

# **BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER COMPENSATION AND RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERISM**

**Ibero-American Association of Time Banks  
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**(Bürger\*Innen-Genossenschaft Brixen - B\*Coop)**

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Ignacio Collado Gosálvez and Luis Fernández Alonso

[www.elrogle.es](http://www.elrogle.es)

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This report is carried out within the framework and with the funding of the European Erasmus+ project LEARN TO CARE<sup>1</sup>, under agreement number 2021-2-AT01-KA220-ADU-000049463, implemented from March 1, 2022, to February 28, 2025. The project is coordinated by the Austrian social organization Zeitpolster GmbH, with the participation of the following national partners: Asociación iberoamericana de Bancos de Tiempo (Spain), Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany), and BürgerInnen-Genossenschaft Brixen – bcoop (Italy).

The purpose of this report is to serve as an informational tool and a compilation of best practices for decision-makers, advisors, and multipliers in politics, administration, and solidarity-based civil communities. It aims to provide insights into:

- a) How and for what types of activities new incentive systems can be implemented in volunteer work;
- b) Which organizational models have demonstrated success and tangible results in local and/or regional implementations for volunteer networks;
- c) How such systems can be legally classified and what legal framework conditions must be considered in their implementation;

The Asociación iberoamericana de Bancos de Tiempo<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter ASIBDT), the organization responsible for this report, networks various Time Bank models in Spain and Latin America. These models engage individuals from diverse backgrounds, utilizing time as a unit of exchange for payments and compensation for services, knowledge, or favors exchanged among members. Users are not referred to as volunteers but rather as users or members, as their activities do not fall under traditional volunteerism. This distinction arises not only due to the compensation involved but also because of the non-hierarchical and non-charitable nature of their interactions. In this system, all participants benefit equally, fostering an unprecedented environment of equality—where everyone is equal and supports one another. Additionally, Time Banks contribute to the development of local mutual aid networks, social cohesion, and inter-community and intergenerational learning and development.

The time or hours that are exchanged between the users of a Time Bank is only a way of adding value to resources that the formal economy does not value or ignores, promoting new collaborative networks that facilitate greater well-being and a higher standard of living for their users and in a complementary way to any official aid system, which on

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.zeitpolster.com/learn-to-care/es/>

<sup>2</sup> Created in 2019, it has its headquarters in Madrid and delegations in Catalonia, Portugal, Ecuador, Mexico and Argentina. [www.asibdt.org](http://www.asibdt.org)

the other hand and in some situations may be inexistent, requiring then and urgently the implementation of these mutual support networks, present in more than 50 countries around the world AND more than 2000 Time Banks, all with the same philosophy and objectives.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, and together with other Spanish organisations promoting Time Banks<sup>4</sup> and under the impulse of the ASIBDT management, we have focused on research into good practices in other European countries based on care in collaboration with public institutions, as is the case of the network of Time Banks in the United Kingdom and their active collaboration with the National Health Service, as explained in the book translated into Spanish and published by the English organisation *timebanking UK*<sup>5</sup> with the title "GIVE AND TAKE: HOW TIMEBANKING IS TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE"<sup>6</sup>, of which, due to its importance and contributions, a summary and compilation of good practices will be included as an appendix to this report.

## VOLUNTARY AID WORK

Of all active volunteering activities in Europe, only about 4% is related to care for others in what we can call care volunteering. What is the reason for this low percentage, with issues as important as the progressive ageing of the European population and the reality of the need for care assistance to older people not only on our continent but globally, with longer life expectancy and a greater need for essential care? How can we face the reality of smaller and smaller family units, traditional care networks that are becoming weaker and weaker or even non-existent, with the emergence of the phenomenon of unwanted loneliness and a greater budgetary burden for States to financially maintain their own health and social protection systems?

There is a lack of basic knowledge in this area among decision-makers in politics and administration, as well as among multipliers in social planning, for whom the systems and proposals we will discuss in this report could make a useful contribution; The output of this report and our LEARN TO CARE project, with all the best practice guidelines

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<sup>3</sup> Every year on the occasion of the International Day of Time Banks on 23 March, ASIBDT presents a world report on the situation of Time Banks:

<https://www.asibdt.org/2023/05/presentacion-del-tercer-informe-mundial.html>

<sup>4</sup> In Spain there are two organisations, in addition to ASIBDT, that promote Time Bank networks: SALUD Y FAMILIA (<https://saludyfamilia.es/es>), which was the entity that brought Time Banks to Spain in 1998 through a European programme, and ADBDT or Association for the Development of Time Banks (<https://adbd.org/>), with its own management software for Time Banks called TIMEOVERFLOW (<https://www.timeoverflow.org/>).

<sup>5</sup> <https://timebanking.org/>

<sup>6</sup> The English translation is available free of charge from the ADBDT at the following link, in its original English edition it can be purchased from AMAZON and other similar platforms: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3VdF85vJxh1OVg3S3YxaWxqeUjBelMtUnpuYzFPb053QTgw/view?usp=sharing&resourcekey=0-ixolLKDIxHcSnhFEELWw>



described in this report, are aimed at these target groups - public administrations, private enterprise and organised civil society - helping multipliers to develop their own competence and weigh up in which contexts new models of voluntary work can represent a practical solution to all these urgently resolvable issues.

## HEALTH AND CARE CRISIS IN EUROPE

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility of health systems in general and the importance of a well-trained, robust and resilient health workforce, both in situations of generalised crisis and in an environment where economic resources are sometimes challenged and the care needs of the general population become more complicated and diversified.

In previous years and this year, strikes by health workers have multiplied in different countries across Europe, citing difficult working conditions and insufficient resources; in France, for example, doctors and nurses held a national strike in November 2022, involving more than 100,000 health workers; in September 2022, more than 6,000 Irish nurses went on strike over concerns about low pay and poor working conditions. Similarly, in Germany, thousands of healthcare workers took part in a nationwide strike in August 2022, for similar reasons. And in the UK, strikes and walkouts by doctors, nurses and ambulance staff have severely affected the health system for months.

In Spain, strikes have taken place practically all over the country and throughout 2022 and 2023, with mobilisations in numerous cities, all of them demanding improvements that have to do with the pressure of care and working conditions of all health professionals, especially in primary care, which was the most stressed by COVID.

These demands clearly reflect the growing frustration and concern among health workers across Europe, highlighting even more the urgent need for government action to support and invest in the health and care workforce, but it must also be a concern of citizens themselves, demanding their involvement, either through volunteering or through prevention policies and neighbourhood mutual aid, among other measures where citizens can be active in some way, not only as potential patients or benefactors of traditional public health systems.

A regional report published by WHO Europe in September last year already warned of a "ticking time bomb" threatening health systems in Europe and Central Asia<sup>7</sup>: Faced with *"rapidly ageing populations and health workers, the rise of chronic diseases and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic"*, the report warned of *"imminent collapse"* in key areas of countries' health systems unless *"rapid and concrete policy action is taken to address these problems, starting with the health workforce"*.

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<sup>7</sup> WHO report "Health and care workforce in Europe: time to act" available in different languages: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/362379?locale-attribute=en&>

At the same time, he noted that labour markets *"are changing, with labour mobility and migration becoming increasingly complex"*. *"As a result, some countries are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain young people in the health and care professions."*

## AGEING IN EUROPE

According to the CNIE<sup>8</sup>, European society is ageing. In 1950, only 12% of the European population was over 65. Today, the proportion has already doubled, and projections show that by 2050 more than 36% of Europe's population will be over 65.

The "culprits" are low birth rates and the increasing longevity of the European population. In the past, a woman in Europe had on average more than two children. Since 2000, the birth rate has fallen below that threshold. Europeans are also living longer now: 78 years on average, up from 66 years in the 1950s. Longer human life spans are of course a sign of Europe's prosperity but combined with the low birth rate they create a whole series of social and financial problems for the old continent, which need to be addressed and corrected. In addition, the fact that the proportion of working people who are able to provide care for the elderly is steadily decreasing, compounding the problem as the number of people in need of care also increases.

The increased demand for care is beginning to require significant financial resources for individual states. In 2014, OECD countries spent on average 1.4% of GDP on long-term care, but these costs are projected to rise substantially to 6.4% by 2060. Public spending on long-term care is highest in countries such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries (where it costs between 3% and 4% of GDP) and lowest in Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland, Hungary and Estonia, less than 1% of GDP is spent on long-term care. This difference in expenditure reflects not only the proportion of the population that is ageing, but also the diversity of long-term care systems in Europe. The Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, for example, have well-developed systems of formal care for older people, offering a wide range of government and private sector services in the home or in institutions; in Central and Eastern European countries, on the other hand, care for older people is largely seen as the responsibility of families. In these countries, as in Mediterranean countries, an older person in need of daily care over a long period of time is likely to move in with children or relatives, who will provide social support and medical assistance when needed.

But what happens when the birth rate decreases in these countries - as is happening in Spain and Italy - whose family units were very large and diverse in the 50s and 60s (families with more than 3 and 4 children), but are now mainly composed of families with one or maximum two children, single-parent families and single people?

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<sup>8</sup> The CENIE or International Centre on Ageing, based in the city of Salamanca (Spain) is an institution jointly promoted by the General Foundation of the University of Salamanca (ES), the General Foundation of the Higher Council for Scientific Research (ES), the University of Algarve (PT) and the Direção-Geral de Saúde (PT), in collaboration with other public and private institutions: <https://cenie.eu/es>

## CHALLENGES OF INFORMAL CARE

While in many European countries public and private efforts are being made to increase and promote the existence of professional long-term care providers as well as the establishment of nursing homes, countries are also striving to promote informal family-based care, which is believed to be more beneficial for older people and to have a lower social cost.

