



THE SPANISH FOOD BASKET

MADRID

- The European Reference Budgets Network is a project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop cross-national, comparable reference budgets in all EU Member States. Reference budgets are baskets of goods and services considered necessary for an individual household to achieve an acceptable standard of living within a given country, region or city. Preparing reference budgets with a common methodology can help EU Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures and to encourage mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. More information about the project as well as the full country reports can be found on the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu/!CC79TD>

The Spanish food basket indicates the monthly budget required for an adequate food intake by three reference households (consisting of children and people of working age, in good health, without disabilities and living in the capital city). The basket includes a budget for food and for the kitchen equipment required to prepare, serve, consume and preserve this food. Furthermore, it takes into account the necessary budget for physical activity

and for other functions of food, such as its social function for example. The food basket has been developed in accordance with nutritionist recommendations and national dietary guidelines and takes into account the cultural specificities of Spanish eating habits. The feasibility and acceptability of the basket have been verified through focus group discussions involving citizens with different socio-economic backgrounds.

1. Key findings

The Spanish Food Budget: monthly amounts in euros, Madrid, March 2015



- The monthly budget required for a healthy diet in Spain is **EUR 174 for a single person** and **EUR 647 for a family of two adults and two children**. If the budget needed for physical activity

and the other functions of food (eating out, holidays, etc.) is also taken into consideration, the **total monthly food budget** amounts to **EUR 199 for a single person** and **EUR 702 for a family of two adults and two children**.

- A previous Spanish food basket was developed within the framework of the ImPRovE project, for which the reference city was Barcelona. The present project has taken Madrid as a reference city, focusing on consumption patterns, acceptability and prices in this city. It is worth noting is that the differences are small, which suggests that living conditions are very similar in both cities.

2. National specificities

Developing cross-national, comparable European reference budgets requires the differences between the respective budgets of the Member States to be explained according to the institutional, cultural, climatological and economic context of the

country concerned. The Spanish food basket takes the following factors into account:

➔ Dietary habits

The National Survey on Nutritional Intake conducted in 2011 by the Spanish Agency for Food Security and Nutrition revealed the Spaniards have too high a consumption of meat products and a too low a consumption of nuts, carbohydrates, fruit and vegetables. Over recent decades, Spanish people have moved away from the Mediterranean diet, while the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolaemia and obesity increased sharply.

➔ National food guidelines

The food basket has been developed in accordance with the national food guidelines. The Spanish Agency for Food Security and Nutrition and the Spanish Society of Community Nutrition have developed nutritional recommendations for the Spanish population. They take into account the main diet-related public health challenges and are based on the principles of the Mediterranean diet. Developed in 2004, the healthy eating pyramid is used as an instrument to promote health and general well-being. It gives recommendations regarding portion quantities for adults and is divided into seven different basic food groups: grains and potatoes; vegetables; olive oil; dairy products; fish, meat, eggs, legumes and nuts; processed meat products; and sweets. It also includes guidelines relating to hydration and physical activity.

➔ The pricing of the basket

The pricing of the food basket was conducted in 2015 in Madrid. A single supermarket chain was selected for combined

purchases on the basis of a study by the Spanish consumers' association comparing the different retailers in Spain. The chosen retailer can be found throughout Spain, offers good-quality products at reasonable prices and is very convenient to reach, even for non-car owners, as it is located within the city centres. The pricing was conducted by taking due account of the required quantity, quality and storage life, whilst looking for the appropriate packaging at the lowest possible price.

➔ Physical activity

Besides the budget required for a healthy diet, the food basket also includes a minimum budget for physical activity, as this is presented in the national guidelines as a general requirement for a healthy lifestyle. Physical activity is understood as moderate exertion that causes the heart to beat faster and leads to light sweating. Adults are recommended to undertake 30 minutes of daily physical activity, while children and teenagers ideally need to undertake 60 minutes of sport every day. Recommended activities include walking, cycling and housework. Since the costs for paid physical activities are very high in Spain and the recommended activities are free of charge, no additional costs are foreseen in the Spanish food basket.

➔ Other functions of food

The food basket also incorporates the social, cultural and emotional functions of food that have been identified by focus group participants as necessary for adequate participation in Spanish society. Cooking festive dishes for holidays and celebrations such as Twelfth Night and Christmas, eating out once in a while and inviting friends and family over are seen as constitutive functions of food.