identification, such as its VAT number and corporate name. For self-employment, the programmes also tracked registration in the self-employment social security scheme.

In some programmes, data collection went **beyond the RRP framework to capture more nuanced indicators of programme success**. For instance, in some cases, employability assessments were conducted at both the start and the conclusion of itineraries to measure progress in terms of employability. Additionally, skill acquisition was monitored in some programmes using competency-based evaluation questionnaires, theoretical exams and the obtention of professional certificates.

In addition to quantitative monitoring, some programmes, particularly those targeting women victims of gender-based violence, collected more **detailed qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of participant progress**. For example, reports were generated that included qualitative information on each participant's self-esteem, autonomy, and other personal developments that were not immediately captured through employment metrics.

The technical infrastructure supporting monitoring within the **RRP framework requires** service providers to **pre-fill bimonthly monitoring files**, which are then submitted to the regional PES. The regional PES conduct quality checks on the collected data before forwarding it to SEPE, ensuring that the data meets the necessary standards. **Simultaneously**, SEPE, together with the regional PES, maintains a comprehensive national database known as the **Information System of Public Employment Services (SISPE)**. This system aggregates data on the implementation of ALMPs across the country, capturing details about jobseekers, the various services and programmes they engage with, as well as data related to the management of ALMPs and unemployment benefits. Data flow into SISPE are facilitated through interfaces with operational databases of regional PES, enabling a compatible and efficient access to programme data.

Some regions have **automated systems** that allow service providers to input data directly into regional or national databases, streamlining the monitoring process and ensuring real-time data availability. However, for many programmes assessed, regions still relied on **manual data entry**, which increased the administrative burden and the risk of information gaps. Moreover, for some programmes, regions had **not established any form of automated data exchange, nor did they manually input data** into SISPE, further exacerbating the gaps in PES records concerning jobseekers participating in the programmes.

Moreover, the need to **manage two parallel data collection systems generated significant inefficiencies**, placing a substantial workload on both service providers and PES staff. Service providers had to duplicate efforts by entering similar information into both systems, while regional PES staff were tasked with performing quality checks and reconciling data from both sources to ensure consistency. This dual system created unnecessary complexity and delays, hindering the efficiency of the monitoring process.

9.2.2. Evaluation practices

While monitoring processes were well-established, ensuring that activities were implemented as planned, identifying bottlenecks or inefficiencies in service delivery, and tracking participant progress and outcomes, evaluation frameworks remained largely underdeveloped. Most programmes **lacked formal impact evaluation mechanisms**, which made it difficult to determine whether observed employment outcomes were directly attributable to programme participation. In rare cases, experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations are being piloted to measure causal programme impact on employment and well-being. One such example, still in its early stages, aims to assess the effects of participation by comparing the employability outcomes of participants with those of a control group, which serves as a counterfactual to

isolate the programme's causal impact. The evaluation also seeks to capture broader qualitative effects, such as improved self-confidence and autonomy among participating women, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the programme's impact.

9.2.3. Stakeholder feedback integration

Some programmes **actively collected feedback from stakeholders** through surveys and interviews, providing valuable insights into programme quality and effectiveness. For example, participant feedback was sometimes gathered at multiple stages throughout the programme, allowing for real-time adjustments based on jobseekers' experiences. When employment was an integral part of the programmes, employer feedback helped assess job readiness, the relevance of training, and identify sector-specific skills gaps, ensuring that training and employment support align with market needs. However, the integration of both participant and employer feedback was not yet systematic across all programmes, and there was a lack of consistent mechanisms to ensure this feedback is used to inform ongoing programme improvements.

9.2.4. Transparency and responsive adjustments

While monitoring results were systematically reported to managing authorities, their **use for public accountability and programme adaptation remained inconsistent across programmes**. In most cases, final reports submitted by service providers remained internal to the PES, limiting opportunities for broader learning and programme improvement. Additionally, findings from M&E activities were not consistently integrated into decision making processes to inform significant programme redesigns, often leading to only minor procedural adjustments rather than more comprehensive refinements based on evidence.

However, some programmes took important steps towards greater transparency and responsiveness. For instance, **publishing programme results and statistical breakdowns online** has increased public accountability and facilitated cross-programme learning. Furthermore, some programmes demonstrated a commitment to data-driven decision making by using M&E results to introduce mid-course adjustments, responding to emerging challenges and fostering continuous improvement throughout implementation.

9.3. Good practices identified

The following two examples, presented in Box on good practices 16 and Box on good practices 17, illustrate particularly noteworthy approaches to monitoring and evaluation identified during the assessment exercise. The first, from the programme targeting vulnerable groups in Baleares, shows how regional authorities can develop an integrated and transparent M&E system that goes beyond mandatory RRP requirements. The second, managed by SEPE through its Provincial Directorate in Ceuta, Melilla, and five other regions (Andalucía, Aragón, Canarias, Cataluña, Madrid), combines systematic monitoring with additional tools to capture broader dimensions of reintegration and participant feedback.

Box on good practices 16. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for vulnerable groups programme in Baleares

Baleares exemplifies a good practice in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the framework of ALMPs targeting vulnerable groups. The comprehensive M&E framework implemented in Baleares aligns with the benchmark for excellence by ensuring continuous improvement and maintaining high transparency standards

Detailed and systematic monitoring

In Baleares, service providers are given access to specialised applications, ACCFOR and ESOIB, to meticulously document all aspects of participant engagement. These platforms allow for the direct upload of comprehensive data on every service and action provided to participants – from initial enrolment to programme completion, including any instances of dropout. This data is seamlessly integrated into both regional and national databases managed by the PES, contributing to the Information System of Public Employment Services (SISPE). This automated data exchange enhances the effectiveness of the monitoring process by ensuring accurate and timely information flow.

Proactive labour market integration monitoring

Distinctively, despite the RRM monitoring framework not mandating such measures, Baleares proactively monitors labour market integration 6 and 12 months after programme completion. The regional PES (SOIB) accomplishes this by tracking participants within the social security database to verify their engagement in employment contracts. This proactive approach allows for a more accurate assessment of the programme's impact on employability.

Integrating participant feedback

Baleares places a strong emphasis on participant feedback to refine and enhance service delivery. Throughout the programme, participants are invited to evaluate each training session and the overall guidance and counselling they receive through structured surveys. This direct feedback is essential for ongoing programme adjustments and is fully integrated into the overall monitoring process.

Commitment to transparency and dissemination

SOIB in Baleares sets a high standard for transparency by publishing analytical reports on its official website (<https://soib.es/avaluacio-de-programes-i-serveis/>). These reports provide an analysis of monitoring actions and survey results, offering key statistics and insights on all aspects of the programme. Information provided includes demographic breakdowns of participants by gender, level of education, and age. Additionally, the reports include breakdowns by service provider, and analyse outcomes such as dropout rates, successful completions, labour market integration, and participant satisfaction.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

Box on good practices 17. Comprehensive and nuanced approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the programme targeting women victims of gender violence and human trafficking by SEPE in Ceuta, Melilla, and in the provinces of Zaragoza (Aragón), Barcelona (Cataluña), Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid), Las Palmas (Canarias), Málaga, and Sevilla (Andalucía)

Systematic monitoring for continuous improvement

A core strength of the programme is its adherence to the structured monitoring processes mandated by the RRM monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This includes the collection of anonymised participant data, ensuring that privacy concerns are respected while still providing comprehensive tracking of participants' progress. Through bimonthly reports submitted to SEPE, the programme tracks critical indicators such as the number of women targeted, employment status, training details, and legal instruments used. The programme introduces a range of documents that facilitate real-time monitoring. Examples include reports generated for services like “Servicio Puedo” and “Servicio Proyecto”, which track participants' progress in personal, social, and employment skills development. Monthly reports document attendance, active job searches, and employer interactions, while final reports detail employment outcomes, such as contract types, work placements, and self-employment transitions.

Additionally, the programme uses a project management system based on the Logical Framework Approach (LFA), a structured methodology for planning, managing, and evaluating projects. The LFA's focus on setting measurable indicators from the outset supports the systematic collection and analysis of data, ensuring that the programme remains aligned with its objectives and can adapt based on participant progress.

Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO)

A unique feature of the SEPE/Red Cross programme is the use of the Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) tool, developed by the International Justice Mission. The ASO tool goes beyond traditional monitoring by assessing the holistic recovery and reintegration of women survivors of violence and exploitation. This tool monitors participants' progress across six critical domains that are essential for reducing vulnerability to revictimisation and fostering long-term reintegration:

- **Safety:** Assesses that participants are living in safe environments.
- **Legal protection:** Tracks participants' access to legal support and rights.
- **Mental well-being:** Monitors psychological recovery and emotional health.
- **Economic empowerment and education:** Evaluates participants' readiness and ability to re-enter the workforce or education and training systems.
- **Social support:** Measures the strength of social networks and the support available to participants.
- **Physical well-being:** Assesses participants' overall health and physical recovery.

This tool provides a comprehensive view of a survivor's progress, going beyond economic outcomes to capture personal empowerment and societal reintegration.

Integration of participant feedback

A vital component of the programme's M&E is its proactive use of participant feedback. Regular satisfaction surveys gauge participants' experiences, focussing on the relevance and usefulness of activities, the quality of information and support provided, and the alignment of the programme with their expectations and needs. Additionally, the programme offers open channels for suggestions and complaints through the Red Cross's Spain official website, allowing for continuous feedback and adaptation.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

9.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening monitoring and evaluation in future ALMPs

Spain has established an integrated model for monitoring and evaluating ALMPs, structured around four key processes: (1) monitoring and evaluation of the current Spanish Strategy for Active Support to Employment and its annual Employment Policy Plans;¹⁷ (2) monitoring of services provided to job seekers and employers through the Common Portfolio of Services; (3) performance assessments of PES, including through benchlearning exercises; and (4) external and independent evaluations of ALMPs and their instruments. Drawing on evidence from the assessment conducted, the following recommendations seek to reinforce and enhance this framework.