In Germany, unpaid carers have the option to reduce their working hours with a medium-term paid leave benefit. In the Czech Republic and Ireland, there are tax exemptions for informal carers with dependent family members. This type of support will continue to play an important role in Western and Eastern European countries. But it also raises questions about the quality of this care - how do countries know that their elderly are receiving adequate care, and who is monitoring their well-being?

Informal caregivers, whether family members or neighbours, generally do not have specialised training, which means that they generally lack skills and knowledge about the recognition of symptoms and therefore about the type of medical care needed, which makes the establishment of quality control mechanisms or simple training in informal care a challenge for public authorities.

To date, the European Commission has begun to stimulate collaboration between countries in the care of older people with supranational platforms such as the "*European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Aging*"<sup>9</sup>, a portal that helps institutions, professionals and researchers in the field of health and ageing to find training resources, best practices and models of care.

## UNWANTED LONELINESS

Another of the keys to this report is the concept of *Unwanted Loneliness* developed in Spain as a new paradigm within volunteer welfare work, providing new keys and new lines of work for volunteers themselves, as well as for the promoters of public or private welfare policies, the target groups of this report.

We define *Unwanted Loneliness* as a negative personal experience in which an individual has a need to communicate with others and perceives a lack of social relationships, either because they have fewer relationships than they would like or because the relationships they do have do not offer the emotional support they desire.

The *State Observatory of Unwanted Loneliness in Spain*<sup>10</sup>, an organisation to which the Ibero-American association of Time Banks belongs - in its report "*The cost of Unwanted Loneliness in Spain*"<sup>11</sup> states that in Spain it is estimated that 13.4% of the population

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<sup>9</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/eip-aha>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.soledades.es/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.soledades.es/estudios/el-coste-de-la-soledad-no-deseada-en-espana>

suffers from Unwanted Loneliness. And the European Commission's report *"Loneliness: an unequally shared burden in Europe"*<sup>12</sup> " estimates that more than 30 million people are frequently lonely in the European Union.

Unwanted loneliness is greater in adolescents and young people than in older people, as may be commonly misunderstood. This circumstance opens the focus of attention on groups that are not usually included in the sphere of care, but which from this perspective need both attention and more specific care that favours their full integration and social adaptation. Moreover, people with disabilities and other groups such as carers, immigrants or returnees, among others, are particularly susceptible to suffering from unwanted loneliness and are therefore targets for attention and care.

This report does not cover all the work related to professional medical care - be it primary or hospital care - which is the sole and exclusive responsibility of national public health services, where voluntary work is very restricted to areas of support and prevention. However, we will refer in this report to different good practices in some countries where close collaboration between public institutions and paid voluntary organisations has had a positive impact on the recovery of patients and patients.

## **VOLUNTEERING AND PAY: AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

With regard to Spanish legislation, there is a clear contradiction between what is VOLUNTEERISM and what is RETRIBUTION, because according to the Spanish Law on Volunteering of 14 October 45/2015<sup>13</sup> , volunteering is considered to be *"all those actions of general interest that contribute to enriching the quality of life of society in general and preserving the environment, carried out by physical individuals and which must meet a series of conditions: They must be of a solidarity nature; They must be carried out freely and voluntarily by the individual, without imposition or compulsion by any agent or organisation; finally, **they do not receive a salary or any other material remuneration**".*

In this sense, we have changed the title of this report from the original translation of *"Best practice Guidelines for new volunteer work"* to *"GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR RETRIBUTION AND RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEER WORK"*, disassociating the word volunteer work due to the legal confusion already mentioned, as well as the sense of recognition as a system that does not have to be of a monetary or remunerated nature, but also in the form of social recognition, along the lines of the work of the Time Banks that reward these informal care activities in new opportunities for socialisation and a better quality of life based on the concept of *"favour"* between neighbours, beyond

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<sup>12</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/loneliness-%E2%80%93-unequally-shared-burden-europe\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/publication/loneliness-%E2%80%93-unequally-shared-burden-europe_en)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2015-11072>

professional intrusiveness and also avoiding job insecurity, a frequent criticism of the phenomenon of volunteering, with the tendency to replace paid jobs with volunteers.

For this reason, we consider that this report can be useful in order to transcend volunteering for new forms of citizen participation and collaboration in public affairs, whether of the administrations or even of the NGOs themselves, proposing new denominations that adapt to new realities that require a different name: neighbourhood activities, mutual aid activities, community work... and even rescuing traditional activities or customs from cultures other than Western ones, such as the *good life* or "*Sumak Kawsay*"<sup>14</sup> from the Quechua tradition, the African-rooted *Ubuntu philosophy*<sup>15</sup>, or even other traditional activities in Europe that were lost with industrialisation, urbanisation and massive emigration from the countryside to the city, in terms of community work and the so-called commons, as developed throughout her work by Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom<sup>16</sup>, and which we can rescue as a transition formula between a mercantilised care system and a more popular or communitarian system, very close to citizenship, co-responsibility and the principle of subsidiarity, based on common benefit.

## FOR WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES CAN THESE BE IMPLEMENTED?

The activities that can be implemented for the incentive models that will be made explicit in the following section of this document should have the following characteristics:

- As a general rule, be of a temporary or non-continuous nature, in order to avoid both professional intrusion and the promotion of forms of informal or submerged economy, except on occasions where these resources cannot be obtained in the community or where there are insufficient economic resources to be able to access them on a continuous basis and without possible substitution in the formal market;
- They must be activities not usually carried out by any professional, company or public service already paid or covered by budgets of the formal economy, although the non-existence of these activities in the context of each experience could justify the development of these uncovered activities;
- Have no real economic value in the formal economy, but are vital to the smooth functioning of the social life of communities and individuals - domestic work, basic care for children, the elderly or people with functional diversity, etc., in situations and environments where neither the economic resources of individuals nor the action of the state, its health services or other public

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<sup>14</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumak\\_kawsay](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumak_kawsay)

<sup>15</sup> <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu>

<sup>16</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor\\_Ostrom](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor_Ostrom)

authorities can reach, what economist Neva Goodwin called the "Core Economy"<sup>17</sup>;

- Regarding care, these should be basic care services that a company or professional service does not usually provide, such as accompaniment to medical or other visits, facilitation of occasional domestic work (such as shopping, simple repairs or other daily or non-daily activities), help in complex digital or technological environments for certain groups or simple accompaniment, without requiring specific prior training or qualifications;
- Activities that are of an urgent nature and of pressing need, as may be the case in disaster situations, or in social situations that require the urgent solidarity action of neighbours, including what we call *micro-emergency* situations in family units or in specific personal situations that require intervention or specific help;
- Community-based activities with an ecological and social purpose, considering in this field traditional collective activities of mutual aid present in many cultures all over the world;
- Finally, they are activities that encourage the creation of informal networks of mutual aid and what these networks mean in terms of citizen involvement in public affairs, networks that are currently non-existent in large cities.

Many of the activities described are those of a Time Bank - a model that we will insist on throughout this report - which considers in its internal regulations that the activities must be occasional - except in cases of need and lack of resources - considering that the exchange of resources is determined more as a barter of favours than as services, whether professional or not, and that they are governed by principles of good neighbourliness, as detailed in the last point of this report regarding the legality of this type of exchange networks.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.paecon.net/PAERreview/issue84/Goodwin84.pdf>



## 1.- CURRENT RECOGNITION MODELS AND NEW PROPOSALS

We will now make explicit different proposals that any institution - whether public, private or community - can implement for the recognition of the voluntary work of its citizens, partners, employees or users, new models that have proven to be successful. Each model is accompanied by different examples of good practices that can help to visualise each proposal.

In order to help the different multiplier agents, we have added an initial explanation to each of the proposals where we clarify the target audience and the objective of the model. To complement this information we will also add different symbols that will correspond to a possible agent according to the following classification:

Unión Europea:	
Admon.nacional/regional:	
Administración local:	
Sector privado-Empresa:	
Organización social:	

### 1.1.- BY FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

**OBJECTIVE:** Compensation for volunteering as an income supplement for future volunteers



In some countries there is a legally defined model that we can call a flat rate for volunteer work: volunteers can receive a certain amount of money per year without this being tax-relevant and without the need to be hired, up to a specific amount and/or a specific number of hours. This has nothing to do with financially compensating the costs of volunteering, which is a very common practice in many countries and legally recognised.

The European country that practices financial payment to volunteers is BELGIUM: The Belgian law on volunteering<sup>18</sup> states that by its very nature volunteering is a free act, but that in order to keep it accessible to all, the legislator has foreseen the possibility of reimbursement or financial compensation - not compulsory for NGOs and voluntary organisations - and that this can be done in two ways.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.levolontariat.be/>

**1.- Reimbursement of actual costs:** the volunteer is reimbursed his or her expenses on presentation of supporting documents (invoice, receipt, train ticket, etc.). In this case, there is no upper limit to be respected.

**2.- Lump sum payment:** in the case of lump sum reimbursement, it is not necessary to prove the reality of the expenses by means of supporting documents. **However, two ceilings must not be exceeded: €41.48 per day and €1,659.29 per year (amounts valid from 1 January to 31 December 2024).**

This second proposal is the one we refer to directly as "financial compensation for volunteering" because, unlike the first one, which is the usual one in many countries, this one allows them to encourage volunteering in layers or sectors of the population that can see it as an economic opportunity, although scarce in the case of unemployment or other situations and that have never volunteered before.

Other countries that also provide for financial compensation for voluntary activity are **AUSTRIA** and **GERMANY**. Because of their significance in this report, all this information is referred to in points 3.2 and 3.3 of this report and in chapter 3 of this report as to how these schemes can be legally classified and what conditions of the legal framework must be observed in their implementation.

