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# WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## COUNTRY REPORT

### SPAIN





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**47.54 mil**

Population

**51.00%**

Share of females

**61.51%**

Females' with low education level

**55.79%**

Females' with tertiary education level

**14.60%**

Females' unemployment rate

**7.40%**

Females' long-term unemployment rate

### Development of social enterprises

In Spain, the concept of the “social economy” is more commonly used and recognised in public discourse and policy discussions compared to the term “social enterprises.” The social economy concept has gained legal recognition through the Law on Social Economy (Law 5/2011), making Spain the first EU country to have dedicated legislation in this regard. It aims to support and promote the social economy as a distinct economic sector requiring public support and promotion.

In general, there is a perception that “social economy” refers to a broader concept that encompasses various economic activities and organisations with a social and solidarity-oriented purpose, while “social enterprises”, which do not have an official definition in Spain, refer to a subset of the social economy and are generally understood as businesses or organisations that pursue social objectives while generating revenue through their economic activities. However, in recent years, a new perspective has been evaluated, suggesting that social enterprises expand the boundaries of the social economy. Overall, there is a growing interest in social entrepreneurship in Spain.

### The main economic sectors for social enterprises

The service/hospitality sector (cafes, etc.), manufacturing of handmade gifts (souvenirs and other small items), agriculture (including processed items such as jams, honey, etc.).

### Ecosystem – women in social entrepreneurship

Considering the varying perspectives on the concepts of social economy and social enterprises, measuring the social entrepreneurs ecosystem in Spain becomes difficult. While traditional social enterprises fall under the umbrella of the social economy, newer emerging social enterprises may not fit within its scope. The available estimate produced by CEPES suggests that there are 43,192 social economy entities generating 2,184,234 million direct and indirect jobs.

There is no specific data on the social enterprises run by women. However, some fragmented information representing limited organisational (legal) forms is available. According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, there were 1.3 million registered females' Social Initiative Cooperatives in Spain in 2022. According to the ESEM 2021-22 surveyed social enterprises, on average, 63.10% of the workforce are women; 52.1% of the management teams are women; and 50.50% of the Boards have women representation. Additionally, 7.50% of founding teams consist entirely of women – suggesting that women are represented at all levels of the social enterprises.

### Key findings on women social entrepreneurship

Women are more likely than men to set up social enterprises in Spain, indicating that women are playing an increasingly important role in the field of social entrepreneurship.



Women-led social enterprises in Spain tend to focus on sectors such as health, education, and social services. Entrepreneurship is becoming a better professional option for women in Spain, with the gender gap in entrepreneurship narrowing over the last decade. Considering that women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship in Spain, social entrepreneurship can serve as an empowering tool for them. The policy level and legislation in Spain are gender neutral.

**WOMEN'S SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SPAIN  
CONTRIBUTES TO ECONOMIC  
GROWTH, SOCIAL INCLUSION,  
AND GENDER EQUALITY**

#### Key obstacles

- Cultural and societal norms that prioritise traditional gender roles and responsibilities.
- Accessing networks and resources due to gender stereotypes and biases.
- The work-life balance.
- Lack of specific financial support. Studies have shown that women-led social enterprises in Spain tend to receive less funding than those led by men, which can limit their ability to grow and expand their businesses.

#### Key knowledge and skills need

- There is a need for a deeper understanding of the social and environmental issues to address.
- A high level of knowledge of the relevant industries and sectors, as well as leadership, communication, financial management, marketing, networking, and innovation.
- Possession of strong leadership and management skills.

- There is a need to be able to navigate the complex legal and regulatory environment in Spain - this includes knowledge of legal structures, tax laws, and regulations related to social entrepreneurship.
- Women social entrepreneurs in Spain should leverage their unique strengths, such as their empathy, resilience, adaptability, creativity, and problem-solving.

