

## Editorial

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Until not long ago, we tended to think older people were the group with the highest rates of poverty and social exclusion and that, by extension, they were the worst affected by the 2008 financial crisis. But the reality is that, for years now, we have seen instead how poverty and social exclusion have become more prevalent and serious among children. This is a trend we share with most of our neighbouring countries, but with some significant differences. On the one hand, this phenomenon could be due to various demographic, work-related and economic changes on a European and global level. But, on the other hand, it also seems to be caused by political changes that are linked to how our social protection models work.

The Spanish case has certain unique features, not just because it is one of the countries with the highest child poverty rates in the region (24% compared to an OECD average of 13%), but also due to the underlying causes. In that respect, the Spanish welfare state displays a strong trend towards what some have called *dualisation*, a characteristic of the country's labour market and its social protection model. On the one hand, we have a labour market that excludes a large number of social groups (young people, women, single mothers, people aged over 45, migrants, etc.) or condemns them to what has been described as the new insecurity. These are the outsiders. On the other hand, we have a social protection system that, paradoxically, is closely linked to participating in the labour force and which, therefore, tends to overprotect the groups most active in the workplace: the insiders. That way, while the latter enjoy policies and benefits with a greater redistributive impact (mainly of a contributory nature, such as unemployment benefits or retirement pensions linked to participation in the job market), the former are subject to non-contributory policies with less redistributive potential (such as minimum wages and emergency social funding provided by regional and municipal bodies).

Part of this more excluded group is made up of children, teenagers and young people in general, who benefit from policies for minors and family allowances, the coverage and intensity of which is usually very low in both Catalonia and Spain. The lack of specific grants or allowances for children and families, the non-existence of free public education for 0 to 3 year-olds, increased poverty and greater economic polarisation in general linked to the high rates of job insecurity in Spain are just some of the factors that explain why children are so badly affected by poverty.

We can therefore say that children in poor households are doubly punished. First, because there are not enough really effective public policies designed specifically for children, and second, because their parents tend to coincide with the population we have identified above as having less security and at the same time, due to their exclusion from the job market, less access to the contributory benefits that are more effective when it comes to reducing poverty and inequality.

Empirical evidence shows that parents' level of education is closely linked to the future wealth (or poverty) of their children. However, as pointed out in one of the articles in this issue of *Barcelona Societat*, we also know that parents' economic status and the frequency with which they have experienced prolonged periods of poverty are another significant variable. That is why our alarming child poverty rates are a reflection of the current shortcomings of the welfare state and in how the labour market works in Spain, as well as being a very illustrative measure for estimating future poverty and inequality rates. Unfortunately, the poor children of today are very likely to become the poor adults of tomorrow.

Given the obvious deficiencies in most policies for children in Spain and the complexities and particularities of our urban reality, municipal social policies currently play a vital role in reducing child poverty rates and everything points to their becoming even more important in years to come. From mental and physical health, via primary, secondary and further education, to policies on incomes and family allowances, here in Barcelona, a great deal of effort and lots of resources are being put into fighting child poverty and, in general, to ensuring a decent quality of life for all the city's children. Let's remember: wealth is inherited, but so is poverty.