## **1.2.- THROUGH STATE RECOGNITION OF ACQUIRED COMPETENCES THROUGH VOLUNTEERING**

**OBJECTIVE:** To promote job search through legal recognition of volunteering.



Many countries have officially implemented the recognition of volunteering activities. The Spanish Volunteering Platform (PVE)<sup>19</sup> has published a study entitled *"INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES THROUGH VOLUNTEERING"*<sup>20</sup> which details the main models in Europe of recognition and certification of competences through volunteering that validate non-formal and informal learning, and where 17 of the 53 certification models identified in various countries are analysed; This study concludes that Europe *"is a benchmark in validation of this type of competences"*, while demonstrating how *"it is essential that governments get involved to generate policies and regulations for the development of national systems for the recognition, validation and certification of competences acquired through volunteering"*.

<sup>19</sup> <https://plataformavoluntariado.org/>

<sup>20</sup> [https://plataformavoluntariado.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/estudio-modelos-reconocimiento\\_competencias\\_voluntariado-2021.pdf](https://plataformavoluntariado.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/estudio-modelos-reconocimiento_competencias_voluntariado-2021.pdf)



The study also includes other validation experiences used in countries outside Europe, such as the USA, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Australia, Hong Kong and South Africa.

We would also like to refer to two reports: on the one hand, a report on validation of prior learning<sup>21</sup> - including volunteering - in European countries, developed by the VINCE PROJECT<sup>22</sup> , a project co-funded by Erasmus+ from 2017 to 2019, which studied validation as a tool to support inclusion so that newcomers to Europe have the opportunity to have their prior learning officially recognised and thus receive access to higher education. Finally, there would be the report of the CIVCIL PROJECT<sup>23</sup> , also co-funded by Erasmus+ - from 2015 to 2017 - with more specific content on recognition of volunteering in European countries.

### **1.2.1.- SPAIN**

Since the 2012 Council Recommendation<sup>24</sup> , the Spanish and regional governments have consolidated national procedures for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning. In the same way, universities have developed their procedures for the recognition of professional and work experience for two purposes: access to programmes (for people over 40 years old) and credits towards a university degree. Royal Decree 861/2010<sup>25</sup> is the legal basis for the recognition of work experience in the form of credits in order to access a university degree.

Since 2015, Spain has had a new Volunteering Law: Law 45/2015, of 14 October, on volunteering<sup>26</sup> . Accreditation and recognition of volunteering activities: "The recognition of the competences acquired by the volunteer will be carried out in accordance with the general regulations on the recognition of competences acquired through work experience or non-formal training". Spain also has RAP (Recognition of Prior Learning) mechanisms for the recognition of prior formal learning in university education and vocational training. So far it has not been possible to regulate the procedure for the validation of learning acquired through volunteering at state level, however, there are some initiatives under development in the country that aim to achieve this objective.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-europe/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://vince.eucen.eu/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.civcil.eu/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:ES:PDF>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2010/07/02/861>

<sup>26</sup> [https://plataformavoluntariado.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ley\\_45-2015\\_lectura\\_facil.pdf](https://plataformavoluntariado.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/ley_45-2015_lectura_facil.pdf)

## **Vol+ Programme**

Vol+<sup>27</sup> is the Programme of the Spanish Volunteering Platform (PVE) that certifies the competences that people acquire when volunteering. It is a process through which volunteers, together with the volunteer organisations, can identify which competences they have been able to develop throughout their experience, obtaining a certificate that can be included in their CVs.

The objectives of Vol+ include: "To recognise the impact of volunteering on skills development; to make visible that volunteering promotes learning; and to enhance the employability of volunteers".

Spain's certificates of professionalism have mechanisms that recognise work experience and non-formal learning, and officially accredit the professional qualifications established in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications. They are regulated by Royal Decree 34/200851 and Royal Decree 1224/2009 on the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience, among others.

So far it has not been possible to regulate the procedure for validation of learning acquired through volunteering at the state level, however, there are some initiatives under development in the country that seek this objective, in addition to these three formulas that we are detailing now (VOL+, Red Reconoce, Talante Solidario).

## **Network Recognises**

The Reconoce Project<sup>28</sup> is an initiative that seeks to promote youth employability by recognising the skills that people acquire through volunteering activities. The aim of the tool is to "articulate a national network of organisations that promote the recognition of competences, establishing a dialogue between public administrations, companies and youth and volunteering entities, in order to give visibility to volunteering experiences and their benefits".

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<sup>27</sup> <https://plataformavoluntariado.org/vol-plus/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://reconoce.org/>

## Solidarity

Talante Solidario<sup>29</sup> is a project created by the FADE Foundation<sup>30</sup> and offered free of charge to volunteers. It consists of a platform for training and certification of transversal competencies, aimed at volunteers from social organisations as a complement to improve the impact of their social action. The training contents are based on theories such as Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences or Neurolinguistic Programming, among others, and the aim is to deconstruct limiting beliefs so that the person can empower themselves. Once the volunteer has completed and passed the courses, and has put the skills into practice through the voluntary action, Talante Solidario evaluates the whole process and generates the certification.

### 1.2.2.- AUSTRIA

#### Freiwilligenpass - Passport of the Voluntary Person

This tool<sup>31</sup> was developed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs in 2005, and its creation was aimed at providing certification of competences and qualifications obtained through volunteering, in order to contribute to personal development, employability and employability. The Austrian national education system recognises skills developed through volunteering, and to facilitate the official recognition of these competences, the Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs developed a special form that can be filled in by the volunteering organisation to help enhance the volunteer's portfolio. The Passport is an online tool with a digital form that the organisation can apply to the Austrian Volunteer Council.

The Volunteering Act (Federal Act for the Promotion of Voluntary Commitment 2012)<sup>32</sup> regulates the conditions for formal voluntary activities of general interest in Austria.

The first section of the Act describes the promotion of voluntary organisations, the Passport of the Voluntary Person and a periodic report on the situation of volunteering in the country. It states that voluntary organisations can only receive financial support from the state if they provide the volunteers with proof of the duration and type of action carried out and the skills acquired during this time, so that the volunteers can make use of the skills and abilities acquired during the period of voluntary activity in the future. This proof (Passport of the Voluntary Person) must be issued within six months after the end of the period of voluntary activity.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://talantesolidario.org/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://fundacionfade.org/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.freiwilligenweb.at/>

<sup>32</sup> English text of the Law: <https://www.freiwilligenweb.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Federal-Law-for-the-Promotion-of-Voluntary-Engagement.pdf>

The certificate issued provides information on the time spent on a voluntary activity by the volunteer, his/her role within the organisation, the tasks, skills, competences and aptitudes of the volunteer (such as social competences and ability to cope with stress, commitment, willingness to accept responsibility, motivation, self-discipline, persuasiveness, leadership and management skills), as well as all relevant professional competences (such as language skills or IT skills).

The Proof of Voluntary Activities form and the Volunteer Passport are available in paper and digital format.

### **1.2.3.- GERMANY**

The federal structure of Germany determines the shared competences of the Bund (German federation) and the Länder (federal states) in education and training. The Grundgesetz (Basic Constitutional Law of the Federal Republic of Germany) stipulates that the primary responsibility for the legislation and administration of education lies with the Länder. The scope of the federal government's responsibilities in the field of education is also defined in the Grundgesetz, according to which the Bund is responsible for certain domains of education. Due to the federal structure of different competences for education, there is neither a common legal framework nor a standardised system for the validation of informal learning at national level and in all educational sectors in Germany, which is difficult to implement in comparison to other countries.

In the case of higher education, the Länder Ministries of Education and Cultural Affairs and the federal state laws provide the legal basis and coordination of the various validation processes, which are carried out by the universities (which are autonomous).

In relation to volunteering, there is the Act for the Promotion of Volunteering of March 2013<sup>33</sup>, but it does not detail a specific legal status for volunteering on a general level: volunteers must act in accordance with legal conditions that partially regulate volunteering, with the aim of protecting them from specific risks, compensating them for any disadvantages resulting from their activity, promoting volunteering through qualifications and creating incentives for volunteering to be possible (Europe for Citizens Programme, 2010a, p.29). However, for some specific volunteering there is a more detailed regulatory framework: the Federal Voluntary Service Act 2011 specifies the type of volunteering to be carried out, in which areas it is to be carried out, the role of the volunteer, the duration of the activity and where it can be carried out, among others. The Act also describes that voluntary activity may only be carried out in state-accredited organisations, that volunteers must receive support and guidance from qualified personnel, and that organisations must issue a certificate of the activity carried out.

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<sup>33</sup> English translation: [https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_bfdg/englisch\\_bfdg.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_bfdg/englisch_bfdg.html)

## Qualipass

The project<sup>34</sup> was created in 2002 and recognises competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning (including volunteering in the latter category). Since its inception it has been administered by the Baden Württemberg Youth Foundation, which is operated by the German state. It comes in four variations: the Qualipass for young people, the Qualipass for adults, the Qualipass in simplified language, and the Qualipass for young people in its national version.

The tool consists of a portfolio of documents recording the experiences and competences acquired through volunteering in schools, associations, community projects, courses, experiences abroad, internships or professional development opportunities. The validation process results in a certificate of the learning obtained, issued by the institution where the volunteer activity took place.

The Qualipass can be obtained at the regional contact points in each respective city or district, which can be checked on the website, where in addition to the details of each centre, the cost of each Qualipass is listed. Qualipass certificates function as attachments and additions to CVs. The Qualipass is supported by companies, chambers of industry and commerce, educational institutions, schools and student councils, clubs and associations for the extracurricular education of young people.