9.4.1. Enhance systematic monitoring

While systematic monitoring was in place for most programmes, improvements are necessary to ensure consistent data collection and streamline the monitoring process across regions. Future ALMP should:

- Systematise the tracking of labour market integration outcomes as a core part of the monitoring process. This involves the mandatory tracking of outcomes such as job placements, the type of contract, job duration, and other key labour market integration indicators. Ideally, monitoring should extend beyond the end of the programme, ensuring long-term follow-up on employment sustainability and career progression.
- Encourage the collection of outcome data on broader dimensions such as social integration, well-being and skills acquisition, to provide a more holistic understanding of participant success and programme effectiveness. Initiatives such as [ES DataLab](#), which facilitates secure access to linked administrative microdata from SEPE and multiple other public institutions, can support the analysis of these broader outcomes.
- Integrate parallel data monitoring systems -such as the RRP monitoring system and PES databases- to reduce inefficiencies, duplication of efforts and administrative burdens on service providers and PES staff, ensuring more consistent and accurate data flows.
- Prioritise the development of automated systems for data exchange in regions that have not yet implemented them. This would enable real-time data tracking and secure data exchange, reduce the risk of information gaps, and improve the overall responsiveness and efficiency of the monitoring system.

9.4.2. Implement robust evaluations

While monitoring processes were established, most programmes lack robust evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact on employment, job quality and other outcomes. Such evaluations could provide the evidence needed to refine programme design, ensure that public resources are used effectively, and assess the economic efficiency of programmes. Future ALMP should:

- Incorporate formal impact evaluations, using experimental or quasi-experimental methodologies to measure causal impacts on employment, social integration, and well-being. This could include, for example, conducting randomised controlled trials (RCTs) at the national or regional level, or using staggered implementation across geographical areas and over time to enable the use of comparison groups. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the programme's effectiveness.
- Include cost-benefit analysis to assess the economic efficiency of programmes, comparing the costs of implementation with the benefits derived from improved employment outcomes, social integration, and other impacts on participants.

9.4.3. Strengthen stakeholder feedback integration

While some programmes collected feedback from participants and employers, this process was not systematic across all programmes. Future ALMP should:

- Systematically gather participant feedback at multiple points throughout the programme, ensuring that their experiences and suggestions can inform real-time adjustments.
- Integrate employer feedback in a more structured way to assess the relevance of itineraries and training, job readiness, and sector-specific skills gaps. This would help tailor training programmes to actual labour market needs and improve employment outcomes.
- Use stakeholder feedback to make responsive adjustments throughout the programme cycle, ensuring that the programme remains dynamic and adaptive.

9.4.4. Improve the transparency and use of M&E findings

Transparency in reporting M&E results is vital for public accountability and continuous programme improvement. In line with the provisions of Title VI of the Employment Law 3/2023, which establishes the obligation to publish evaluation results and integrate them into decision making processes, future ALMP should:

- Publish M&E findings, enabling external scrutiny, promoting accountability, and facilitating cross-programme learning.
- Ensure that findings from M&E activities are systematically used to inform not only minor adjustments but also more comprehensive programme redesigns based on evidence.

9.4.5. Invest in capacity building for M&E systems

Effective M&E activities require adequate resources and capacity at all levels of programme implementation. Building on existing initiatives, such as the training guarantee established under Royal Decree 438/2024 and the permanent training plan approved by the Sectoral Conference, future ALMPs should invest in training and capacity-building for staff responsible for data collection, analysis, and M&E in both service providers and PES. This could help ensure high-quality data and effective use of M&E systems across regions. Additionally, regions, particularly those with limited capacity and experience, should receive technical and financial support to develop and implement automated data systems.

10 Criteria specific to the objectives of the recovery and resilience plan

This chapter examines how selected ALMPs in Spain contribute to the four transversal objectives of the recovery and resilience plan (RRP): green transition, digital transformation, social and territorial cohesion and gender equality. It begins by emphasising the importance of translating broad policy goals into concrete measurable targets to ensure coherent implementation. The chapter reviews the various ways how the assessed programmes address the RRP objectives and presents a good practice that demonstrates a particularly strong focus on well-defined targets. The chapter concludes with recommendations for strengthening the contribution of future ALMPs to overarching policy priorities.

10.1. Understanding the criterion and its benchmark for qualitative assessment

The RRP is aimed at accelerating and smoothing the transition towards a greener environmentally sustainable economy, maximising the benefits of digital transformation, and reducing social, territorial and gender gaps. Spain has a high share of the population with insufficient digital skills and a shortage of workers with specialist digital skills, which hampers the adoption of digital technologies across various sectors of society and limits the potential for economic growth through digital investments. Climate change and meeting ambitious environmental targets will have major economic effects and will foreseeably exacerbate already pronounced regional and social disparities. Equipping the labour force with the skills needed for the green transition would facilitate adaptation and support Spain's achievement of its climate goals (Bank of Spain, 2022^[36]; OECD, 2023^[37]).

Spain's RRP is structured along four transversal objectives that guide the ALMPs implemented as part of the investments under Components 23 and 19. These objectives are:

- **Green transition:** ALMPs should be designed to promote employment in environmentally sustainable sectors and the creation of green jobs, with a focus on the provision of training for skills relevant to a greener economy.
- **Digital transformation:** ALMPs should aim to increase the level of digital skills of various population groups, improving digital literacy and providing training to support digital transformation.
- **Social and territorial cohesion:** ALMPs should be targeted at reducing territorial and social gaps in the labour market and mitigating the social impact of the recent crises. This includes implementing programmes in deprived areas (e.g. in regions facing high unemployment or other challenging economic conditions), targeting various vulnerable groups (e.g. youth, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, etc.), prioritising transformation in economic sectors under pressure, etc.
- **Gender equality:** ALMPs should focus on empowering women, removing gender-based disparities in the labour market and ensuring equal access to employment.

Some of the 38 ALMPs considered in the assessment in this project aim at addressing several of these objectives at the same time, while others focus on one objective only and for selected beneficiaries. Whatever a particular aim of a specific policy is, it is important to monitor whether the design and the implementation of the policy is coherent with the overarching RRP objectives. It is important that the services provided by PES are in line with the objectives, i.e. they target population groups, regions, sectors, jobs, skills that contribute to meeting some or all of the objectives of the RRP.

While the RRP objectives are defined in broad terms at the national level, for monitoring purposes it is important to translate these objectives into "targets" that can be represented and assessed by statistical data (European Commission, 2021^[5]). It is important to set the targets in co-operation with regional/local PES considering local economic and labour market circumstances. Targets should be clear, specific, measurable, time bound, ambitious and realistic. To monitor the coherence of the policies with the objectives, it is important to design efficient ways to share information, e.g. to report on the relevant statistical data in a fixed and easily comprehensible format at regular time intervals.

Box 10.1. Benchmark for excellence: Criteria specific to the RRP objectives

The RRP is aimed at accelerating and smoothing the transition towards a greener environmentally sustainable economy, maximising the benefits of digital transformation, and reducing social, territorial and gender gaps. In the context of the RRP, the objectives that guide the implementation of the ALMPs are:

- **Green transition:** ALMPs should be designed to promote employment in environmentally sustainable sectors and the creation of green jobs, with a focus on the provision of training for skills relevant to a greener economy.
- **Digital transformation:** ALMPs should aim to increase the level of digital skills of various population groups, improving digital literacy and providing training to support digital transformation.
- **Social and territorial cohesion:** ALMPs should be targeted at reducing territorial and social gaps in the labour market and mitigating the social impact of the recent crises. This includes implementing programmes in deprived areas (e.g. in regions facing high unemployment or other challenging economic conditions), targeting various vulnerable groups (e.g. youth, long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, etc.), prioritising transformation in economic sectors under pressure, etc.
- **Gender equality:** ALMPs should focus on empowering women, removing gender-based disparities in the labour market and ensuring equal access to employment.

The benchmark ALPM operates in line with one or several¹ of the overarching RRP objectives by targeting population groups, regions, sectors, jobs, skills that contribute to meeting these objectives. The objectives are translated into clearly defined targets. These targets are specific, measurable, time bound, ambitious and realistic. They are monitored by sharing relevant statistical data in a fixed and easily comprehensible format at regular time intervals.

1. While it is not mandatory for an ALMP to address all four objectives to attain the highest score, it is essential to illustrate a focussed commitment to a specific objective. The ALMP should demonstrate how the chosen objective is actively pursued through relevant initiatives and monitored meticulously with well-defined processes and targets.

10.2. Summary of the qualitative assessment results

While not all 38 programmes addressed all four RRP objectives, most showed a strong commitment to at least one of them. Programmes often combined several objectives, for example, linking digital transformation with social inclusion or gender equality. Although targets were frequently expressed in general terms, focussing on the number of participants, some programmes included more specific outcome-oriented elements, such as insertion rates. Overall, the programmes demonstrated a structured and coherent approach in line with the priorities of the RRP.

10.2.1. Green transition

Green transition was typically not the primary focus of the assessed ALMPs, but it was addressed through a number of supporting policy elements. From the outset, all activities included in the RRP were required to comply with certain principles, such as the “do no significant harm” rule, which prohibits activities that could harm the environment, and “green labelling” to facilitate the allocation of resources to environmental initiatives. The promotion of green skills and jobs was often integrated into the programmes as part of training packages. Many programmes offered training modules on environmental awareness to

promote environmental responsibility or provided training to acquire skills for green jobs in areas such as photovoltaic panel installation, forestry, gardening, cleaning, circular economy, sustainable waste management and energy-efficient renovation. In some cases, programmes explicitly reserved a certain share of training content (25-35%) for climate-related skills.

10.2.2. Digital transformation

Digital transformation was systematically addressed in all of the assessed programmes. This objective was incorporated in a variety of ways: starting from “digital labelling”, as required by the RRP principles to facilitate the allocation of resources to digital transformation initiatives, and finishing with the implementation of programmes explicitly dedicated to the development of digital skills, such as digital training for women in the agricultural sector and training for digital transformation. Even programmes that did not have digital goals as a primary objective often targeted populations with low levels of digital literacy and thus included basic digital skills training as an important component. In addition, some programmes also offered specialised courses to acquire advanced digital skills, including office software, accounting, graphic design, document digitisation, AI-activities and ICT networks. As with green skills, some programmes explicitly dedicate a certain share of their training content (25-35%) to the development of digital skills.