#### Drivers and opportunities

- Social entrepreneurship is a tool that can be used to empower women by providing them with opportunities to become financially independent and improve their social status.
- A desire to address social and environmental issues in their communities, and to make a difference in the lives of others.
- There are several organisations and initiatives in Spain that are focused on promoting women's entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, including the Women's Institute and the Spanish Association of Women Entrepreneurs.
- There are several funding programs and initiatives designed to support women entrepreneurs, including the Break Fellowship Programme, which awards funding of over 7,000 EUR to EU resident women social entrepreneurs.
- The growing interest among investors and venture capitalists in supporting social enterprises that are led by women.

#### Policy recommendation to empower women

increasing access to funding and financial resources for women entrepreneurs, promoting greater gender equality with various measures, providing access to training and mentorship to develop skills for establishing and running successful business, and networking opportunities.



#### POLICY MAKERS AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- [The Ministry for Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda](#)
- [The Spanish Business Confederation of Social Economy \(CEPES\) \(Cooperatives\)](#)
- [The Esade Institute for Social Innovation](#)
- Banks (Cajas): [www.santander.com](http://www.santander.com); [www.bbva.com](http://www.bbva.com); [www.lacaixa.com](http://www.lacaixa.com)

#### ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS REPRESENTING SE SECTOR

- [The National Association of Self-Employed and Entrepreneurial Women - ANMEYA](#)
- [Fundación Mujeres \(Women's foundation\)](#)
- [Asociación Sociocultural Cincuentopía](#) (association for persons aged 50+ willing to start a business)

#### KEY FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- [ASHOKA](#) (supports social entrepreneurs and their initiatives)
- [The Break Fellowship](#) (incubation and skills development for women entrepreneurship in Spain)
- [InvestMed](#) (development of sustainable entrepreneurship and business initiatives)
- "Mujeres emprendedoras" (by Microbank) - microcredits without guarantees for women with financial difficulties
- [Microcréditos sin avales](#) - microfinancing (up to 25,000 EUR) to women starting business or consolidating existing one
- [Scale Impact](#) - acceleration and financing program for projects that address social inclusion

#### DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE & MENTORING

- [Program Innovatia 8.3](#) (promotes women's entrepreneurship, run by the University of Santiago de Compostela)
- Social Tides Aspire track - SE acceleration and incubation online programme
- [Virtual School for Equality](#) (run by the Institute for Women and Equal Opportunities)
- [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#)
- [MICROWD](#) (crowdfunding)
- [Bolsa Social](#) (crowdfunding)
- [MentorDay](#) (voluntary entrepreneurs help to successfully launch a business project)
- "[Programa de apoyo empresarial a las mujeres](#)" - ESF advising programme for women

#### BUSINESS SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS & OTHER

- [Impact Hub Madrid \(co-working space, various programs and events to support social entrepreneurs\)](#)
- [Astrade](#) (association supporting people with developmental disorders and their families)
- [Ship2B](#) (invests in social impact start-ups and provides support for social entrepreneurs)

#### OTHER

- [EU Prize for Women Innovators](#) (EU programme - rewards the women entrepreneurs whose projects have created the greatest impact in terms of innovation)
- "[Lilí Álvarez](#)" Awards (highlights the journalistic works about the equality between women and men)
- "[Programa desafío mujer rural](#)" - facilitation of projects led by women in rural areas
- [Generación propósito](#) - a social leadership programme for young people (aged 20-30)
- [Fiscal exemption](#) (income generated by social enterprises via membership fees is exempt from taxation)

#### Used sources:

- CEPES. [General statistics of the Social Economy](#)
- European Commission (2020), Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe – Spain , Authors: Diaz, M., Marcuello, C., Nogales, R.
- European Parliament (2022), [Social Economy in Spain](#). Briefing paper for EMPL delegation to Madrid, 21-23 February 2022, PE 703.349
- The [Euclid Network](#) Knowledge Centre, [Ecosystem mapping: Country factsheet, Spain](#)
- U.POWER Country Report of Spain (analysis of data and expert interviews) by AEII

#### Statistical data sources

- DataReportal, Population of Spain (2023)
- National Institute of Statistics in Spain, [Level of education](#) (2021)
- National Institute of Statistics in Spain, [Unemployment rates](#) (2022, 2021)



# SUCCESS STORIES





# SPAIN

## LactApp Success Story



**ALBA PADRÓ  
AROCAS (CEO)**

Sector: Maternity

[facebook.com/LactApp/](https://facebook.com/LactApp/)

[www.lactapp.es](http://www.lactapp.es)

### LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

N/A

### EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

From 2017 to the present, Alba's company has attended more than 19 million queries, in addition 23% of mothers in Spain use the app.

### SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Alba Padró became a mother 18 years ago, a stage that awakened her interest in the world of breastfeeding and support for nursing mothers. In 2004 she began volunteering as an adviser in one of the support groups of the Alba Breastfeeding Association, and since then she has answered 24-hour emergency lactation inquiries via the association's telephone number.

### THE MAIN AIM

This mobile application, LactApp, which is free and available globally, offers personalised help to women who are breastfeeding or lactating. This application resolves more than 100,000 weekly queries, with download levels that put it in the thousands. For a high percentage of users, it has helped them improve their breastfeeding experience.

### QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

**"A MOTHER WITH RELIABLE INFORMATION ALWAYS MAKES GOOD DECISIONS"**



# SPAIN

## LactApp Success Story



### ARANCHA MARTÍNEZ (CEO)

Sector: NGO

[facebook.com/itwilbe.org](https://www.facebook.com/itwilbe.org)

[www.it-willbe.org/](http://www.it-willbe.org/)

#### LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

*You must understand the problem you are trying to solve from the user perspective. Do not be afraid to get things wrong.*

#### EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

Thousands of children have been helped to escape disadvantaged situations and receive an education, the percentage of child labour exploitation has been reduced and women's empowerment has been helped. This website <https://it-willbe.org/> also includes its commitments to the United Nations 2030 Agenda.



#### INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

At 24 years old, it was clear to Arancha that changing the world was possible. She has training in business and international relations and professional experience in strategic marketing and finance.

#### THE MAIN AIM

At it-willbe.org they know that to solve the greatest social challenges they need to attract talent, professionals capable of innovating and replicating technologies that have revolutionised other sectors to find new business models and solutions that allow the sector to fulfil its mission. They integrate children and their families in production processes to manufacture specialised furniture for children with disabilities. Achieving social changes based on social cooperation.

The impact of this social enterprise is at two levels. The first group of direct beneficiaries are children. The second group of direct beneficiaries consists of those parents of children that are employed.

#### QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

***"IN A WORLD WHERE TECHNOLOGY IS SOLVING SO MANY PROBLEMS, I WONDERED, WHY DOESN'T TECHNOLOGY HELP TO END POVERTY?"***





# SPAIN

## Social Nest Foundation Success Story

**social  
nest\_**  
foundation

**MARGARITA  
ALBORS (CEO)**

Sector: Social foundation

[facebook.com/Socialnest/](https://facebook.com/Socialnest/)  
[www.socialnest.org](http://www.socialnest.org)

### LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

*The social problem should be embedded in the enterprise from the very beginning. The solution should be a part of the business operations.*

### EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

From 2021 to the present, they have helped a number of people to start their business with various programs.



### INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Margarita Albors is a philanthropist, entrepreneur and investor with experience in impact investing and entrepreneurship and social innovation. Margarita is the President of the Social Nest Foundation, where she has been dedicating her energy and passion to build a network of leaders in impact investing and sustainable investing, inspiring, educating and connecting private and institutional investors.

### THE MAIN AIM

Social Nest Foundation provides the resources, opportunities, and personalised guidance that entrepreneurs, business, governments, and investors need to create solutions to the most pressing challenges

facing humanity. They have a wide variety of programs for start-up, impact investment, diversity, corporate programs and innovative techniques. The institution joins forces with companies who aim to create a positive impact on the world through open innovation.

### QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

***“THE WAY TO START IS TO STOP TALKING AND START DOING.”***

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