### 1.2.4.- ITALY

The emergence of a national policy is linked to Law 92/2012 on Labour Market Reform<sup>35</sup> (also known as the Fornero Law), which defines the validation of non-formal and informal learning, within the framework of the national competence certification system, as one of the key elements to ensure and implement lifelong learning. The law establishes rules and regulatory requirements (standards) on the characteristics and parties involved, with the aim of ensuring transparency, usability and wide accessibility of validation and/or certification services.

From the Law 92/2012, the Legislative Decree on the "Certification and validation of national competences of non-formal and informal learning" n. 13/2013 was adopted. This decree defines the general rules and essential levels of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the minimum service standards of the national competence certification system. This decree also mentions that entities qualified as public or private entities, authorised or accredited by the public body, can provide identification, validation and certification services.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://qualipass.de/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2012/07/03/012G0115/sg>

On 30 June 2015 an Inter-ministerial Decree<sup>36</sup>, DI (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education) defined the Regional Framework of Professional Standards (MREP) according to Decree 13/2013. This framework established on the one hand a mechanism for mutual recognition between regional qualifications, and on the other hand, processes, attestations and standard system procedures for the identification/validation services of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences.

The Regional Framework of Professional Standards MREP of the Lombardy Region consists of 25 professions corresponding to different professional figures, including: animator, social animator, elderly care home animator, trainer, public relations expert, event organiser, sign language interpreter, youth communication expert, counsellor, job placement expert for disadvantaged people, trainer, fundraising expert, recruitment expert, secretary, data entry operator, ambulance driver, butler.<sup>37</sup>

### **Attitude**

This is a completed project<sup>38</sup> which was led by the Milan Volunteer Centre and supported by the Province of Milan, in which a group of volunteers were able to name and certify skills developed in volunteering according to the standardised model approved by the Lombardy Region, in relation to the Regional Framework of Professional Standards MREP (QRSP).

The objectives of the project focused on improving the skills acquired through volunteering experience and proposing their integration into the regional and national framework of professional standards; cooperating with employers to persuade them that the skills developed through volunteering are useful and transferable also to the work environment; elaborating a competence validation system with authorised certification bodies, companies and organisations that are responsible for the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal education.

The project ended in November 2014, and involved 9 entities, 7 companies and 137 volunteers (of which 86 received the certification of competences, 18% were under 25 years old, 46% between 25 and 45 years old and 36% over 45 years old, 59% were women and 41% men).

The proposal was submitted by ATS Fondazione Politecnico, Fondazione Don Gnocchi, AFOL Sud and with the delegation of technical support to Ciessevi, to the public call for the implementation of an experimental project on the certification of skills acquired in voluntary activities and their valorisation for employability improvement purposes in the vocational training sector in the province of Milan. The focus was placed on enhancing voluntary action and specifically on the professional use of the skills

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.pwc.com/it/it/publications/assets/docs/decreto-30062015.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <https://csvnet.it/csv/storia/144-notizie/1411-milano-certificate-le-competenze-di-oltre-80-volontari>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.csvlombardia.it/milano/post/attitude/>



developed, through certification issued by accredited bodies to work in collaboration with the Politecnico Foundation and Ciessevi Milano. The aim was also to identify the skills or competences developed in volunteering that are most sought after by companies.

### 1.3.- THROUGH RECOGNITION FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

**OBJECTIVE:** To promote job search through legal recognition of volunteering.



**AUSTRALIA:** Australian Red Cross volunteer recognition programme<sup>39</sup> offers a wide range of recognition mechanisms for volunteering in nursing and care. This includes certificates, awards, letters of appreciation and official events.

**CANADA:** In Canada there is the "Canada Cares Award"<sup>40</sup>, which honours people involved in caregiving. This programme recognises and rewards caregivers and volunteers in the caregiving industry for their outstanding achievements.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** In Great Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) Volunteer Achievement Awards Scheme<sup>41</sup> aims to recognise volunteers in the health sector. The programme includes different levels of recognition and offers volunteers the opportunity to recognise their achievements.

**SWEDEN:** The Swedish government<sup>42</sup> has introduced the "Guldstjärnans Volunteer Award" to recognise volunteers in the health and social field. This award is given to people who do voluntary work and make a positive contribution to society.

**NEW ZEALAND:** In New Zealand, *Volunteering New Zealand*<sup>43</sup> has developed the *New Zealand Excellence in Volunteer Management Award* to recognise organisations for outstanding volunteer management. This programme emphasises the importance of volunteer recognition and provides a platform for best practice in volunteer management.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.redcross.org.au/volunteer/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.canadianabilities.org/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/nhs-parliamentary-awards/categories-criteria/#volunteer>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.krisinformation.se/frivilligorganisationer>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/>

## **WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO)**

WHO offers recognition programmes for volunteers in the health sector. For example, WHO has a programme called *Volunteer Voices*<sup>44</sup>, which collects stories and testimonials from health volunteers to recognise their contributions and promote the value of volunteering in the health sector.

## **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)**

The IFRC<sup>45</sup> is an international humanitarian organization that coordinates the work of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide. The IFRC offers recognition programmes for volunteers providing care in emergency, conflict or disaster situations.

## **EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE (EVS)**

The European Union runs the EVS programme<sup>46</sup>, which offers voluntary service opportunities to young people aged 17-30 in several European countries. EVS promotes the recognition of skills acquired through voluntary work and offers a Youthpass certificate to participants who have successfully completed their volunteering project.

## **UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION (UN)**

The UN offers a variety of volunteer opportunities in its programmes and specialised agencies. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, runs the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme<sup>47</sup>, which engages volunteers in development projects around the world. UNV provides recognition of skills acquired through volunteerism and promotes the key role of volunteers in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Its recognition practices include awards, certificates, events and online platforms to showcase the achievements of its volunteers.

On the other hand, the International Labour Organisation or ILO<sup>48</sup> - an organisation under the umbrella of the United Nations, has published a manual on measuring volunteer work<sup>49</sup> to help countries obtain data on volunteer work that can be used to complement the measurement of volunteering as another workforce that is not usually included by countries in any traditional economic accounting or statistics, being

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.who.int/es/careers/un-volunteers-programme>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.ifrc.org/es>

<sup>46</sup> <https://serviciovoluntarioeuropeo.org/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.unv.org/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/es>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/es/media/358921/download>



increasingly important and recognised also by many States that have begun to quantify it and give it its recognised importance within any national economy.

Another highly recommended report by this organisation, *"Care work and care workers for a decent working future"*<sup>50</sup>, is an important contribution to gender reconciliation of work in this area, based on the finding that care work, both paid and unpaid, is mostly carried out by women and girls, who do three quarters of all care work, and that two thirds of paid care workers are women.

## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTARY WORK (IAVE)

IAVE<sup>51</sup> is a global network that promotes, celebrates and supports volunteering around the world; while it does not provide specific recognition models, it does provide resources and guidance for volunteer management, including recognition strategies.

### 1.4.- OTHER COMPENSATION SCHEMES IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERE

**OBJECTIVE:** Promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility through a greater social involvement of company employees, personal and family work conciliation.



The involvement of public administrations and companies through new forms of Corporate Volunteering generates trust among citizens and employees, improving the ratios of loyalty and social commitment of these entities.

We detail five ways to promote corporate volunteering, both for public employees and employees of private companies:<sup>52</sup>

- 1. Licences to carry out missions:** This refers to the granting of leave, for a specific period, to undertake a mission in developing countries, with limitations determined by service needs or a cumulative duration cap. This option is included in the collective agreements of public entities such as the Consorcio Hospital General Universitario de Valencia, the Comunidad Autónoma de las Illes

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/es/publications/major-publications/el-trabajo-de-cuidados-y-los-trabajadores-del-cuidado-para-un-futuro-con>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.iave.org/>

<sup>52</sup> Collected from the website of *Volunteer*, a corporate volunteering network that brings together the largest companies that carry out corporate volunteering in Spain: <https://www.voluntare.org/5-propuestas-voluntariado-corporativo-funcionarios/>

Balears, the Consejo de Administración del Patrimonio Nacional, and the Agencia Estatal de Administración Tributaria, as well as in the business sector...

2. **Influencing the working day regime:** either by facilitating the possibility of adapting the timetable, or through a reduction in the working day. The Catalan health service, CatSalut, offers the option of adapting working hours without a reduction in working hours or of reducing working hours by a minimum of half an hour and a maximum of half an hour for volunteering in cooperation and solidarity organisations, also with specific limits.
3. **Volunteering Day/Week:** this is the option most commonly used by almost half of public employers in Europe and consists of offering civil servants a catalogue of volunteering actions, which are organised around a specific day or week of the year.
4. **Offer employees "umbrella" volunteering organisations,** through which they can find out about a range of volunteering initiatives to join. This is one of the measures to promote volunteering developed by the Human Resources area of the European Commission, or in the business sphere, what the financial institution CAIXABANK does together with the La Caixa Foundation, offering through its International Cooperation programme the possibility for its employees to participate as volunteers in different projects around the world financed by the Foundation of the financial group.

## 1.5.- GAMIFICATION SYSTEMS IN VOLUNTEER NETWORKS

**OBJECTIVE:** Greater emotional involvement of volunteers from social organisations.



Here we understand that any gamification process involves a reward and motivation system for the volunteer that is more linked to the emotional and casuistry of any game dynamics. In this case, the organisation implements a system of points or rewards on the institution's volunteering portal or website that evaluates the participation of the volunteer in a personal capacity, with different goals or milestones to be met for the recognition of their activity, with different rankings that motivate their activity in the volunteering project in which they participate. In this way, for each activity in which the volunteer signs up and participates, for the photos they share and the comments they make on the portal, they add points to their profile; the more points they obtain, the more they are eligible for the rewards that will be progressively unlocked. Among the rewards - which in this case is the formula for gratification in these models in addition to the strictly recreational and participatory aspects - we can offer free training, participation in webinars, products donated by companies, access to different activities, etc.

