



# BRIDGING THE GAP

## Enhancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Colorectal Cancer Care in Spain

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Spain** has a well-developed CRC care framework, anchored by regional organised screening programmes, advanced diagnostic and treatment services, and strong professional networks. Universal healthcare coverage ensures broad access, but variation in implementation between autonomous communities leads to inequities in screening participation, timeliness of diagnosis, and access to cutting-edge therapies.

At **Level 4**, the focus is on harmonising standards across regions, integrating precision medicine consistently, and strengthening survivorship pathways.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Harmonising excellence across diverse regions

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer in Spain, with survival rates improving due to effective screening and high-quality treatment in major centres. However, decentralised governance means performance varies — some regions achieve >70% screening coverage, while others lag behind.

Advanced molecular testing and innovative therapies are available but not uniformly adopted. Addressing these disparities will be key to moving **towards Level 5 maturity**.





# COLORECTAL CANCER IN SPAIN

## Current Landscape and Strategic Gaps

Pillar	Current Status	Strength	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	Organised FIT-based screening offered in most regions for ages 50–69; participation rates vary by >20 percentage points regionally.	National cancer strategy endorses screening, strong public health infrastructure.	Harmonise screening implementation and participation targets nationwide; ensure rapid diagnostic workup for positive cases.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	RAS, BRAF, MSI/MMR testing widely available in tertiary hospitals; access to broad genomic profiling inconsistent between regions.	Established pathology and molecular networks in major cancer centres.	Expand equitable access to advanced NGS panels; integrate results into electronic health records for treatment planning.
Treatment Access	High-quality surgery, radiotherapy, targeted therapies, and immunotherapy available; access to latest agents varies by region and reimbursement decisions.	Multidisciplinary teams standard in oncology units.	Streamline national drug approval and reimbursement processes to minimise delays; expand access to innovative therapies in all autonomous communities.
Clinical Guidelines & Quality Standards	National guidelines in place; regional adaptation leads to some variability in adherence.	Strong professional societies driving evidence-based practice.	Standardise adherence to national guidelines and link compliance to quality monitoring frameworks.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Well-developed palliative care in many regions; survivorship care plans emerging but not universal.	Integration of palliative care into oncology pathways in leading hospitals.	Develop national survivorship frameworks; scale early palliative care integration across all cancer centres.





## CONCLUSION & Call to Action

Spain's CRC system is strong, but inequities in access and outcomes persist due to regional variation in screening, molecular testing, and therapy availability. Achieving uniform excellence requires national coordination, consistent funding, and stronger data integration to monitor and address gaps.



### KEY POLICY PRIORITIES

- 1 Harmonise screening participation :** align regional programmes with national targets and improve outreach to under-screened populations.
- 2 Expand precision oncology access :** ensure equitable provision of NGS testing and integrate results into treatment pathways.
- 3 Reduce therapy access delays :** streamline reimbursement and procurement processes across regions.
- 4 Standardise guideline adherence :** implement national audits and quality benchmarks.
- 5 Strengthen survivorship and palliative care :** implement structured survivorship plans and ensure universal early palliative care access.

## CONCLUSION

At **Level 4** maturity, Spain's CRC system is well-established but uneven in delivery. Focusing on harmonisation, equity, and rapid adoption of innovation will enable the country to progress towards a fully integrated, high-performing Level 5 system.