10.2.3. Social and territorial cohesion

Social and territorial cohesion was strongly embedded across all the assessed programmes. It was the central objective of the programmes targeting vulnerable groups, such as young people, women, the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants, and people with very low education levels. Another way of addressing this objective was to implement initiatives in disadvantaged areas facing high unemployment, depopulation or other challenging economic conditions. A good practice to ensure coherence with this objective was to channel a certain part of funding directly to projects in small municipalities, thereby helping to bridge territorial disparities. When it was not possible to work in remote locations, some programmes helped to overcome territorial barriers by providing online training to make the programmes accessible to all participants regardless of their geographical location.

10.2.4. Gender equality

Gender equality was explicitly addressed in several ALMPs targeting women, such as programmes for women victims of gender-based violence, women in rural and urban areas, and digital training for women in the agricultural sector. These programmes focussed on improving women’s employability and supporting their integration into the labour market, thereby actively contributing to gender equality, reducing gender gaps and empowering women. Other programmes, while not specifically targeting women, included certain categories of women as priority groups, for example women with low levels of education in disadvantaged areas. Few programmes set explicit targets to ensure equal representation of women among participants.

10.3. Good practices identified

The programme presented in Box on good practices 18 illustrates a targeted approach to advancing key objectives of the RRP. Implemented across several regions under a common detailed legal framework, the support programme for women in rural and urban areas sets specific, measurable, time-bound, ambitious and realistic targets to ensure alignment of the programme with the overarching policy objectives.

Box on good practices 18. Addressing the transversal objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Plan through focussed commitment to well-defined targets: Support for women in rural and urban areas in Andalucía, La Rioja, Madrid, Valencia y Ceuta

The programme “Support for Women in Rural and Urban Areas”, implemented in the regions of Andalucía, La Rioja, Madrid, Valencia and in Ceuta, by means of *Order TES/1 121/2021 of 11 October*, exemplifies a targeted approach to address key objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) such as green transition, digital transformation, social and territorial cohesion, and gender equality.

The programme provides comprehensive support to the targeted women by offering a personalised and individualised itineraries of career guidance, advice, training, acquisition of transversal skills and competencies, facilitation of job insertion and employment tailored to the profiles of the participating women. This holistic support not only enhances their skills and qualifications but also boosts their confidence and readiness for the job market. The focus on green and digital skills ensures that participants are equipped for future job markets, contributing to both environmental sustainability and technological advancement. By targeting women in rural and urban areas, particularly those in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants, the programme addresses regional disparities and promotes social cohesion. This targeted approach helps bridge the gender gap in employment, supports the revitalisation of rural areas, and contributes to the overall economic and social development of these regions.

The detailed legal framework ensures that the programmes under this investment commit to the overarching objectives by setting specific, measurable, time-bound, ambitious and realistic targets. This approach enhances accountability and transparency, as progress can be systematically tracked and evaluated.

Specific well-defined targets:

- **Targeting women:** At least 22 240 women are expected to complete the programme out of 27 800 women registered at the start of its implementation.
- **Promoting green skills and jobs:** 35% of the participants of the programme complete an individualised itinerary oriented to the development of green skills and jobs. Such itineraries may include, for example, renewable energy, water and waste treatment, respectful forestry and agriculture, and circular economy.
- **Enhancing digital literacy:** 35% of the participants of the programme complete an individualised itinerary oriented to the development of digital skills and jobs. These itineraries may cover the digitalisation of services, online commercial activities and areas related to technology.
- **Focusing on small municipalities:** The programme prioritises women residing in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants. At least a third of the investment is directed to these areas.*
- **Achieving desired employment impact:** At least 20% of women participating in the individualised itineraries are expected to achieve professional integration, either as employees or self-employed.**

Note: * In the case of an island Autonomous Community, the percentage of investment and participants residing in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants will correspond to the weight of the inhabitants of these municipalities in the total population in that Autonomous Community. For projects that plan to be developed in a single municipality, the population of the affected municipality may not exceed 5 000 inhabitants, except in the case of the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

** The competent labour administration will determine the minimum number of paid days required for a participant to be considered integrated into the labour market, which will be at least 90 days, not necessarily continuous. It will also define the methods of verification, the criteria for calculating part-time work and other relevant aspects.

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations; Order TES/1 121/2021 of 11 October.

10.4. Policy directions: Avenues for strengthening the contribution of future ALMPs to overarching policy objectives

To ensure coherence between programme design, implementation and overarching policy objectives, future ALMPs should build on the experience of the ALMPs implemented under the RRP and on the provisions established under Law 3/2023 and:

- **Clearly define policy objectives and ensure alignment with these objectives** through the services they provide, the population groups they target, the territories they serve and other relevant policy elements, following a pre-defined Theory of Change.¹⁸
- Set clear, specific, measurable, time-bound, ambitious and realistic targets (including baseline indicators and their target values), that are directly linked to the defined objectives and monitor progress using relevant statistical data.
- **Include outcome-oriented targets** to increase the effectiveness of the programmes, for example by requiring a minimum percentage of participants to be (sustainably) integrated into the labour market after the completion of the programme.

References

- Bank of Spain (2022), *Annual Report 2021*, Banco de España, Madrid. [36]
- Carcillo, S. and S. Scarpetta (eds.) (2024), *Handbook on Labour Markets in Transition*, Edward Elgar Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839106958>. [21]
- Desiere, S., K. Langenbucher and L. Struyven (2019), “Statistical profiling in public employment services: An international comparison”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 224, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5e5f16e-en>. [18]
- Dromundo, S., M. Lüske and M. Tuccio (2023), *Innovative approaches to tackle long-term unemployment*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e1f7e16e-en>. [13]
- Espinoza, R. and N. Martinez-Yarza (2023), “Quality matters: A comparative analysis of quality assurance mechanisms in adult education and training in OECD countries”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 302, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fc5ae97c-en>. [4]
- European Commission (2021), *PES Network Benchlearning Manual*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. [5]
- Fernandez, R. et al. (2018), “Faces of joblessness in Spain: A people-centred perspective on employment barriers and policies”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 207, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6149118d-en>. [23]
- Geyer, L., A. Scoppetta and E. Davern (2019), “Job carving and job crafting – A review of practices”, *European Commission, Brussels*, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/95966>. [29]
- Kõiv, K. (2018), “Profile of effective NEET-youth support service”, https://ank.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CommunityGuarantee.IO1_Final_.pdf. [15]
- Langenbucher, K. and M. Vodopivec (2022), “Paying for results: Contracting out employment services through outcome-based payment schemes in OECD countries”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 267, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c6392a59-en>. [8]
- Laumer, S., A. Eckhardt and T. Weitzel (2012), “Online Gaming to Find a New Job – Examining Job Seekers’ Intention to Use Serious Games as a Self-Assessment Tool”, *German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management*, Vol. 26/3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23279202>. [19]

- Lauringson, A. and M. Lüske (2021), “Institutional set-up of active labour market policy provision in OECD and EU countries: Organisational set-up, regulation and capacity”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 262, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9f2cbaa5-en>. [6]
- OECD (2024), *Modernising Latvia’s Public Employment Service through Digitalisation, Connecting People with Jobs*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/07e830f5-en>. [20]
- OECD (2023), *Boosting Social Inclusion in Spain: Improving Pathways and Co-ordination of Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/56b604a0-en>. [17]
- OECD (2023), *Evaluation of Active Labour Market Policies in Finland*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/115b186e-en>. [32]
- OECD (2023), *Impact Evaluation of the Digital Tool for Employment Counsellors in Spain: SEND@: Report on the Design and Implementation of an Impact Evaluation of the Digital Counselling Tool for Spain’s Public Employment Services*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/fe1ec3c3-en>. [22]
- OECD (2023), *OECD Economic Surveys: Spain 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5b50cc51-en>. [37]
- OECD (2023), *Personalised Public Services for People in Vulnerable Situations in Lithuania: Towards a More Integrated Approach*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e028d183-en>. [12]
- OECD (2022), *Aligning Regional and Local Budgets with Green Objectives: Subnational Green Budgeting Practices and Guidelines*, OECD Multi-level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/93b4036f-en>. [3]
- OECD (2022), *Assessing Canada’s System of Impact Evaluation of Active Labour Market Policies*, Connecting People with Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/27dfbd5f-en>. [30]
- OECD (2022), *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management*, OECD, Paris, [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/EV\(2022\)2/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/EV(2022)2/en/pdf). [35]
- OECD (2022), *Impact Evaluation of Vocational Training and Employment Subsidies for the Unemployed in Lithuania*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c22d68b3-en>. [31]
- OECD (2022), *New ways to reach out to employers*, <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/dg-reform/dg-reform-technical-reports/bulgaria/New-ways-to-reach-out-to-employers.pdf>. [28]
- OECD (2021), “Institutional and regulatory set-up of active labour market policy provision in Denmark.”, https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/Denmark_ALMP_Institutional_set-up.pdf. [7]
- OECD (2021), “Building inclusive labour markets: Active labour market policies for the most vulnerable groups”, *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/607662d9-en>. [11]
- OECD (2021), *Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook*, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcbc2ea9-en>. [2]