### 1.5.1.- SPANISH RED CROSS "ENREDATE" PROJECT

Spanish Red Cross<sup>53</sup> launched in 2021 and in different Spanish towns a "Social Network" for the elderly through the project "ENREDATE". The aim of the organisation is to reduce the loneliness and involuntary isolation of people over 65 who do not have a social circle according to their needs, using gamification and game techniques that not only motivate them to participate but also to volunteer and help other elderly people. The programme also includes the virtual social network "Enréd@te"<sup>54</sup>, which, as a social network, will enable people in the programme to communicate with each other from computers or tablets, facilitating their inclusion and digital literacy.

Red Cross also develops workshops for its volunteers and staff on gamification and gamification of activities, based on the premise that the motivation of many people when doing any activity can be closely linked to the concept of FUN as an emotion inherent to human beings, which can also drive us to commit ourselves to causes, people or objectives. These workshops aim to show the contribution of games to intervention processes with young people, from the need to play, the motivation, the typology of games, the benefits and limits, as well as examples of use.

### 1.6.- PROMOTING SOCIAL SCORING

**OBJECTIVE: To promote civic and healthy activities and behaviour among citizens from the institutions and to promote greater involvement of citizens in volunteering and the common good.**



Some countries have implemented point systems for their citizens that reward civic activities such as volunteering, although we must distinguish here two different models at state level - the Chinese model and the Dubai model - and a local model such as that of the Italian city of Bologna.

A social credit or social scoring system is a data-based system that records, monitors and evaluates the behaviour of a population or group of people, whether they are customers or employees of a company, neighbours of a city or even all the citizens of a country. The controlling agent can be either a company or, nowadays, public institutions, with all that this generates in terms of privacy and intrusion into people's lives, models that generate a lot of controversy and many legal doubts and infringements of rights.

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www2.cruzroja.es/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.fundaciontecsos.es/proyectos/enredte/>

This type of system is based fundamentally on three pillars: The first is the recording and monitoring of behaviour. The second is the evaluation and classification of individuals according to these behaviours. The third is the application of rewards derived from this assessment, and even penalties in some cases.

Registration and control, in its most radical formats, is carried out by taking data relating to the public but also private behaviour of each individual: offences, traffic fines and sanctions, non-payment of taxes, debts, consumer solvency, asocial behaviour, criminal situations..., but also and in our case for participation in voluntary activities or caring for sick family members. Sometimes information is added from social networks and even video surveillance cameras, or evaluations from bosses, landlords and authorities

In our case, we focus on those models that only offer rewards for voluntary activity and care and models of proximity to the citizen from the local level, without disregarding the analysis of all existing systems.

#### **1.6.1.- THE CHINESE MODEL**

The Chinese Social Credit System is a national credit rating system developed by the government of the People's Republic of China. This programme started an initial regional trial in 2009, before launching a national pilot with eight credit rating companies in 2014. Administered by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the People's Bank of China (PBOC) and the Supreme People's Court (SPC), since 2016 this system is intended to standardise the credit rating function - not only on strictly financial criteria but also on social criteria, which is the most controversial aspect of this system - allowing financial and social assessments to be made available to companies and government institutions, individuals and non-governmental organisations operating in the country.

This social credit system is, as the Chinese authorities justify, an extension of the financial credit rating system that exists in China and that also exists in many countries in its exclusively financial version, which allows it to cover all people living in rural areas and small businesses lacking legal registration, This makes it an effective tool for financial inclusion, although this system records other issues that are also evaluated, such as fiscal behaviour, the person's procedural or criminal situation and, in short, all their social behaviour, which for the Chinese authorities helps to regulate social behaviour and promote what they call the "traditional values" of the Chinese people; Critics of the system claim that it transgresses the rule of law and violates the legal rights of residents and organisations, especially the right to reputation, the right to privacy and personal dignity, and that the system is a tool for government surveillance and the suppression of dissent from the Chinese government.

These social scoring systems are not yet a widespread reality, but they are expanding and are complemented in the country by parallel and fully operational systems in the financial sector, although the Chinese authorities hope that both systems - private and public - will in the future converge into a single national economic and social scoring system.

How does it actually work? In some of these local level projects the system is very simple; you start with 1,000 points and add them up to reward good public behaviour and subtract them for actions against the community, usually violations of the law. Thus, rewards for good citizens who care for their elders, pay their taxes on time or volunteer would include preference in getting a university place or a job, credit facilities, discounts on public transport and car hire, reduced waiting lists in health care or access to public housing; Conversely, a person who continuously violates the rules and loses points as a result could face difficulties in, for example, accessing social benefits or using public services, including being banned from working in the public sector, being refused licences and permits for economic activity, or having restrictions on travel. This applies to both individuals and companies.

What happens if an individual or a company commits very serious offences or accumulates numerous breaches of social order? If their score falls below a minimum threshold set by the system, they would be put on a blacklist called the "list of untrustworthy entities" with very serious consequences in the employment or professional field: difficulty in finding an employer or an investor willing to sign or work with a company untrustworthy to the authorities.

#### **1.6.2.- THE DUBAI MODEL**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Possibilities has recently launched a programme to reward good behaviour by its citizens through a points system; the aim is to encourage Emirati citizens to conform to a set of "positive behaviours" and to promote concepts such as "homeland, society and family". This model was presented by the authorities in April this year to great media attention, but has yet to be implemented, and appears to be limited to Emirati citizens, just 11 per cent of the country's 9.5 million inhabitants.

Around 100 behaviours will be assessed, including "healthy living, healthy nutrition, volunteering, compliance with laws and legislation, a knowledge economy and the "empowerment" of citizens themselves. Those whose behaviour is positive will be rewarded with points redeemable for discounts on government services, and it does not appear to have, like the Chinese model, a scale that categorises people as socially good or bad; nor has anyone in the country debated the potential conflict with the right to privacy it poses, especially in a country where civil liberties are already restricted: without reaching China's level, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the UAE's two main cities, have one of the highest percentages of surveillance cameras per inhabitant in the world.

#### **1.6.3.- THE CITY OF BOLOGNA**

Last March of this year, the City Council of Bologna, a city of 400,000 inhabitants in Northern Italy, announced the launch of the *Smart Citizen Wallet* as a kind of "smart citizen wallet" where points will be collected from the citizens of Bologna who recycle their waste correctly, use public transport, save energy and even do some kind of volunteering.

This type of initiative, part of the city's Digital Innovation Plan 2022-2024, means that points can be redeemed for bonuses, such as discounts on purchases and services at local businesses and free cultural activities. This proposal is expected to be launched in autumn this year. There is also no mention of penalties or sanctions like the Dubai model and it will be completely voluntary unlike the Chinese model, and other local governments are also planning to implement it, as is the case in the Italian capital Rome. What we do not know are the means of control by the city council with respect to these behaviours, which we understand could be through the permanent control that new technologies provide, the use of electronic money, geolocation devices, social networks, etc.

From the point of view of the advocates of these social scoring systems, they are fundamentally a way of preserving trust in the good behaviour of citizens. There is also a simpler reason: if all bad behaviour deserves punishment, good actions should also be rewarded, and volunteering is part of this type of actions and can be rewarded as one more behaviour within this context of pious or socially beneficial behaviours that count positively for these systems, and this is the only thing we can point out in this report, being aware of the possible spread in the near future in some of our cities, as it has already started in Italy. The problem arises when we stop to think about who decides what is right and wrong and for what reasons it is done, for policies to cut public spending that are derived from the actions of citizens who are rewarded at minimal cost, to educate citizens in values, or for social benefit, or for all of these reasons. As we can see, there are more doubts and questions about these systems than certainties. Doubts and questions that we should not fail to answer if these scoring systems continue to expand.

### 1.7.- PROMOTION OF MICRO-VOLUNTEERISM

**OBJECTIVE:** Greater involvement of young people in volunteering, parallel programmes of education in values.



Microvolunteering is defined as work done by a volunteer or a team of volunteers, both online via an internet-connected device and offline, carried out in a small amount of time and without any semblance of continuity, with the aim of serving a non-profit, charitable, governmental or non-governmental organisation.

It is generally a form of online volunteering - it can also be face-to-face, such as cleaning a river or helping out at a fun run, to give a few examples - and does not require any prior registration, selection and training, but only a few minutes or hours to complete; nor does it require a permanent commitment on the part of the volunteers, but only the punctuality of the activity.



It is considered that it was in the United States where it began to be practiced, specifically from the social enterprise '*The Extraordinaries*' based in San Francisco and founded in January 2008, which popularised this form of volunteering through a smartphone application in early 2009, although previously, the Spanish microvolunteering portal had already registered the term "microvolunteering" for the first time in Spain in November 2006, thanks to the Bip Bip Foundation, which pioneered this field by creating the first publicly accessible online platform for microvolunteering in May 2008.

This original project aimed to use the advantages of the internet (speed and flexibility) to make the volunteering task a quick action (between 10 minutes and two hours) but also to bring great results to the organisations requesting help. The clearest advantage was convenience, as the organisation presented a large humanitarian project divided into a series of concrete activities that could be carried out in the volunteer's free time, which only required an internet connection. In this way, the "good deed of the day" could be done from home or anywhere else without having to go to a physical location.

