

# Living on a Diet:

## A Brief Study of the Daily Allowances of Public Workers in Spain

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# Academics travel a lot



**General mobility** represents **75%** of the carbon footprint of the average PhD student



**Attending conferences** accounts for **35%** of the total footprint (close to half of all mobility)

# Per Diem

/pə: 'di:ɛm/

*adverb*

adverb: per diem

for each day (used in financial contexts).

"he agreed to pay at certain specified rates per diem"

*noun*

noun: per diem; plural noun: per diems

an allowance or payment made for each day.

"per diems are still allowed for out-of-state legislators"

Cuantías en euros		
	Por alojamiento	Por manutención
Grupo 1	136,23	55,00
Grupo 2	110,00	55,00
Andalucía	86,56	65,70
Grupo 1	79,60	64,00
Grupo 2	64,91	50,49
Grupo 3		
Argelia	133,00	55,00
Grupo 1	105,97	44,47
Grupo 2	89,55	43,07
Grupo 3		
Argentina	136,42	64,50
Grupo 1	113,18	50,25
Grupo 2	97,96	50,44
Grupo 3		
Australia	84,96	57,12
Grupo 1	81,14	53,27
Grupo 2	71,82	48,12
Grupo 3		
Austria	112,99	60,10
Grupo 1	90,96	50,10
Grupo 2	84,74	50,10
Grupo 3		
Bélgica	118,29	61,10
Grupo 1	108,65	55,10
Grupo 2	101,02	55,10
Grupo 3		
Bolivia	60,00	55,00
Grupo 1	55,00	55,00
Grupo 2	45,00	55,00
Grupo 3		
Bosnia-Herzegovina	86,96	55,10
Grupo 1	72,72	55,10
Grupo 2	64,56	55,10
Grupo 3		
Brasil	140,29	60,10
Grupo 1	120,00	60,10
Grupo 2	102,99	60,10
Grupo 3		
Bulgaria	62,51	55,10
Grupo 1	53,49	55,10
Grupo 2	46,46	55,10
Grupo 3		
Camerún	103,37	60,10
Grupo 1	88,35	60,10
Grupo 2	77,63	60,10
Grupo 3		
Canadá	105,59	60,10
Grupo 1	84,36	60,10
Grupo 2	80,34	60,10
Grupo 3		
Chile	130,20	60,10
Grupo 1	103,37	60,10
Grupo 2	90,15	60,10
Grupo 3		
China	84,14	60,10
Grupo 1	71,50	60,10
Grupo 2	63,11	60,10
Grupo 3		
Colombia	146,44	60,10
Grupo 1	123,64	60,10
Grupo 2	109,39	60,10
Grupo 3		
Corea	130,20	60,10
Grupo 1	103,37	60,10
Grupo 2	90,15	60,10
Grupo 3		
Costa de Marfil	72,12	60,10
Grupo 1		

Página 2

Disposición final sexta. Grupo 1  
El presente Real Decreto  
publicación en el «Boletín  
Dado en Madrid a 24



LEGISLACIÓN CONSOLIDADA

Real Decreto 462/2002, de 24 de mayo, sobre indemnizaciones por razón del servicio.

Ministerio de la Presidencia  
«BOE» núm. 129, de 30 de mayo de 2002  
Referencia: BOE-A-2002-10337

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Página 1

# Daily Allowance Table

	Cuantías en euros		
	Por alojamiento	Por mantenc.	Dieta entera
<i>Alemania</i>			
Grupo 1	155,66	68,52	224,18
Grupo 2	132,82	59,50	192,32
Grupo 3	117,20	56,50	173,69
<i>Andorra</i>			
Grupo 1	54,69	44,47	99,17
Grupo 2	46,88	37,86	84,74
Grupo 3	41,47	34,86	76,33
<i>Angola</i>			
Grupo 1	158,67	66,71	225,38
Grupo 2	135,23	59,50	194,73
Grupo 3	119,00	55,89	174,89
<i>Arabia Saudita</i>			
Grupo 1	86,55	60,70	147,25
Grupo 2	73,92	54,09	128,02
Grupo 3	64,91	50,49	115,39
<i>Argelia</i>			
Grupo 1	119,00	51,09	170,09

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PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN  
UNIVERSITY RECTORS

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● WITHOUT A BACHELOR'S DEGREE

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● CLOSE TO ALL ACADEMIC STAFF



# Daily Allowance Table

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● MAXIMUM AMOUNT PER NIGHT

# Daily Allowance Table

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FULL AMOUNT,  
GET TO KEEP UNSPENT FUNDS \*

# Some highlights from this table

Lists **98 countries** after including Spain

Average total diet is **142 € per day**

Hasn't changed for **20+ years** (since 2002)

Includes the defunct **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

Totals are **miscalculated** for 1 in 4 countries

## RESEARCH QUESTION

**Which are the best and worst countries to attend a conference as a researcher in Spain?**

(financially speaking)

# Methodology



## Spanish Daily Allowances

Official table from Annex III of **RD 462/2002**



## Accommodation Prices

Room rates for hotels and guesthouses in **Booking.com** located  $\leq 5$ km away from the city center of the **capital** of each country



## Meal Prices

**Numbeo's** Average price at an inexpensive restaurant per country

# Profit or Plummet Score

Daily amount of euros a researcher gets to **keep or pay** out of pocket




$$(1) \quad \text{PPS} = \text{PPS}_{\text{lodging}} + \text{PPS}_{\text{meals}}$$

$$(2) \quad \text{PPS}_{\text{lodging}} = \min(\text{MaxLodging} - \text{AvgLodging}, 0)$$

$$(3) \quad \text{PPS}_{\text{meals}} = \text{MaxMeals} - 2 \cdot \text{AvgMeals}$$