- OECD (2021), *Improving the Provision of Active Labour Market Policies in Estonia*, Connecting People with Jobs, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/31f72c5b-en>. [14]
- OECD (2021), *Improving the Quality of Non-Formal Adult Learning: Learning from European Best Practices on Quality Assurance*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f1b450e1-en>. [1]
- OECD (2021), *OECD Employment Outlook 2021: Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis and Recovery*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5a700c4b-en>. [10]
- OECD (2020), *Impact evaluation of labour market policies through the use of linked administrative data*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-issues/employment-services/impact_evaluation_of_imp.pdf. [34]
- OECD (2020), *Impact Evaluations Framework for the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-issues/employment-services/impact_evaluations_framework.pdf. [33]
- Pôle emploi (2018), *Rapport Annuel*, <https://www.pole-emploi.org/files/live/sites/peorg/files/documents/Publications/Rapport%20Annuel%20-%202018-040619-15h43.pdf>. [24]
- Scharle, Á., T. Weber and I. Puchwein Roberts (2014), *PES approaches for sustainable integration of long-term unemployed. Toolkit*, European Commission, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14078&langId=en>. [26]
- Serrano-Laguna, Á. et al. (2017), “A methodology for assessing the effectiveness of serious games and for inferring player learning outcomes”, *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, Vol. 77/2, pp. 2849-2871, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11042-017-4467-6>. [38]
- Sotsiaalministeerium (2020), *Valitsuse kinnitatud tööhõiveprogramm leevendab COVID-19 negatiivseid mõjusid* [Government-approved employment programme mitigates negative effects of COVID-19], <https://www.sm.ee/et/uudised/valitsuse-kinnitatud-toohoiveprogramm-leevendab-covid-19-negatiivseid-mojusid>. [27]
- Staible, A. (2017), *INA!- Sustain Integration*, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=17306&langId=en>. [25]
- Van Gestel, R. et al. (2022), “Improving Take-Up by Reaching Out to Potential Beneficiaries. Insights from a Large-Scale Field Experiment in Belgium”, *Journal of Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S004727942100088X>. [16]
- Vodopivec, M. (2023), “Raising the bar: Designing and implementing innovative contracted-out employment services in OECD countries”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 301, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c7a819e8-en>. [9]

Annex A. Standardised descriptions of good practices at the programme level

This annex presents fact sheets for the active labour market programmes that have been identified as overall good practices and that stand out across several qualitative assessment criteria. It first provides a table listing all good practices identified during the assessment exercise, including both overall good practices and those identified at the level of specific assessment criteria. The latter correspond to the good practices presented in Sections 3 of each thematic chapter, where each criterion is assessed in detail.

For each programme identified as an overall good practice, the annex provides a fact sheet indicating all the criteria in which good practices were observed, and highlighting the most notable features. It offers a concise overview of the strengths of each programme, focussing on the areas where they excel and outlining the key approaches and strategies that contributed to their success.

Table A A.1. The list of identified good practices

| Management level | Territorial scope | Programme name | Programme Code |
|--|--------------------|---|----------------|
| Criterion 1: Evidence-based design | | | |
| Regional | Extremadura | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: people with disabilities. | C23.I04.P01 |
| SEPE- FUNDAE (National) | National | TIC: Training for digital transformation | C19.I03 |
| SEPE- FUNDAE (National) | National | Turismo: Training programmes for people employed in the tourism sector | C23.I03 |
| Criterion 2: Engaging service providers | | | |
| Regional | Castilla-La Mancha | Subsidies for the implementation of actions to improve employability and integration aimed at vulnerable groups | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Castilla-La Mancha | Socio-occupational insertion with commitment to hiring of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Regional | Extremadura | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: people with disabilities. | C23.I04.P01 |
| Criterion 3: Identification and outreach to target population | | | |
| Regional | Asturias | Integrated itineraries of active inclusion oriented to the labour insertion of vulnerable people | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | País Vasco | Training and insertion programme with commitment to hiring for women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Criterion 4: Assessment and referral of participants | | | |
| Regional | Navarra | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Murcia | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |

| Management level | Territorial scope | Programme name | Programme Code |
|--|--|---|----------------|
| Criterion 5: Integrated and holistic support | | | |
| SEPE (National) | National | Digital literacy for women hired under the Plan for the Promotion of Agricultural Employment | C19.I03 |
| Regional | Extremadura | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: people with disabilities. | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Canarias | TIGOTAN 2.0 Project San Juan de la Rambla itinerary | C23.I04.P01 |
| Criterion 6: Case management and follow-up support | | | |
| Regional | Asturias | Integrated itineraries of active inclusion oriented to the labour insertion of vulnerable people | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Criterion 7: Partnership with employers | | | |
| Regional | La Rioja | Opening the doors to the IT world | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Cataluña | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Criterion 8: Monitoring and Evaluation | | | |
| Regional | Islas Baleares | Territorial projects for vulnerable groups for people aged 30 and over, long-term unemployed | C23.I04.P01 |
| SEPE (National) | Ceuta, Melilla and selected provinces in Aragón, Cataluña, Comunidad de Madrid, Canarias and Andalucía | Training and insertion programme with commitment to hiring for women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Criterion 9: Criteria specific to the transversal objectives of RRP | | | |
| Regional & SEPE | Andalusia, Ceuta, La Rioja, Comunidad de Madrid, Valencia | Support for women in rural and urban areas | C23.I02.P01 |
| Overall good practices | | | |
| Regional | Asturias | Integrated itineraries of active inclusion oriented to the labour insertion of vulnerable people | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Extremadura | New territorial projects for rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups: people with disabilities. | C23.I04.P01 |
| Regional | Canarias | Job placement project "Opening doors, opening opportunities" | C23.I02.P02 |
| Regional | Comunidad de Madrid | Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation | C23.I02.P02 |
| Regional | Navarra | GAIA project "Training for women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation" | C23.I02.P02 |
| Regional | La Rioja | IN ITINERE LAB: a mobile laboratory to support the improvement of women's employability | C23.I02.P01 |
| Regional | Valencia | Support for women in rural and urban areas | C23.I02.P01 |
| SEPE (National) | National | TándEM: Training in alternation with employment for young people | C23.I01.P01 |

Source: Authors from information collected through questionnaires and consultations.

i. Territorial projects for vulnerable groups in Asturias

Good practice: Integrated itineraries of active inclusion oriented to the labour insertion of vulnerable people in Asturias (C23.I04.P01)

Programme description: The programme develops individualised and personalised itineraries for unemployed people, with a focus on the long-term unemployed and the inactive

Responsible body: The Public Employment Service in Asturias (SEPEPA)

Evidence-based design

- **Design and monitoring framework informed by previous successful experiences:** The design of the programme has been informed by previous successful experiences in the Spanish context carried out by third sector entities. These previous experiences showed positive results of combining counselling and training services and were supported by evaluations from the European Social Fund. The monitoring and evaluation framework of this programme has also been informed by these previous successful cases and goes beyond minimum requirements established by the RRP framework.

Engaging service providers

- **Rigorous provider selection:** Service providers are selected by an expert committee following clear-cut criteria with a well-defined system of points. The assessment criteria include the coherence and adequacy of the proposed project and its innovative character; the organisation of the project, including time and human resources; the qualification and experience of the working team; the existence of an established network with local employers; and possible cost reductions.
- **Performance-based payment model:** The payment model is designed to incentivise providers to deliver outcomes that are consistent with the programme's core objective of achieving stable employment for participants. Payments are linked to the achievement of three key milestones, set at one month, three months and six months after the end of the programme, with no payment foreseen if less than 30% of participants are integrated into the labour market. Concerning participation in itineraries, a minimum number of actions have to be undertaken to consider an individual as a participant and receive a payment. For training, a certain share of the training hours must be completed to receive a payment.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Combination of multiple identification channels:** Asturias employs a combination of administrative data and networks of specialised third-sector entities to identify potential participants. The identification process includes: (1) administrative data screening by SEPEPA, (2) use of an existent agreement with social services to identify and reach beneficiaries of the regional minimum income scheme who can also benefit from the programme and (3) partnerships with third-sector entities for the identification of individuals who might not yet be registered with public services but are in contact with these entities.
- **Multi-faceted outreach strategy:** The programme includes a strategy for individualised outreach. Participants are contacted up to three times at different days and times to maximise the chances of receiving a response. If participants do not answer, a follow-up WhatsApp message containing information about the programme is sent. The content of these communications is designed using principles from behavioural economics to ensure engagement and effectiveness. This approach is complemented by dissemination through online platforms such as Meta with the goal of reaching individuals who have not yet engaged with public or private entities.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Thorough assessment of participants using digital tools:** The initial assessment consists of a semi-structured interview that employs a digital tool and methodology specifically developed by the service provider for working with vulnerable groups. This process takes a holistic approach, including questions not only on the labour market dimension, but also on social aspects and health.
- **Self-assessment of digital skills:** The initial assessment is complemented by the use of self-assessment questionnaires on digital competences that allow to adapt the materials of the itinerary to the specific needs of participants
- **Adaptable and dynamic individual itineraries:** Information from the initial assessment is used to personalise both the content and the pace of individualised itineraries. Furthermore, itineraries can be revised when the circumstances of a participant change.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Extensive network of partners:** The programme shows strong collaboration between the service provider, social services and third sector entities. In cases when needs are detected, the network is used to refer participants to health services, social services, NGOs or specific services in cases of work-life balance or gender-based violence. Referral to external services is done in two stages: (1) advising the participant to contact the resources directly; and (2) informing SEPEPA of the needs detected, which leads to activating the social services at the regional or local level.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Continuous and flexible case management:** Each participant works closely with a job counsellor to develop an Individual Action Plan during the first session of the programme. After that, case management meetings are held frequently, in most cases once per week. All counsellors are equipped with mobile phones, which allow them to communicate with participants via WhatsApp. This approach allows for flexibility and adaptation of the communication to the needs of participants.
- **Systematic follow-up support framework:** The programme provides consistent follow-up during the first two months after participants secure employment, with check-ins with participants foreseen once or twice per week. Additional follow-ups are scheduled at the three- and six-month marks. Furthermore, if the service provider detects that a participant becomes unemployed during this period, they are immediately reintegrated into the programme's itinerary.