In the face-to-face environment, there are different initiatives that we are now going to develop that are very close to both Time Banks and micro volunteering, aimed especially at a young public that does not want a firm commitment to any organisation and that also sees its voluntary work rewarded with issues that really interest it: culture, sport and leisure.

#### **1.7.1.- THE MINUTS IN CATALONIA**

*Minuts.cat* was a platform - which disappeared during the pandemic - that exchanged the minutes a person dedicated to community work for activities, services, discounts or gifts offered on the website. The aim of the project was to connect the population with the different sectors or organisations in the neighbourhood and make the occasional provision of help or micro-volunteering services an opportunity to improve social cohesion, common welfare, participation and the local social economy. Minuts was a system that also made it possible to boost the local and community economy and to connect the third sector, the public administration and companies.

*Minuts.cat* recognised and rewarded all the time citizens contributed to social and environmental work through a currency: time. Citizens received a voucher of 15, 30 or 60 minutes in exchange for their contribution, which could be accumulated or exchanged for cultural activities, municipal services or for a hand from a neighbour through an online platform, such as a Time Bank, provided that the volunteer wanted a greater commitment to the community.

*Minuts.cat* carried out a pilot test in 2016 in the Barcelona town of Figaró - Montmany, and then went on to be implemented in two more Catalan municipalities, Vilafranca del Penedès and Rubí, in direct collaboration with the town councils of these towns.

*Minuts.cat* was also the winner of the 2016 edition of the SmartCAT Challenge competition promoted by the Secretariat for Telecommunications, Cybersecurity and

Digital Society of the Government of Catalonia and was the platform chosen by Vilafranca del Penedès Town Council to pilot the collaborative city area.

In 2018, in collaboration with Barcelona City Council, the platform developed a project in the Nou Barris district aimed at unemployed young people aged between 16 and 24, with the aim of encouraging the participation of teenagers and young people, involving them in their neighbourhood and thus promoting community dynamisation, based on three axes: sustainability, older people and gender equality.

*Minuts.cat* also started in 2018 the project "*Minuts at work*" aimed at the business world, whose objective was to motivate work teams in companies to improve their professional skills, eliminating communication barriers and rewarding involvement with rewards and incentives through an internal currency in time format that can be exchanged for culture, training, group activities... or even donated to an NGO. This programme was subsidised by the Public Employment Service of Catalonia within the framework of the Local Development Support Programmes and by the Barcelona Provincial Council.



### 1.7.2.- THE TEMPO MODEL IN THE UK

*Tempo*<sup>55</sup> is a social enterprise that started in Wales in 2008, but now works across the UK. *Tempo* develops time credit systems - TIME CREDIT as they call it - a form of currency that uses time as a unit of value, a system aimed at communities and public and voluntary sector agencies. In this sense it is not a proper Time Bank, because it does not create stable exchange networks based on reciprocity between its users, which is how Time Banks normally operate, it is a model of promoting volunteering that uses time currency for its implementation.

<sup>55</sup> <https://wearetempo.org/>



The currency model that *Tempo* has developed has strong similarities to Time Bank models, in that individuals earn a time credit for every hour of their time given in voluntary activity. However, these credits are mainly awarded by organisations such as associations or local authorities, and people can then 'spend' these credits to access events, for training and education, and for leisure activities provided by public, community and private organisations. Therefore, unlike other types of Time Banks, exchanges take place mainly between organisations and individuals, rather than person to person, without favouring a permanent and consolidated market of exchanges. This model focuses on building stronger communities by involving citizens as active participants in the design and delivery of community services, providing local organisations with a tool for citizen participation based on micro-volunteering with rewards in assets - educational, cultural, sporting or leisure - from all these organisations.

*TEMPO*'s desired outcomes are built on three different levels:

For individuals or private individuals:

- They learn new skills, gain confidence and raise their aspirations for their volunteering activities.
- They have access to community support networks and feel they have something valuable to contribute - improved self-esteem.
- Try new activities, improving their health and wellbeing

For organisations:

- Engage with new groups and promote more active participation of their users in the design and delivery of services to make them more responsive to their needs.
- They make better use of the assets of their respective communities.

For communities:

- More connected groups and services that can better support each other.

*TEMPO* key results:

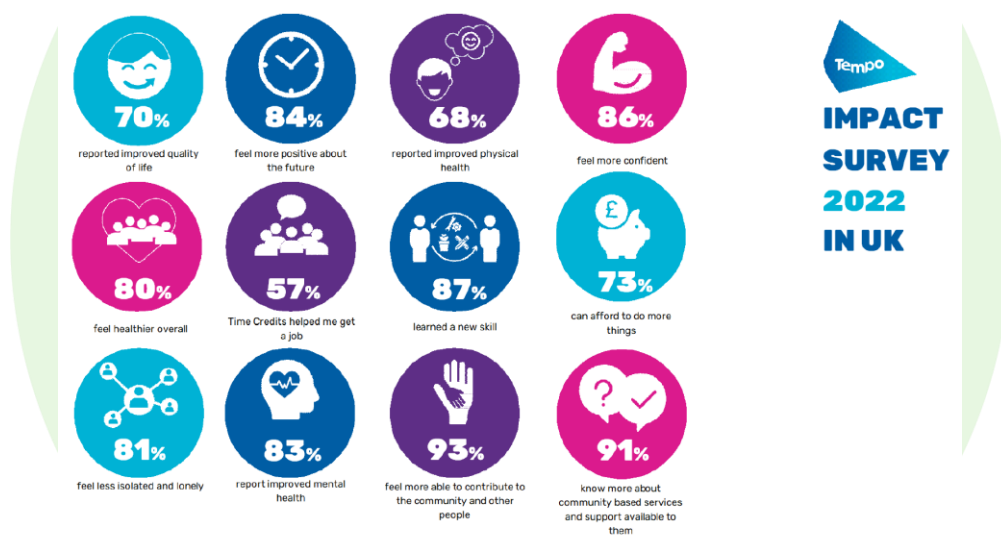
Some of the results *TEMPO* and its time credit system have achieved:

- Increased collaboration between organisations and better use of resources: 74% of participating organisations reported that they make better use of skills and resources in their community, and almost 50% reported that they are now able to provide improved services with the same resources.
- Develop volunteers' motivation and give time more regularly: *TEMPO* partner organisations reported that their volunteers feel more valued and stay longer with the organisation. More than 50% of users volunteer in their communities for the first time and 80% say they are likely to continue volunteering their time in the future. *TEMPO* users also give their time much more frequently than other

volunteers: 62% of *TEMPO* volunteers give their time at least once a week, compared to 66% of national volunteers who give their time at least once a month.

- People increase their confidence and try new activities: 40% of users now participate in activities they have never done before.
- Increased levels of community involvement also have positive effects on people: 70% say it has helped them improve their quality of life, 71% have made new friends, 81% feel less isolated and 80% feel healthier since starting the project.

## NET WELLBEING IMPACT IN UK



### 1.7.3.- YOUNG ACTION IN SÜDTIROL (ITALY)

Young Action<sup>56</sup> in South Tyrol is a project to promote voluntary work among young people created and developed by the KAAS youth centre in Brixen (Italy); young people aged 13-19 can volunteer in various organisations and receive symbolic recognition in the form of shopping vouchers.

<sup>56</sup> <https://youngaction.it/>

#### **1.7.4.- AHA PLUS VOLUNTEER PROMOTION PROGRAMME, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF VORARLBERG**

AHA PLUS is a digital recognition and incentive system for young people who want to volunteer. Young people between the ages of 12 and 24 can participate in volunteering activities (quests), collect points and redeem them for rewards. With the AHA PLUS commitment test, young people have the opportunity to demonstrate the experience they have gained in their volunteering activities when applying for a job and thus increase their chances of getting a job or an apprenticeship.

##### **WHY DOES AHA PLUS EXIST?**

Associations, organisations and municipalities use AHA PLUS to make their opportunities for youth work and participation even more visible and to make volunteering attractive to young people. By publishing their activities - so-called searches - online in AHA PLUS, they reach more and new young people. And: engaged young people keep clubs and organisations alive, and volunteering fosters the relationship between young people and the community. AHA PLUS has been running successfully and developing in Vorarlberg since November 2017. With many years of experience and continuous progress, the participation platform has established itself as a functioning system in Vorarlberg.

##### **HOW DOES AHA PLUS WORK?**

The AHA PLUS system is simple and game-based:

- Participating in a voluntary task/activity (search)
- Points received for this
- Redeem points for prizes
- Download the proof of commitment

AHA PLUS points are calculated automatically by the system and are given for periods of time. AHA PLUS refers to voluntary work and not to paid employment.

Examples of missions:

- Spend time with us and help!
- Maintaining the website, social media channels or distributing brochures
- Assistance at festivals (service, assembly/disassembly)
- Participation and co-design, e.g. Which offer is most attractive to you?
- Digital volunteering: online survey, questionnaires

##### **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF AHA PLUS?**

AHA PLUS offers points for youth, clubs, organisations and municipalities, as well as rewarding donors (sponsors):

- Young volunteers receive points. The points they accumulate can be exchanged for rewards, i.e. invaluable experiences (e.g. job shadowing) or useful and attractive products (e.g. tickets to events, access to leisure activities). This provides them with new experiences and encourages their participation in social and cultural life. In addition, their voluntary commitment and the experience they gain is documented with AHA PLUS.
- Associations, organisations and municipalities use AHA PLUS to make their opportunities for youth work and participation even more visible and to make volunteering attractive to young people. By publishing their activities (searches) online in AHA PLUS, they reach more and "new" young people.
- Reward donors (sponsors) open up opportunities for young people by offering them so-called rewards. These can be an internship in a company or a product that is useful or particularly attractive to young people, such as tickets to events or access to leisure activities. In this way, reward givers raise their profile, cultivate relationships with young people and enable them to participate in social and cultural life.

