

Rural bank branches, key to offering financial services without exclusion

- ***Branch networks, mobile branches and rural ATMs are essential for democratising banking services in the most depopulated areas.***
- ***These municipalities are home to a significant percentage of people over 65 years of age, some of them with difficulties in using new technologies or with mobility problems.***
- ***CaixaBank has branches in a total of 3,142 towns, 45% of which are in rural areas.***

Opening an account, applying for a loan or withdrawing cash from an ATM are commonplace operations for the majority of the population, but they can become an ordeal for the inhabitants of any small town. In 2022, more than 2,700 towns in Spain had no access to banking services, according to the Report on Financial Inclusion in Spain" by the Valencian Institute of Economic Research. This figure reflects the lack of democratisation of financial services in the most rural areas, and highlights the problems that people in these localities have in carrying out the simplest banking transactions. In addition, these municipalities are home to a significant percentage of people over 65 years of age, some of whom have difficulties in using new technologies or mobility problems.

For these reasons, over the last few years the populations of rural Spain have expressed their growing need for an improved network of banking services. The increase of branch networks, the implementation of rural ATMs and the deployment of mobile branches are three essential actions that allow the rapid and effective democratisation of banking services in rural areas.

CaixaBank has played a crucial role in bringing banking services to the entire population, including vulnerable groups and rural areas. The bank covers a total of 1,342 towns throughout the country, and has the largest banking network in Spain, with close to 4,000 branches. This capillarity also extends to rural areas, where the financial group has a total of 1,835 branches and counters in towns of less than 10,000 inhabitants.

Thanks to its mobile branches, with which customers and non-customers can carry out the most common banking operations, the bank reached a total of 798 towns between January and March 2024 that do not have any face-to-face point to access this type of services.

Through ATMs, the bank is able to reach around 340 small towns and villages with access to financial services. Furthermore, of the 1,835 branches that the banking group has in the rural sector, around 230 are located in towns with less than 1,000 inhabitants, and in 458 of these rural towns, CaixaBank is the only entity present.

Thus, the financial group strives, year after year, to expand its presence throughout Spain and to commit itself to financial inclusion in Spain. And it is thanks to the commitment and efforts of banking institutions that the democratisation of rural services is undoubtedly an increasingly present reality.