Partnership with employers

- **Extensive prospection aligned with labour market needs:** Labour market trends are used to identify potential sectors of labour market prospection, with the goal of reaching firms and sectors with a high hiring potential. The programme has a dedicated team that analyses current job vacancies, attends job fairs and analyses statistical data to have a comprehensive vision of labour market demands. Insights from these analyses are used to inform training design to suit both the needs of participants and employers.
- **Communication with employers to enhance prospection:** Employers are contacted through emails, in-person events and professional social networks such as LinkedIn. Furthermore, the programme's team offers free services to employers to fill in their vacancies with programme participants. In these communications, programme workers highlight the value of transversal competences and try to help companies and people to find ways to ensure that employment is compatible with the personal situation of workers.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Use of digital tools enhances monitoring:** The programme has its own Customer Relationship Management (CRM) where all the activities that take place in the programme are collected immediately. This allows for daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly reports with specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Insertion data is reported in the same system and participants' employment histories are collected, one month, three months and six months after recruitment. The use of this CRM allows for smoother reporting both to SEPEPA and SEPE information systems.
- **Independent evaluation that covers a broad range of indicators:** An independent external evaluation has been conducted to measure key elements such as the satisfaction of participants (collected through calls), the satisfaction of employers, a profile and analysis of participants, an analysis of insertion rates, and a multivariate analysis of explanatory variables of labour market insertion.
- **Integrating stakeholder feedback into the evaluation framework:** The programme integrates stakeholder feedback into the evaluation framework, using such tools as a digital anonymous suggestion box, a satisfaction survey of participants and employers and a focus group, implemented by an external provider.

RRP objectives

- **Fostering digital transformation and social and territorial cohesion:** The programme contributes to the RRP objectives of digital transformation and social and territorial cohesion. Digital transformation goals are achieved through a compulsory workshop on digital training; while social and territorial cohesion is fostered through the targeting of the programme to vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the programme also contributes to green skills by offering a specific training on photovoltaic panels, and holding environmental awareness sessions. Finally, gender equality is taken into account transversally in both group and individual sessions, with specific actions on work-life balance.

ii. Territorial projects for vulnerable groups in Extremadura

Good practice: Rebalancing and equity for vulnerable groups in Extremadura (C23.I04.P01)

Programme description: The programme develops individualised and personalised itineraries for people with disabilities.

Responsible body: The Public Employment Service in Extremadura (SEXPE)

Evidence-based design

- **Design informed by extensive evidence and tested approaches:** The design of the programme has been carefully shaped and fine-tuned by drawing on lessons from previous active labour market policies (ALMPs) implemented by SEXPE for jobseekers with disabilities. It integrates the feedback from service providers engaged in the previous programmes, findings from participant satisfaction surveys, analysis of the data from the PES Information System (SISPE) and insights from forward-looking studies by the Observatory for Innovation and Foresight of the Labour Market in Extremadura. The programme is also aligned with the strategic objectives of the Employment and Business Competitiveness Strategy of Extremadura (2020-2025).
- **Robust monitoring system to ensure transparency and accountability:** SEXPE has developed a specialised computer application that tracks a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data. Together with a comprehensive "Manual for Action Development", it provides clear guidance to service providers to ensure consistent and thorough monitoring of the programme's actions, promoting transparency and contributing to the effectiveness of the programme.

Engaging service providers

- **Rigorous provider selection:** Service providers are selected through a transparent and competitive process using a well-defined scoring system. The selection criteria focus on past performance in the implementation of active employment and social policies, commitment to labour market integration, number of previously approved projects in the same field, quality of management practices and the provider's financial contribution to the total funding of the programme. This system ensures that only the most capable providers with a strong track record are selected.
- **Performance-based payment model:** The payment model is designed to incentivise providers to deliver outcomes that are consistent with the programme's core objective of achieving stable employment for participants. Payments are linked to the achievement of key milestones, encouraging timely and effective service delivery. The model also includes penalties for non-compliance, reinforcing accountability and ensuring efficient use of public funds.
- **Comprehensive quality monitoring:** Continuous monitoring of service providers is facilitated by the dedicated computer application that tracks performance indicators. In addition, participant feedback is regularly collected through multiple surveys, ensuring that service quality is consistently assessed and maintained throughout the programme.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Targeted recruitment through multiple channels:** Participants are primarily recruited through SEXPE employment centres, which use SISPE to identify and contact eligible jobseekers. In addition, non-jobseekers are recruited by service providers or referred by local social services, extending outreach beyond traditional channels.
- **Broad outreach strategy:** Employment centres contact potential participants directly and hold face-to-face information sessions with joint labour and social teams, ensuring clear communication about the programme. Dissemination is further supported through online platforms, including the websites of SEXPE and the Regional Government of Extremadura, and through social networks and community assemblies of service providers.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Thorough assessment of participants using digital tools:** SEXPE technical staff use digital questionnaires, developed in partnership with the University of Extremadura, and SEPE's profiling tool Send@ to assess generic and transversal skills of potential participants and direct them to the programme for vulnerable groups or other programmes that can enhance their employability. During participation in the programme, the specialised computer application collects and evaluates detailed data on participants' skills, availability, training, professional background, motivation and expectations to design individualised itineraries.
- **Dual-path referral system:** Service providers refer participants to other active employment measures (e.g. training or non-work practices) as part of their individualised itineraries. For more specialised interventions, such as experiential programmes or vocational schools, a referral report is sent to the SEXPE employment centres to ensure a structured and targeted approach to participants' activation.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Wide-ranging service provision accounting for familial barriers:** Teams of employment and social professionals design individualised itineraries covering a wide range of services, including acquisition of generic and transversal competences, digital skills training, job search coaching, mentoring, supported employment, job placement and prospecting. Financial support is available for participation, families with young children or single parents, transport and meals. In addition, itineraries may involve family members when necessary to detect and address barriers that limit participants' employability beyond the individual level.
- **Collaborative partnerships and efficient data sharing:** The programme is supported by a network of partners, including SEXPE, non-profit entities responsible for implementing the programme and municipal social services. The entities integrate information from local social services and the Directorate General for Social Policy, Childhood and Family of the Regional Government of Extremadura to ensure that the individual needs of each participant are addressed. Data on the developed itineraries are shared through the dedicated computer application provided by SEXPE to ensure seamless coordination and monitoring. Finally, the information on the execution of the itineraries is recorded in the history of each participant through the PES Information System (SISPE).

Case management and follow-up support

- **Continuous and flexible case management by a multidisciplinary team:** Participants receive ongoing support from a team of social and/or employment specialists. Throughout the 12-14 month programme, participants maintain direct and regular contact with their assigned team, with the frequency and mode of interactions (e.g. in person, by phone, or online) adjusted based on individual needs. A personal employment contract is signed to formalise the participant's commitment and plan.

Partnership with employers

- **Proactive engagement with employers:** Service providers work closely with employers through demand-supply matching to ensure that participant profiles are in line with company requirements. Specialised technical staff make regular company visits to inform employers about the programme, identify recruitment needs, collect job offers and promote suitable candidates. In addition, SEXPE organises seminars for the business community to raise awareness of ALMPs and encourage the hiring of unemployed people, including participants of the programme for vulnerable groups.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Ongoing monitoring and feedback system:** SEXPE continuously monitors programme implementation through mandatory reporting by service providers via the dedicated application. In addition, bimonthly reports track key indicators, including data on number of participants, content and progress of the itineraries, number of completed itineraries and insertions. Detailed reports from service providers on the implementation and results as well as participant satisfaction surveys provide opportunities for real-time and future adjustments to the programme, leading to improved guidance and overall service quality.

RRP objectives

- **Bridging social gaps by targeting employment outcomes:** The main objective of the programme is to promote territorial and social cohesion by improving the employability of vulnerable people with disabilities. This is achieved through individualised and personalised itineraries that include active employment measures such as guidance, development of generic, transversal and professional skills, job search assistance and training. The programme supports digital transformation by providing targeted digital skills training to participants identified as having gaps during the diagnostic phase, focusing on information gathering, communication, content creation, security and problem solving. To ensure a strong focus on employment outcomes, the programme aims to achieve a job insertion rate of 15% for participants who complete their itineraries.
-

iii. Training programmes with commitment to hiring and insertion of women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation in Canarias

Good practice: Job placement project "Opening doors, opening opportunities" in Canarias (C23.I02.P02)

Programme description: The programme offers training with hiring and insertion commitment for women victims of gender-based violence or trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Responsible body: Canary Islands Employment Service (Servicio Canario de Empleo, SCE)

Evidence-based design

- **Design informed by a broad range of evidence and data sources:** The programme design draws on a combination of international evidence, including Eurostat data and the 2022 UN report on human trafficking, alongside national reports and analyses from sources such as the Spanish Ministry of the Interior, the National Statistics Institute (INE), the Canary Islands Employment Observatory (OBECAN) and the Canary Islands Institute of Statistics. This evidence provides a clearer understanding of the target population's needs, enabling more effective targeting of the programme's services.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Outreach strategy focusing on specialized entities:** The programme relies on specialized entities working with women victims of violence to raise awareness of the programme. The service provider contacted these specialized entities through fairs and roundtables. Furthermore, information about the programme is disseminated through the service provider's website and specific campaigns in social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Thorough assessment of participants:** There is an initial assessment and diagnostic through a semi-structured interview that leads to a personalized itinerary. As part of this interview, participants are asked on elements such as their nationality, age, level of studies, work experience or whether they have dependent children. This interview is complemented by a self-assessment of own skills and attitudes.
- **Referral protocols for supplementary services:** Referral to services within the programme takes place in the form of individualised itineraries designed in function of the initial assessment. Furthermore, the service providers count with referral protocols that allow to refer participants to other services when specific needs were identified.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Services cover a broad range of areas:** The programme covers four phases that have been established with the goal of responding to participants needs: (1) bonding phase, which includes the initial assessment; (2) training actions oriented towards the labour market; (3) labour market prospection; and (4) hiring commitments. Furthermore, supplementary services can be offered, including mental health support, legal assistance and socio-sanitary care. In addition to the programme's services, participants receive a grant for participation and support with covering work-life balance costs.
- **Extensive network of partners:** The programme has established a series of collaborations with other entities working with different groups of women victims, focusing on dissemination activities and roundtables. The entity in charge of the provision of services is also a participant of the Canary Islands Employability Network (REC) and is in constant contact with the SCE with the goal of finding synergies on job prospection for participants.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Continuous case management by a multidisciplinary team:** Participants receive ongoing support from a multi-disciplinary team formed by a social counsellor, a social worker and an economist. All members of the case management team have previous experience in working with women in situations of violence. Case management sessions take place on a weekly basis.
- **Flexible framework for follow-up support:** The follow-up support actions of the programme take place during the first months of insertion, and include a weekly contact with participants, that can take place either by phone or in person. In addition, the entity in charge of providing services provides psychological and legal support to participants if this is needed during the follow-up period.