## WHO PARTICIPATES?

AHA PLUS is aimed at young people aged 12 and over. Of course, anyone over the age of 24 can also participate in AHA PLUS, get involved and collect points. However, it is not possible to exchange points for prizes. The AHA PLUS certificate is available to all participants. AHA PLUS is also aimed at organisations, associations, initiatives and communities in Vorarlberg that are looking for new young volunteers or would like to thank existing volunteers.

Participation in AHA PLUS is free of charge for young people as well as for organisations, clubs and municipalities.

## FIGURES:

- 22,631 young people under the age of 24 registered
- 1,586 over 24 years old can use AHA PLUS without redeeming points
- 3,615 young people have already volunteered through AHA PLUS
- 409 registered organisations, associations and municipalities
- 2,533 Missions for which points have been awarded
- 36,391 Points awarded for the first time
- 9,214,161 points awarded or collected for voluntary activities.

These are consecutive figures since the launch of AHA PLUS in November 2017.

## WHO IS BEHIND AHA PLUS?

AHA PLUS is a project of the AHA - Youth Information Centre Vorarlberg and is implemented and financed on behalf of the Office for Volunteering and Participation in cooperation with the Department for Youth and Family of the Vorarlberg Provincial Government Office.

### 1.8.- THROUGH THE USE OF ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY MONETISATION TOOLS: SOCIAL CURRENCIES

**OBJECTIVE** To promote civic and healthy activities and behaviour among citizens from the institutions and to involve new agents such as local businesses and other public and private organisations in the promotion of volunteering.



#### 1.8.1.- THE MAKKIE (THE NETHERLANDS)

The Makkie<sup>57</sup>, created in 2012 to strengthen the local economy and social cohesion, is defined as a Time Bank that is used to remunerate volunteer work and can also be spent once obtained in some shops in Amsterdam Oost, a low socio-economic status neighbourhood in the city of Amsterdam. One Makkie is equivalent to one hour of volunteer work and there is no direct correlation between the Makkie and the euro, so each local shop decides with the Makkie gesture team how much the volunteers can buy with their Makkie in their shop, returning in this case up to 90% of the market value of the products sold in Makkies, thanks to the funding of the project by the local municipality. Makkie has a digital platform where services can be requested and offered, but also uses paper money to facilitate exchanges

The organisations in the Makkie network remunerate their volunteers with Makkies, but the Makkie organisers leave it up to these organisations to determine the details of the work: As long as the work "contributes to the neighbourhood and social cohesion", they are free to use Makkies. Volunteer jobs range from bar shifts at the social centre, cooking in one of the many soup kitchens on this side of town, giving language classes, organising activities for the elderly, running creative workshops or swimming lessons. Each volunteer receives a Makkie for each hour of work, which creates a level playing field. When an organisation joins the network, the Makkie team assesses whether it contributes to the neighbourhood and what kind of volunteer work could be done before providing Makkies to the organisation to remunerate the volunteers.

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<sup>57</sup> <https://makkie.amsterdam/>

It should be noted that there is a maximum limit of makkies that can be earned per month, which is 32 makkies. This is explained through the logic of social welfare institutions, which do not allow social benefit recipients to earn money in addition to their social welfare payments, as most participants are on social benefits or retired.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, Makkie organisers have recorded a 50% growth in spending on basic goods such as food, demonstrating that the network is really enabling people to make ends meet. Today, the Makkie network is made up of more than 800 volunteers, 35 local shops and 50 volunteer organisations; organisers estimate that between 2,000 and 3,000 people participate in Makkie each week

We recommend reading the following article<sup>58</sup>, very illustrative of the situation of the MAKKIE experience, with very interesting reflections on this initiative.



### 1.8.2.- THE TOREKE SOCIAL CURRENCY IN GENT (BELGIUM)

Social currencies, like Time Banks, can be an effective tool for rewarding or remunerating voluntary activity, as long as it does not collude with the national legislation of each country and the interests of traders, professionals and businesses that provide identical services or products as the exchange networks using such a social currency.

In this case we give an example of a local social currency initiative, the TOREKE<sup>59</sup>, developed since 2010 in the Rabot-Blaisantvest district of the Belgian city of Ghent. Torekes are a complementary currency supported by euros, but not redeemable by individuals. Like the euro, Torekes have a certain value, which corresponds to 1 Toreke for 10-euro cents. The difference between Torekes and the euro is that all transactions in Torekes are valued equally, so that an hour spent cleaning up litter or reading for an hour in a school will always receive 25 Torekes, regardless of the type of activity.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.commonsnetwork.org/2023/08/17/makkie-timebanking-in-the-east-of-amsterdam/#:~:text=The%20Makkie%20is%20a%20time,some%20shops%20of%20Amsterdam%20Oost>

<sup>59</sup> <https://torekes.be/nl/home/>



Torekes - Turkish in Flemish in allusion to the immigrant and Flemish origin of many of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood - can be purchased, both digitally and physically in the form of banknotes, by volunteering for different projects in the district, either individually or as a group of residents, or as a volunteer in a neighbourhood organisation. These projects are offered on the coin's website, and can be very diverse activities, ranging from reading to children in a school, offering free sports classes, picking up litter, helping out during work days in the different vegetable gardens in the area, etc.

And the Torekes can be exchanged in shops in the neighbourhood and even outside, indicating on the website or in the project's app the places where this is possible, with the city council subsequently reimbursing the amount of the Torekes in euros.



### 1.8.3- LA TURUTA IN VILANOVA I LA GELTRÚ (SPAIN)

In July 2009, a group of residents of the town of Vilanova i La Geltrú in the province of Barcelona (Spain), motivated by the Transition Towns movement, got together to launch an initiative with the same objectives and, mainly, to advance food and energy sovereignty, designing different tools such as a social and local currency called Turuta, which is the name of a popular dance of this coastal town of 10,000 inhabitants. Created in October 2010, the Turuta currency<sup>60</sup> has since been used to exchange goods, knowledge and services among its users through an accounting system called mutual credit, which is the same system that governs the Time Banks, the accounting of exchanges and their conversion into currency. To this end, they created an association

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.15-15-15.org/webzine/2015/09/18/transicio-vng-y-la-turuta-hacia-una-sociedad-diversa-sostenible-y-pacifica/>

to promote it called ECOL3VNG (initials of *ECOsistema, ECONómico, ECOLógico Local de Vilanova i la Geltrú*).

The ECOL3VNG association currently has 320 members, 30 of whom are professional providers (shops, establishments, freelancers, etc.). The city council, through the Department of the Environment, has also become a member and the city council plenary meeting of 7 July 2014 unanimously approved the recognition of the peat as a *VNG social currency*. The originality of this currency is that it works on the basis of projects presented by its members, which can receive credit from the association in turutas and compensate the dedication of the members to carry them out. The projects that are promoted are approved at the participatory budget assembly at the beginning of the year. Some projects have focused on the creation of community gardens and the recovery of land for organic farming, gardens that also provide resources that can be exchanged again between members using their local currency.

Voluntary contributions of turutas can be made to a common fund called the *Co-operative Fund*, which is not tied up in the members' balances and can be recovered if needed. This fund is used to finance projects of any kind (always in the sense of the Earth Charter). For example: a group of young people who want to organise a concert, ask for a credit, for example, of 1,000 turutas; from this they pay the necessary for the concert, the musicians, etc.; if they want they can compensate turutas for their work, too; when the concert takes place, they pay turutas and liquidate the credit. They can also exchange euros for turutas, since the association has an account in an ethical bank and if they deposit euros, in the Local Exchange Office we write down the same amount in turutas plus a 5% bonus. They charge a single initial fee of 10 euros and you receive 10 turutas to start exchanging (these turutas come from a project financed by the Cooperative Fund). The idea is that, as the euro fund grows, once the association's expenses have been paid, it will be used to make interest-free microcredits for ecosystem projects, in this way they are - as they say - converting *speculative euros* into *cooperative euros*.

Professional partners accept in exchange for part or all of their products or services. They know that, if the offer is attractive, they will have a new clientele. They value that the clientele appreciates their offer. Initially they started with a *physical Trading Card*, but now they use the Cyclos platform as a Marketplace and to publish the different offers.

The option mostly chosen by the associated establishments or shops is not to offer exclusively in turutas, as they have to pay their products with euros to their suppliers, and they also have to pay their taxes with euros and as it is a system not backed with euros, like other local currencies, they cannot recover euros from their Turutas. What has Turuta learned with local traders?

that traders who offer a higher percentage in chips, receive more new customers who previously did not come to their shop, with some shops even offering their products 100% in chips rather than throwing them away, if it is in their interest to empty the shop.





<https://communities.cyclos.org/turuta/>

### 1.9. - THROUGH THEIR RECOGNITION IN TIME: TIME BANKS

**OBJECTIVE:** to create networks of mutual help and care between neighbours, users, consumers, workers and people in general as a complement to the social action of public and private institutions, without the need for financial investment and using only the resources of each community or group.



This system refers to the payment that is made within a Time Bank community for services rendered in the form of time, so that the volunteer can obtain services from other users or members of the Time Bank with the time obtained.

Time Banks are communities of exchange based on mutual trust and mutual help, as well as on the common commitment to generate a new model of society where neighbours can help each other by regenerating the traditional help networks typical of rural areas and which in urban environments - with other added problems such as loneliness and isolation - do not exist.

They operate using tools similar to those of traditional banks - hence their name - using programmes and applications that manage accounts and time transfers between their members, with the particularity that the exchange value and currency used is the hour invested, regardless of the activity or professional category of the persons involved in the exchange.

