

News

A new Time Bank has recently opened in Marbella, where members trade abilities, services, and knowledge

Time is worth more than money

CRISTINA GONZÁLEZ

“Today for you, tomorrow for me”, six words that sum up the spirit of an initiative that has cropped up in many Spanish cities, among them Malaga and a newly opened establishment in Marbella. Hugo Coche is one of the members of a peculiar bank where there isn't any money or any vaults. Instead the bank offers an array of services based on the abilities of its members, and it pays with hours, not money. Each client offers their own abilities to the rest of the members and can earn the help of others who want to share what they know. This is how the Time Bank works, a system that caught the attention of Hugo, a Chilean who has spent the last 20 years in Spain, and prompted him join and offer to give English classes.

As of now, after being open for a few short months, this system of exchanging services, abilities, and knowledge, located in the Divina

Pastora Civic Centre is being supported by the local Welfare Department and the organisation 'Marbella Voluntaria' and has attracted 13 members. The hours they give range from advice about investing in the stock market or teaching how to cut hair, to technology or language classes, or even plumbing. “Everyone offers whatever they want to give and gets back whatever they need”, explains Marta Fernández, who runs the Time Bank.

The system is simple. A database shows offers and requests and tells members how to agree on an exchange, which doesn't necessarily have to be reciprocated by the same person. They can also form workshops if several people are requesting the same type of class or opportunity. “When you give for example three hours of a service in the bank your account is credited with three hours that you can spend on anything that interests you”, says Marta, adding that this part of the

bank is an important tool, especially in times of crisis.

This opinion is shared by Laura Ruiz, another member who praises the bartering done by past generations. “There are some activities that you can't access because of your schedule or because they're expensive”, she remarks. Laura is available to give technology classes to those who want to plunge into the world of personal computers, and in return she uses the Time Bank to improve her knowledge of foreign languages such as English or French. “Sometimes it's important to do things without hoping for something in return, to enjoy our collective knowledge because it makes you a better person”.

Equality and self-esteem

But the benefits of the Time Bank aren't limited to learning how to cook or finding a reliable baby-sitter. Fernández emphasizes that it's about creating an egalitarian system “where a housekeeper who teaches you how to prepare dinner and a lawyer who gives you legal advice” are equally valued because it increases self-esteem, integration, and personal relationships. The only obstacle is mistrust, an emotion that is early overcome at the regular meetings of the members, although the Bank is only just getting started.

Some interesting statistics emerge from examining the Bank's first dozen members. The majority of them are between the ages of 30 and 40, half have jobs, 12% are retired, and the rest are unemployed. Many of the initial members of the Bank are foreign residents. “There are people who have a lot of things to offer and they don't have to be huge. In a time of crisis every little thing is important and can help someone”, points out the leader of the Time Bank.



TIME. MARTA FERNÁNDEZ TALKS WITH NEW MEMBERS. JOSELE-LANZA

Business start-up Lexland Abogados

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«We aim to provide high-quality labour law and social security advice in English»

The international law firm has extended its services to expatriates

SUR IN ENGLISH

Labour law specialist Fátima Vera, who has worked for years with prestigious law firms such as KPMG, recently joined the international and multidisciplinary team of Lexland Abogados in Marbella. With her, this well-known company extends its range of services and now provides high-quality advice on labour and social security issues in English.

Why did you decide to join Lexland Abogados?

Lexland is a prestigious international law firm offering its services especially to expats living in Spain. With the new labour law department we now cover all the employment and social security related issues expats can be faced with, resolving all kinds of problems in a trustworthy and efficient manner.

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complicated economic situation in Spain. Therefore, unfortunately, we have to manage a lot of cases related to dismissals for economic reasons and we advise companies on how to carry them out. We also advise employees who are faced with unfair dismissal. Another aspect is to identify whether a company is obliged to subscribe an ordinary work contract or a mercantile agreement. I also manage all issues involving trade unions and social security.

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