Partnership with employers

- **Extensive prospection aligned with labour market needs:** Labour market trends are used to identify potential sectors of labour market prospection, with the goal of reaching firms and sectors with a high hiring potential. Prospection actions entail contacting firms through means such as telephone calls, online forms, emails, face-to-face visits, and leaflet campaigns with key information about the programme. Entities deliver regular prospection reports to inform the SCE about the firms that have been contacted.
- **Promotion of inclusivity among firms:** As part of the programme, the SCE has developed a brief to encourage collaboration on the part of companies, encouraging their corporate social responsibility. This brief provides specific and detailed information on the subsidies for which companies are eligible when hiring job candidates that are accredited as victims, such as reductions in social security contributions, and other advantages of corporate social responsibility.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Comprehensive monitoring framework through a combination of approaches:** The monitoring of the programme includes very detailed monitoring indicators, including labour market integration, which is checked against social security data. The programme also collects detailed individualised reports on the qualitative progress of participants. Furthermore, information is gathered on the content of the training phase, participants' grades from the trainings, professional certificates issued and the hours of non-labour professional practice carried out by each participant. Results of monitoring are then used to feed and shape the design of new editions of the programme.
- **Dissemination of monitoring and evaluation results:** A report on the results of the monitoring of the programme is uploaded on the website of the service provider. It includes information on the activities performed and their results, the number of women who participated in the programme, the grants awarded to them and the use of the programme's funding, including any amount that has been deducted from the initial amount foreseen.

RRP objectives

- **Fostering gender equality and digital transformation:** The programme aims to promote gender equality and digital transformation. Gender equality is promoted through group workshops that focus on women's autonomy, self-esteem and empowerment, motivation, self-perception and problem-solving. The target of 50% labour market insertion for participant women further enhances the goal of gender equality by bringing women closer to the labour market. Furthermore, digital transformation is supported through workshops on transversal digital skills, use of personal laptops and raising awareness on issues like privacy and prevention of online violence. A specific 6-hour course on Digital Literacy is provided, together with a follow-up workshop to reinforce what has been learned.

iv. Training programmes with commitment to hiring and insertion of women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation in Madrid

Good practice: Good practice: Training with commitment to recruitment and integration of women victims of gender-based violence, trafficking or sexual exploitation in Madrid (C23.I02.P02)

Programme description: The programme provides integrated itineraries of social and labour insertion to improve employability of women victims of gender-based violence.

Responsible body: General Subdirectorate for Evaluation, Monitoring and Control of Training, Government of the Community of Madrid

Evidence-based design

- **Programme design based on evidence and stakeholder input:** The programme design is based on the SEPE's Specific Technical Specifications governing the tender for this programme and the experience from previous programmes with recruitment commitments and active job search training. To further improve service quality and participant motivation, the design includes service enhancements informed by bibliographic research and stakeholder consultations (e.g. new services such as self-defence and peer group meetings). In addition, the processing of financial support has been adapted to ensure compliance and timely delivery. Collaboration with the Directorate General for Equality, employers' organisations and trade unions has helped to shape the technical content of the tender and the legal basis for financial support, as well as to align training with occupations in high demand.

Engaging service providers

- **Transparent tendering process with clear selection criteria:** The selection process follows a competitive tendering procedure in accordance with the public procurement law. The evaluation criteria are clearly defined and focus on price, quality certifications, experience of the service provider and the involvement of a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including psychologists, social educators and social workers, preferably with expertise in gender equality or gender-based violence. Each criterion is assessed using a points-based scoring system. The selection criteria and scoring system ensure the selection of the highest scoring and most qualified provider, such as the Spanish Red Cross.
- **Accountability through payment by results:** Monthly payments are made based on submitted invoices after verification of services provided. Penalties are applied if targets are not met (e.g. low insertion rate, unmet participant numbers or high staff turnover). Payments are directly linked to hiring commitments and effective labour market integration.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Individualised outreach through dedicated agents and services:** Each employment office in the Community of Madrid has dedicated career counsellors for victims of gender-based violence who identify potential participants through secure access to victims' data, ensuring both privacy and data protection. This approach allows for administrative data screening while protecting sensitive information. During personalised appointments, the counsellors provide participants with detailed information about the programme and assess their motivation and commitment to support the selection process. The Spanish Red Cross also conducts outreach through its own networks and provides comprehensive application assistance. The recruitment is strengthened by collaboration with social services that specialise in supporting women victims of gender-based violence.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Well-defined assessment and referral protocols:** The recruitment process begins with a personalised interview to identify participants' needs, followed by psycho-social support sessions that include a self-assessment of skills. In the second phase, an employability assessment is carried out, a professional profile is defined, and a personalised insertion itinerary is developed, including a referral to five different training programmes.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Comprehensive support services:** The programme offers a wide range of services aimed at labour market insertion and training but also provides financial assistance, active job search workshops, support sessions with other women victims of gender-based violence in advanced stages of recovery, training on establishing routines, managing household formalities, developing healthy lifestyles, creating a personal image for job interviews, self-defence training, as well as advice on different services provided by the public administration. The programme provides a dedicated job search space to foster a collaborative and supportive job search environment together with colleagues. In addition, the Spanish Red Cross uses its own resources to address other needs of participant, such as transportation and childcare.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Ongoing accompaniment by a specialist team:** The specialist team, consisting of a social educator, a social worker, a psychologist and a job prospector, provides individualised support to participants in their respective areas. The team meets weekly to coordinate their activities. Participants receive individual face-to-face sessions as needed and are followed up weekly by phone and email.
- **Structured and adaptable follow-up framework for employment retention:** The programme provides continuous, tailored follow-up, ensuring regular points of contact and support to facilitate long-term employment retention. A special document called "Accredited Document of Follow-Up for Employment Integration" records interactions between the service provider, participants and employers, with follow-ups scheduled at one, three and six months after the start of employment. The document records detailed information on follow-up meetings, their duration, means of contact, updates on participants' wellbeing, work situation and proposed actions for ongoing support. Additional support is provided as needed to address challenges and ensure sustainable employment, including counselling, psychological support and skills development. Regular communication helps to resolve problems and promote long-term success in the workplace.

Partnership with employers

- **Extensive business collaboration network:** The Red Cross employs a business collaboration team consisting of ten people, one of whom is specifically dedicated to the programme for victims of gender-based violence. The team organises meetings with target companies to disseminate information and encourage companies to offer job opportunities tailored to participants' profiles. The Red Cross is part of the Women's Institute's initiative "Companies for a society free of gender violence", which brings together more than 80 companies to promote the social and labour integration of women victims of gender violence.
- **Fostering active employer engagement:** Companies are encouraged to participate in various activities within the programme, such as organising company visits to inform participants of different occupational sectors, providing sessions to promote health, well-being, emotional management, and conflict resolution, offering workshops on personal branding. In addition, the business collaboration team organises various events for companies, such as the Scape Room on diversity, the photographic exhibition "Talent without limits", the annual Red Cross Job Fair. This collaboration deepens employer engagement and encourages them to invest in a skilled and diverse workforce.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Detailed monitoring of training and outcomes:** Each participant's training is tracked individually, recording key details such as dates, duration, learning outcomes and the issue of professional certificates. In addition, the programme collects qualitative reports from counsellors on the development of participant skills, including soft skills. Labour market insertion is measured by tracking participants' registration in the social security system, with data verified through both employer and participant information, and cross-checked with social security databases.

RRP objectives

- **Aiming for sustainable employment outcomes:** The programme sets an ambitious target of 50% of women who complete the programme successfully entering the labour market. This target not only drives the effectiveness and impact of the programme, but also supports ongoing follow-up with participants after programme completion, further enhancing their long-term integration into the labour market.
-

v. Training programmes with commitment to hiring and insertion of women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation in Navarra

Good practice: GAIA project "Training for women victims of gender-based violence, human trafficking or sexual exploitation" in Navarra (C23.I02.P02)

Programme description: The programme provides integrated itineraries of social and labour insertion to improve employability of women victims of gender-based violence.

Responsible body: Employment Service of Navarra (SNE-NL)

Evidence-based design

- **Drawing on experience with similar programmes:** The design of the programme is informed by lessons learned from a previous initiative implemented by SNE-NL 'What I am drives me. Together it's easier'. In this programme, PES counsellors provided personalised guidance to women victims of gender-based violence, integrating job search strategies with personal development. The programme also fostered a group dynamic of mutual support among women with similar experiences. PES counsellors played a key role in the design of the new programme, leveraging their expertise and insights to ensure that the specific needs of the target group are effectively addressed.

Engaging service providers

- **Payments linked to key milestones and outcomes:** The programme's payment structure is divided into three service categories, each of which is linked to the participant's achievement of key milestones, such as completion of digital literacy or job search skills workshops or a minimum number of professional training hours. Payments also cover services directly related to labour market integration, such as employer prospecting, intermediation, and hiring commitments. The payment model incentivises employment outcomes by applying reductions if less than 50% of participants achieve labour market integration.
- **Quality assurance through regular monitoring and on-site visits:** The programme ensures quality through regular meetings between SNE-NL and the Pamplona City Council, with all actions recorded in SNE-NL's applications ("ORIENTASARE" for guidance and "IRIS" for training). On-site visits further reinforce programme standards and contribute to ongoing quality control.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Identification through specialised service:** The Pamplona City Council identifies participants for the programme through the Municipal Service for Women's Affairs (SMAM), which is a public service that provides comprehensive and personalised care to women in vulnerable situations. If necessary, additional participants are suggested by SNE-NL from its administrative database. Participation in the programme is voluntary, and all participants' data remain confidential and accessible only to the programme tutors.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Comprehensive initial assessment for tailored itineraries:** An initial assessment is carried out at the start of the programme to gather information on each participant's current situation, needs, expectations, availability and goals, helping to personalise the programme from the outset. The ORIENTASARE application is used to assess work skills, social skills, training needs, motivation and job search skills. All programme staff are trained to carry out these assessments to ensure equal opportunities and treatment of participants. The resulting itineraries include individual-level identification of professional alternatives, training, and job search actions.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Comprehensive support services:** The programme provides a wide range of services aimed at improving participants' personal and professional development. Key services include: personal development workshops on social skills, reproductive health and gender-based violence; digital literacy courses; individual employability diagnostics and personalised insertion itinerary; job search training; vocational and job training, including professional internships; and soft skills workshops to improve communication and interpersonal skills.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Support from a multidisciplinary team:** Participants benefit from a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including social workers, social integration technicians, employment technicians and psychologists. Each participant is assigned a personal tutor or case manager, who provides a trusted point of contact while the team of experts offers specialised support tailored to the participant's needs. This approach helps to address the multidimensional challenges faced by the target group. In addition, social integration and employment technicians provide follow-up support to both participants and employers during the recruitment process to ensure mutual satisfaction and contribute to successful labour market integration.