# Results

---

#	Country	Profit or Plummet Score (PPS)		
		Lodging	Meals	Total
 1	Japan	-2.75	84.50	81.75
 2	Colombia	0.00	69.47	69.47
 3	Brazil	0.00	69.31	69.31
:	:	:	:	:
92	Spain	-106.81	11.40	-95.41
93	Malta	-103.06	1.85	-134.01
94	Jamaica	-166.43	32.42	-134.01
95	United States	-222.95	33.30	-189.65

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# Conclusion

The **PPS is  $\geq 0$**  for only **55 countries**

Where researchers do not lose money when travelling

**All countries** have a **positive PPS<sub>meals</sub>**

Meal allowances are fine

**68% of countries** have a **negative PPS<sub>lodging</sub>**

Researchers lose on average 33 € per night on accommodation



# Thanks for listening

## Any questions?

### Living on a Diet: A Brief Study of the Daily Allowances of Public Workers in Spain

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#### Abstract

Academic researchers in Spain are entitled to financial compensation to cover accommodation and meals when attending conferences. The amount of this compensation, known as *per diem* or daily allowance, varies with the destination country and is defined in an official table set by the government in 2002. This study examines the adequacy of these allowances by comparing them to current accommodation and meal costs, defining a score to find countries where researchers can attend conferences without incurring financial loss. Our results show that only 55 countries offer neutral or positive results, highlighting the need to update the official table to suit current cost of living conditions.

#### 1 Introduction

When traveling outside their workplace, Spanish public workers (from Ph.D. students to civil servants) are entitled to receiving a monetary compensation for their travel expenses. This compensation is known as *per diem* or daily allowance and covers both accommodation and meals. The daily allowance amounts are officially defined in a royal decree published back in 2002 [1] and change depending on the country of destination, presumably to account for differences in the cost of living. Despite remaining unchanged for more than two decades, no previous research has studied the fairness of the *per diem* mandated by the Spanish government, neither their adequacy compared to current day prices. Looking at these amounts is of particular interest to academic researchers, who are known to work under precarious conditions and have to decide which foreign conferences to attend in order to avoid losing money.

In this paper we try to answer a simple yet so far ignored question: what are the best and worst countries to attend a conference as a Spanish researcher from a monetary point of view? To do so, we define a score per country based on its daily allowance and average price of accommodations and meals. Our findings show that only 55 out of 95 countries are neutral or net positive for researchers, 55 out of 95 countries are neutral or net positive for researchers, 55 out of 95 countries are neutral or net positive for researchers. We who have to pay out of pocket for the remaining destinations. We also find that the official daily allowance table has miscalculated total amounts for 25 countries, which have remained unchanged for the past 20+ years.

**Artifacts.** For reproducibility and to encourage new research on this topic, we provide the whole dataset and results as Apache Parquet and CSV files at <https://zenodo.org/uploads/13923674>.

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#### 2 Methodology

For this research, we build a thorough dataset comprising the following sources:

**Daily Allowance Table.** We use the Spanish government's official *per diem* table published in Annex III of the Royal Decree 462/2002 [1]. This table shows the maximum amount in euros that a Spanish public worker is allowed to spend per day on accommodation (lodging) and food (meals), which varies depending on the country of destination. Other expenses, such as transportation, are not subject to this table. This amount also varies with the body and scale of the public worker. All personnel are classified in 3 groups according to Annex I of the same document. We focus on prices from the 2nd group since close to all academic staff fall into it. To give some context, the 1st group is for senior officials such as the Prime Minister of Spain and university rectors, and the 3rd group consist of employees without a bachelor's degree.

**Accommodation Prices.** Due to the complexity of the hospitality sector, we could not find a current or public dataset that met our needs. As a compromise, we crawl the popular lodging reservation website Booking.com to get aggregated data on room rates per night [2]. We search for hotels and guesthouses in the capital of each of the countries listed in the previous daily allowance table, filtering out all locations more than 5 km away from the city center. We acknowledge that not all academic events take place in a nation's capital city. However, this serves as a nice compromise to keep the methodology simple for this brief preliminary study. We pick the same travel dates for all searches to consistently compare rates across cities.<sup>1</sup>

**Average Meal Prices.** We use Numbeo's to get the current average meal price in euros at an inexpensive restaurant per country [4]. Numbeo is the largest crowd-sourced, publicly available database of consumer prices, having been cited by several newspapers in the likes of The New York Times, the BBC, and The Guardian [3].

#### 2.1 Score Calculation

To assess the suitability of a country with regard to traveling to an event as a Spanish public worker, we define a metric called *Profit* or *Flinner Score* (FPS). The FPS is the daily amount of money in euros that a researcher gets to keep when returning from their trip (profit) or has to pay out of pocket to cover their expenses (plummet). This score is comprised of two parts:

$$FPS = FPS_{\text{lodging}} + FPS_{\text{meals}} \quad (1)$$

<sup>1</sup>We choose Monday, March 10 through Friday, March 14, 2025 because they are far enough away from October 2024 when we did the searches, they span a work week, and they do not overlap with a major holiday.

José Miguel Moreno. 2024. *Living on a Diet: A Brief Study of the Daily Allowances of Public Workers in Spain*. Proceedings of the 1st Precarity and Instability in Academia Symposium. <https://pias.cc/2024/proceedings/living-on-a-diet>