Partnership with employers

- **Hiring commitments and practical training by employers:** This programme's early labour market prospecting and intermediation activities sometimes resulted in hiring commitments being signed before training started, allowing training to be tailored to the specific needs of vacancies. In addition, employers were directly involved in providing practical training, getting to know participants and enabling them to carry out the "real world" functions of the occupation for which they were being training. Finally, the programme sought to inform employers about financial incentives, such as reductions in social security contributions and regional subsidies, for hiring participants from the target group.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Detailed monitoring through IT tools and in-depth assessments:** This programme allowed service providers to use the IT applications ORIENTASARE and IRIS to upload participant information directly into the PES information system (SISPE). The smaller scale of the project facilitated more effective monitoring, allowing detailed tracking of participants' progress and qualitative assessment of outcomes beyond job finding. Employability assessments were carried out at the beginning and end of participants' itineraries to evaluate improvements in employability and skills acquisition. In addition, the programme tracked participants' well-being and autonomy.

RRP objectives

- **Aiming for sustainable employment outcomes:** The programme sets an ambitious target of 50% of women who complete the programme successfully entering the labour market. This target not only drives the effectiveness and impact of the programme, but also supports ongoing follow-up with participants after programme completion, further enhancing their long-term integration into the labour market.

vi. Support for women in rural and urban areas in La Rioja

Good practice: IN ITINERE LAB: a mobile laboratory to support the improvement of women's employability in La Rioja (C23.I02.P01)

Programme description: This is a comprehensive programme aimed at women in vulnerable situations living in rural areas, consisting of the implementation of personalised socio-labour itineraries.

Responsible body: Regional Government of La Rioja, Ministry for Regional Development, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Dialogue and Labour Relations

Evidence-based design

- **Design informed by previous experiences and local stakeholders:** The design of the programme was developed by the service provider, drawing on previous experiences working in the same territory, as well as throughout Spain with similar target groups. The design strongly relied on established networks of partners, with local businesses and action groups playing a key role in shaping the programme design.

Engaging service providers

- **Performance-based payment model:** The payment model is designed to incentivise providers to deliver outcomes that are consistent with the programme's core objective of achieving stable employment for participants. Payments are linked to the achievement of key milestones such as labour market insertion. The model requires at least 20% of participants to achieve labour market integration, with proportional adjustments to the payments if targets are not met.
- **Comprehensive quality monitoring:** Regular visits are organised to almost all services of the programme to check their quality, the materials used and the adequacy of the venues and facilities. Furthermore, service providers are required to conduct very exhaustive satisfaction surveys among participants, that are complemented by an additional survey by the PES.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Combination of multiple identification channels:** The programme is targeted at unemployed women registered in population areas of under 5 000 inhabitants. To identify potential candidates, La Rioja employs a combination of administrative data and networks of specialised entities. The identification process includes (1) administrative data screening by employment offices, and (2) use of the service provider's network to reach women outside of the employment services network who might not yet be registered as jobseekers but are in contact with these entities.
- **Multi-faceted outreach strategy:** The programme combines direct, individualised outreach with broader campaigns carried out by service providers. Potential participants are contacted directly through email, SMS or WhatsApp with information about the programme. Furthermore, information about the programme is disseminated through the employment services' website and specific campaigns launched by service providers.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Broad range of services offered:** The programme covers a broad range of actions targeted at improving the skills of participants, including (1) actions related to transversal skills, including self-awareness, equality, finance education and teamwork; (2) labour counselling, including CV creation, interview preparation; (3) training on digital skills; (4) professional training that varied depending on itinerary. Furthermore, extra services were provided on a case-by-case basis for participants with specific needs in areas such as transport, legal counselling or work-life balance.

Case management and follow-up support

- **A network of mentors complements case management:** Each participant has a reference tutor who acts as a case manager, with a minimum number of hours dedicated to case management and accompaniment. Furthermore, the programme has an innovative mentoring scheme provided through a network of volunteers and collaborators with experience in a particular professional area. This mentoring is carried out through in-person and online meetings and entails counselling on specific sectors and providing important information to participants to help them transition towards the achievement of their professional goals.

Partnership with employers

- **Focus on matching needs of employers with those of participants:** The programme combines two complementary goals, by (1) aiming to improve the employability of women in rural areas and (2) focusing on the labour force needs of businesses in rural areas. To bring these objectives together, the training content was defined following prospection and discussion with the local employers. Furthermore, all women participated in practical traineeships directly with these employers, leading to very close contact between the programme participants and the firms.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Integrating stakeholder feedback into the evaluation framework:** The programme combines a series of tools for collecting stakeholder feedback as part of the evaluation framework. Programme participants receive a survey covering the usefulness of contents, their learning experiences, the didactic resources, the tele-training platform, the programme's coordination and their perception of the usefulness of the programme and how it has impacted their employability, motivation and network of contacts. The feedback is also collected through questionnaires addressed to training staff and through an additional satisfaction survey of the participants carried out by regional PES.

RRP objectives

- **Fostering green and digital skills and social and territorial cohesion:** 35% of the programme itineraries focus on green skills, and another 35% on digital skills although, given the reduced size of participant groups, most itineraries entail a combined approach of green and digital elements. Furthermore, social and territorial cohesion is one of the core goals of the programme. The focus on green and digital skills ensures that participants are equipped for future job markets, contributing to both environmental sustainability and technological advancement. By targeting women in rural and urban areas, particularly those in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants, the program addresses regional disparities and promotes social cohesion. This targeted approach helps bridge the gender gap in employment, supports the revitalization of rural areas, and contributes to the overall economic and social development of these regions.

vii. Support for women in rural and urban areas in Valencia

Good practice: Support for women in rural and urban areas in Valencia (C23.I02.P01)

Programme description: The programme provides personalised and integrated itineraries of guidance, counselling and training actions to women jobseekers in rural and urban areas.

Responsible body: Valencian Employment and Training Service (LABORA)

Evidence-based design

- **Design based on previous comprehensive programmes for vulnerable groups:** Drawing from EU and national regulations, the programme builds on the success of existing comprehensive support programmes, such as LABORA's Integrem and OPEA (Orientación para el empleo y autoempleo), which focused on personalised employment itineraries for vulnerable groups, including women.
- **Collaboration with trade unions to ensure quality employment:** The framework of the programme was significantly shaped by public consultations with trade unions prior to the publication of the call, resulting in the inclusion of their suggestions regarding work-life balance and recruitment to ensure quality employment outcomes for women.

Engaging service providers

- **Resolution system for a more equitable provider selection:** Although Valencia used a non-competitive concurrence procedure, it introduced a resolution system for provider selection that goes beyond the "first-come first-served" approach. If multiple applications are received on the same day, criteria such as gender equality plans, work-life balance initiatives, representation of women in leadership, and efforts towards ecological or digital transitions are considered. This ensures a more equitable and more strategic allocation of resources.
- **Performance-based payment model:** The payment model is designed to incentivise providers to deliver outcomes that are consistent with the programme's core objective of achieving stable employment for participants. Payments are linked to the achievement of key milestones such as labour market insertion. The model requires at least 20% of participants to achieve labour market integration, with proportional adjustments to the payments if targets are not met.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Dual identification strategy:** The programme targets unemployed women registered in population areas of under 5 000 inhabitants. To identify potential candidates, LABORA uses administrative data screening to create a list of eligible candidates based on the programme's criteria, which is shared with providers. Providers also have the option of independently selecting potential candidates and sending them to employment offices for registration and assessment. This dual identification approach enhances outreach by making full use of PES administrative data while allowing flexibility for providers to leverage their local knowledge.
- **Proactive outreach for participant engagement:** Service providers use a combination of emails, phone calls, and text messages to maximize participant engagement. Providers are required to select at least five potential candidates for each position offered on the programme and make a minimum of three attempts to contact each candidate at different times, either by phone or text message to keep records. This approach, supplemented by mass email campaigns and social media outreach, increases the likelihood of contacting potential participants and securing their participation in the programme.

Assessment and referral of participants

- **Well-structured initial assessment:** The initial assessment includes a two-hour personal interview covering an employment diagnosis and the development of a personalised plan. This plan outlines a minimum set of actions based on individual needs. The assessment follows a structured protocol provided by LABORA, which includes guidelines on how to conduct the interview. In addition, participants complete a self-assessment of their skills. All data and plans are recorded in the IT application “Colaborem” to ensure consistency and track progress.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Wide range of services for women's employment:** The programme offers a comprehensive approach to improving employability through a personalised employment plan. This includes employability diagnosis and design of the personalised employment itinerary, individual and group job orientation actions, training in fields relevant to local job markets, prospecting of the labour market to identify job opportunities, accompaniment and support, financial incentives to encourage women's participation as well as specific support grants for transportation and work-life balance.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Dedicated case management:** Each participant is assigned a dedicated case manager or tutor with a minimum number of case management hours to ensure consistent, personalised guidance and monitoring throughout the programme. This approach allows for tailored support that effectively addresses specific needs and challenges and promotes successful outcomes.

Partnership with employers

- **Proactive labour market prospecting and candidate presentation:** Labour market prospecting is carried out to identify personnel needs, required profiles and to attract job offers, with candidates being proposed to employers with multiple vacancies. The programme goes further by facilitating interviews between participants and employers and offering practical skills tests through simulations of real-life situations. This direct engagement increases participants' chances of securing employment by demonstrating their skills directly to employers.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Systematic monitoring through IT applications:** For programmes targeting rural and urban women, the monitoring framework collects general information about the programme, detailed participant-specific information, including demographic data, programme implementation details, and employment outcomes. The programme in Valencia stands for its systematic monitoring process. Service providers use LABORA's IT applications (Colaborem and eSidec) to track individual and group actions, training activities and to enter participant information directly into the PES databases. LABORA ensures the correct implementation of the programme through ongoing control and verification activities.

RRP objectives

- **Addressing objectives through well-defined targets:** Following the legal framework for programmes targeting rural and urban women, this programme addresses the key objectives of the RRP through clear and measurable targets. It tackles regional disparities by prioritising participants in municipalities with less than 5 000 inhabitants and directing at least one third of the investment to these areas. It promotes environmental sustainability and technological progress, by requiring that 35% of the programme itineraries focus on green skills, and another 35% on digital skills. Finally, at least 20% of women participating in the individualised itineraries are expected to achieve professional integration contributing to the effectiveness of the programme in achieving the desired impact on women's employment and reducing the gender gap.

viii. TándEM in the provincial directorates of SEPE

Good practice: TándEM training programme (C23.I01.P01)

Programme description: The programme provides training in alternation with employment to young people.

Responsible body: State Public Employment Service of Spain (SEPE)

Evidence-based design

- **Design based on many years of experience and input from stakeholders:** The programme builds on SEPE's long experience with mixed employment and training programmes since 1985 and incorporates best practices from international programmes targeting youth. Consultations with stakeholders, including ministries and social partners, helped shape the design of the programme. The design of the programme also benefited from the information on the results from the implementation of the workshop schools programme and the feedback from beneficiaries who had participated in previous editions.

Engaging service providers

- **Rigorous oversight for quality assurance:** SEPE's 52 provincial directorates conduct at least two visits per each TándEM project to monitor training in real work environments, ensuring that the programme's dual focus on training and employment is maintained. When problems are identified, SEPE teams work directly with the responsible entity to take corrective action, escalating to the SEPE central unit and higher-level supervisors as necessary to ensure effective remedial action.
- **Module-based payment system accounts for dropouts:** The programme uses a standardised module-based payment system across Spain, with a fixed monthly module rate per participant, which covers training costs, education materials, staff salaries, and insurance. It also subsidises 75% of the minimum wage, including social security contributions, for young participants who are hired under the alternating training contract modality. Payments are made in stages, starting with an initial payment for the first 3-6 months and adjusted for subsequent periods based on participant retention. Dropouts reduce future payments and service providers must reconcile any unspent funds. The dropout rate must not exceed 16%.

Identification and outreach to target population

- **Targeted recruitment and broad outreach strategies:** The TándEM programme targets unemployed people under the age of 30 who are registered as jobseekers, with further selection criteria tailored by a working group composed of service providers and General Directorate or Provincial Directorate of SEPE. These selection criteria are set at the programme level to maximise the match between participants' profiles and the programme content. Participants are identified through the administrative registers of employment offices, with outreach combining direct contact and wider dissemination through SEPE's website, social networks, the Empléate portal and other campaigns organised by service providers and regional PES to increase programme coverage.

Integrated and holistic support

- **Focused training with additional support services:** The main focus of the programme is the provision of alternating training and employment in areas with good professional prospects for young people who lack such experience. In addition to training and employment, participants may also receive professional and entrepreneurial support, psychological support, basic education for those with low levels of education, a salary, study aid, and transportation support, thus addressing multiple needs beyond training. For many young people, this programme is their first professional experience increasing their chances of integration into the labour market. SEPE has actively promoted the programme through meetings with youth-focused institutions to raise awareness of the programme among relevant stakeholders, fostering greater engagement and participation.

Case management and follow-up support

- **Case management and follow-up by a dedicated team:** For each TándEM project, the service provider is required to establish a dedicated technical team (Equipo Técnico de la Iniciativa, ETI), which provides professional guidance and psychological support tailored to the needs of participants. The configuration and functioning of the ETIs vary depending on the specific target group of the training provided and may include a multidisciplinary team consisting of administrative staff, teachers, psychologists, counsellors, etc. At the end of the project, the ETIs provide two months of follow-up support to help participants secure employment or pursue self-employment, facilitating a smooth transition to sustainable employment.

Partnership with employers

- **Strong collaboration with employers from public and non-profit sector:** Despite the lack of direct engagement with employers from private sector, the programme fosters strong collaboration with employers from the public and non-profit sectors, who play a pivotal role in the programme by providing hands-on real-world training that contributes to the development of community projects of general and social interest. The programme prioritises the development of green and digital skills, ensuring alignment with current labour market demands in Spain.

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Comprehensive monitoring of training and employment activities:** The programme monitors both the training and employment activities of young participants by collecting detailed information on service providers, participants, training activities, as well as details of employment contracts, including the employer's VAT number, type of contract, job description and start and end dates of their employment relationship. Monthly updates ensure effective monitoring of contract status, including any terminations or dropouts.

RRP objectives

- **Training for the green and digital transition with a focus on social and territorial cohesion:** The programme offers young people a mix of training and employment, with 25% of the programme dedicated to green skills (e.g. gardening, forestry, sustainable waste management, energy-efficient renovation) and 25% to digital skills (e.g. from basic digital literacy to specialised training, including AI-related professional activities and ICT network maintenance). These projects, implemented in different regions and often targeting particularly vulnerable young people (e.g. people with disabilities, Roma, immigrants), including sparsely populated areas, support the dual transition to a green and digital economy, while promoting social inclusion and reducing territorial disparities.
-

Notes

¹ In this report, the acronym ALMPs covers both “active labour market policies” and “active labour market programmes,” which are used interchangeably.

² Under this investment, SEPE also manages five pilot projects for vulnerable groups in Extremadura, Murcia (two projects), Valencia, and País Vasco, as well as the programme in Melilla. However, this report only assesses the programme carried out by SEPE in Ceuta.

³ SEPE's implementation of the programme for women victims of gender-based violence in Ceuta, Melilla and the provinces of Zaragoza (Aragón), Barcelona (Cataluña), Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid), Las Palmas (Canarias), Malaga and Seville (Andalucía) follows the same legal framework and is assessed in this report as a single programme.

⁴ PROFEA is a subsidy programme aimed at hiring workers in the agricultural sector during periods when they remain unemployed due to the seasonal nature of agricultural work, to carry out projects of general and social interest, such as the conservation and maintenance of rural, forest, heritage and environmental areas, and the improvement of village infrastructure, while strengthening the attachment of the rural population to the territories and thereby mitigating their depopulation.

⁵ The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp), implemented by the Joint Research Centre on behalf of the European Commission, outlines key components of digital competence across major areas and describes eight levels of digital proficiency. DigComp supports the EU's digital skills objectives and is being used by Member States to develop assessment tools and training materials, and to define professional digital profiles in employment, education and training, and social inclusion.

⁶ This includes the hotel and catering industry, travel agencies, car hire, road passenger transport, air transport, bingo organisers and manufacturers of cooked products for home delivery.

⁷ The Catalogue of Training Specialities is an instrument of transparency and dissemination of the training system, which summarises the training programmes offered by the National Employment System of Spain. It applies throughout the country and is regulated by [Order TMS/ 283 / 2019 of 12 March](#).

⁸ These programmes were: TIC and TURISMO implemented by SEPE-FUNDAE, and two programmes managed by SEPE through its Provincial Directorate in Ceuta.

⁹ See also OECD/DG Reform projects: ["Reforming the Swedish Public Employment Service"](#) and ["Labour market integration of the long-term unemployed in Slovenia"](#).

¹⁰ Serious Games are games that are explicitly designed for non-entertainment purposes (Serrano-Laguna et al., 2017^[38]). They are multimedia tools, and their versatility allow them to be used in different domains including assessing and promoting skill acquisition.

¹¹ Details of the programme are available on the main website: <https://www.1jeune1solution.gouv.fr/>.

¹² Note: SISPE (*Sistema de Información de los Servicios Públicos de Empleo*) is a centralised information system that integrates data from all employment services at the national and the regional levels. SEGISS (*Sistema Estatal de Gestión de la Información de Servicios Sociales*) is a management tool of primary care social services professionals.

¹³ See OECD/DG Reform project: “[Reforming the Existing and Designing of New Measures for Activating Inactive Persons and Their Inclusion in the Labour Market in Bulgaria](#)”, particularly the [note on new ways to reach out to employers](#).

¹⁴ Details of the programme are available on the main website: <https://linospiterifoundation.org/>.

¹⁵ Details of the programme are available on the main website: <https://www.lanzaderasdeempleo.es>.

¹⁶ See OECD-EC project on [policy impact evaluation through the use of linked administrative and survey data](#).

¹⁷ Currently called annual Plans for the Promotion of Decent Employment (PAFED).

¹⁸ A Theory of Change (ToC) is a comprehensive framework that outlines how and why a desired change is expected to occur in a specific context, linking specific activities and programmes to observable outcomes and impacts.

Improving Active Labour Market Policies in Spain

Lessons from a Qualitative Assessment

The report presents the findings of a qualitative assessment exercise covering 38 active labour market programmes (ALMPs) implemented under Spain's Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), and managed either by the State Public Employment Service (SEPE) or by regional public employment services. The assessment is structured around nine criteria covering the full ALMP cycle, from evidence-based design and effective outreach, through implementation and delivery of support, to monitoring and evaluation to inform decision making. The report identifies good practices across Spain and offers targeted recommendations to support mutual learning and guide the future development of ALMPs across the Spanish National Employment System. This report on Spain is the twentieth in a series of country reports on policies to connect people with better jobs.



Funded by
the European Union



PRINT ISBN 978-92-64-83443-9
PDF ISBN 978-92-64-55781-9



9 789264 834439