In this way, we will speak of a Time Bank as a tool used by a collective of people who exchange services, favours and knowledge among themselves - what in legal terms in Spain are called *friendly, benevolent and good neighbourly jobs* - paying each other with the time it takes to give or receive that service, knowledge or favour, without money and in a *multi-reciprocal* way, paying each other with the time it takes to give or receive that service, knowledge or favour, without the intermediation of money and in a multi-reciprocal way, that is, I do not necessarily have to exchange with the person who

provides me with an exchange - as in direct barter - but with any other person in the bank indistinctly.

The users of a Time Bank have access to all the wealth of resources that the community they have created themselves has, a great multitude of services, skills and knowledge that are available to each member of the bank and that are none other than the skills of each one of us contributed to the Time Bank, resources that I can access through the aforementioned tools - via web or mobile phone app - consult and make contact with the provider or applicant of this or any other service and carry it out.

The aim is, besides the fact of creating a network of help and even care among the users of the Time Bank, to be able to solve concrete problems of our daily life that seem to be limited by the fact of not having the money to access them or simply by not knowing the most abundant and valuable resource we have, our neighbours in our cities.

### **1.9.1.- FROM NATIONAL/REGIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS**

Public administrations can encourage the creation of networks of Time Banks at a national or regional level through the enactment of laws and financial aid, as is the case at a national level in China and at a regional level in the Autonomous Community of Galicia in Spain - this law will be dealt with in section 4 of this report - and in Australia through the regional government of New South Wales.

In China<sup>61</sup>, of the 54 Time Banks existing in 2021, there are 27 Time Banks managed directly by the government, 7 Time Banks managed by companies, 12 organised by community organisations and 8 Time Banks managed in mixed private-public mode. A very interesting feature of Time Banks in China is that time is exchangeable for money, and also that the services of some Time Banks are paid for and paid for by the government itself, which supports them as an effective care measure for its elderly, as the former national one-child policy has created a generation with few informal care resources, which is a huge public expense for the Chinese government's coffers.

In Australia, it was the regional government of New South Wales that decided to put Time Banks and volunteering on the same level of importance, promoting a dense network of regionally funded Time Banks across the country with over 70 communities as an effective tool for recording and rewarding volunteering - the main objective of the regional government - and with a single networked platform facilitating exchanges between different communities across the region. It has now been handed over to an international exchange network platform based in South Africa with local nodes in Australia and Taiwan, CES<sup>62</sup>, as the pandemic appears to have severely restricted the effectiveness and outcomes of the current network.

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<sup>61</sup> ASIBDT Global Timebanking Report 2023, pages 27-29:  
<https://www.asibdt.org/2023/05/presentacion-del-tercer-informe-mundial.html>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.community-exchange.org/>

### **1.9.2.- FROM LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS**

In Spain, there are numerous Time Banks promoted by local administrations and by different councils, areas or departments, depending on the characteristics or functions of the Time Banks:

- Equality/women/family council or area: as an effective tool for reconciling work and family life and empowering women.
- Department or area of social action: for its assistance and care activities and as a tool for the social integration of vulnerable groups.
- Department or area of citizen participation: often linked to volunteer dynamics.
- Youth council or area: oriented to activities by and for young people.

The formulas for implementation are very different, ranging from direct management by the local council of the Time Bank with its own staff; through public tender open to local entities for its management, or through informal support to a local organisation that wants to manage it on its own, with the council ceding issues such as the headquarters and other basic inputs for its operation and management.

Some Time Banks in Spain are about to celebrate their 20th anniversary and have been able to continue their activity despite different changes of government, which means that they are considered by citizens as useful structures for social cohesion and social welfare, regardless of partisanship and ideology.. The Banco de Tiempo de Sant Cugat in Barcelona, the Banco de Tiempo de Valladolid, the Banco de Tiempo de San Javier (Murcia), the Banco de Tiempo de Málaga, the Banco de Tiempo de Almería, the Banco de Tiempo de Sevilla and the Banco de Tiempo de Ciudad Real, among others, stand out here.

### **1.9.3.- TIME BANKS FROM WITHIN THE COMPANY**

One of the most valued variable year after year by employees and managers of large and small companies is to have a better work-life balance.

And it is in the personal sphere where there are endless administrative and day-to-day tasks that rob us of time, which is why, beyond classic flexibility policies in companies, some companies are introducing corporate Time Banks as another social benefit for their employees. In this way, quality time is freed up for all of them, which results in greater productivity for the company. People offer services to their colleagues according to their availability and capabilities, while expecting them to offer other benefits in return.

The implementation of Time Banks also brings other benefits to employees and work teams such as:

- Lighten employees' schedules by implementing flexitime policies.

- Enjoy more and better leisure time, saving time, money and travel through employee clubs. For example, they can share hobbies and interests with other members of the club, also fostering interpersonal relationships between the different teams.
- Improve the work experience of employees. Among others, Time Banks can be used to facilitate everyday tasks, such as running errands or teaching languages without wasting time, among many other possibilities.

Another formula that goes beyond the Time Bank is when these services are carried out by professionals and paid for by the company, which detracts from the traditional Time Bank model to become simply a catalogue of services provided free of charge by the company, despite the incorrect use of the name "Time Bank" for this practice.

On the other hand, we have seen in Spain original formulas and proposals<sup>63</sup> for collaboration between companies and traditional Time Banks, where the company has offered the free and voluntary time of its employees as exceptional services within the Time Bank and whose cost is only in hours on the part of the beneficiaries, establishing collaborative networks between companies and their immediate environment, neighbours and neighbours of the neighbourhood. An example would be the *Time Bank*, a recently created Time Bank in a coworking centre in Madrid, where the aim is to interact between the professionals who occupy the centre, neighbours, local businesses and other neighbourhood institutions such as neighbourhood associations, schools and even museums (this coworking centre is located in the heart of Barrio de Las Letras, close to the Prado Museum, the Reina Sofía Art Centre and many other top-level cultural and artistic institutions).

The concept used as a synergy between first-rate cultural entities such as this type of museum and the social reality that surrounds them - in most cases alien and strange to each other - has been called "situated", as in the case of the experience of the "Museo situado"<sup>64</sup> for the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, with respect to its enclave in the Lavapiés district of Madrid; The name "situated museum" in this case brings us back to feminist theory, and particularly to Donna Haraway<sup>65</sup> when she refers to situated knowledge, a practice of thought that aims to have an impact on its surroundings, but which at the same time allows itself to be affected by those surroundings.

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<sup>63</sup> This is one of them, in addition to the one described:  
[https://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10234/178238/TFM\\_2018\\_LaraGomez\\_Isaac.pdf?sequence=1](https://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10234/178238/TFM_2018_LaraGomez_Isaac.pdf?sequence=1)

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/museo-red/museo-situado>

<sup>65</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna\\_Haraway](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna_Haraway)

#### 1.9.4.- TIME BANKS FROM THE CITIZENRY

There are numerous time banks that work from the citizens themselves, even without legal personality, and that nevertheless comply with the basic rule of any Time Bank that time is the same for everyone but are more permissive with regard to the exchange of products and even the continued provision of certain services, especially for reasons of necessity.

#### 1.9.5.- PENSIONS IN TIME: ZEITVORSORGE, FROM LOCAL COUNCILS

In 2012, the municipality of St. Gallen<sup>66</sup> in Switzerland, a city of more than 75,000 inhabitants, set up a pioneering time donation project for older people in cooperation with regional and local social and care organisations.

The original idea of this initiative is none other than the accumulation of time as prevention for the personal future of the participants, consisting of older people - in this case over 50 years old - who are still in good health, very active and well educated and also willing and interested in social commitment, supporting and helping other older people in need and their relatives in their daily activities, receiving in exchange hours of time that accumulate in their personal accounts, as Time Banks traditionally work all over the world. These accumulated time hours can later be redeemed by each of the participants to cover their own needs, whose services will be provided by other people who will in turn provide and accumulate hours for the future.

With this model, the city of St. Gallen not only wants to increase the security of care provision for the future and reduce the rising costs of care for the elderly, it also wants to give more value to the work of volunteers, promote active ageing, relieve family carers and strengthen social relations between the elderly.

As explained on the project's website<sup>67</sup>, the provision of time is situated between unpaid voluntary work and paid work, and takes the form of tasks and activities where professional services of any kind are not normally provided, such as daily help with household chores, leisure and free time activities, maintaining and caring for social relations, help in the digital world, small repairs, relief and support for family carers, companionship and some administrative help. Time providers receive one hour of credit for one hour of service performed, and the maximum amount of time to be accumulated is limited to 750 hours.

Who manages all this? The "St. Gallen Zeitvorsorge" project is supported by a foundation set up and financed by the city council together with local social and health organisations, which are also represented on the foundation's board. Other important actors in the operational implementation of the time provision are local service providers such as *Pro Senectute* (a Swiss social organisation with more than 100 years

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<sup>66</sup> [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/San\\_Galo](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Galo)

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.zeitvorsorge.ch/>

of activity for the elderly), the Red Cross of St. Gallen or organisations providing home care services as a complement to their activities, as well as parishes with their social services.

But the great originality of this proposal is that the city of St. Gallen itself guarantees that the hours saved can be exchanged in the future for services, and that it is a complementary welfare system to the public welfare system, as an additional pension that makes life easier for the elderly, with the clear objective of preventing loneliness and isolation of the elderly through socialisation from a network of neighbours in a local Time Bank.



#### **1.9.6.- THE ZEITPOLSTER MODEL, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISED CIVIL SOCIETY**

ZEITPOLSTER<sup>68</sup> is a social franchise model that started in 2018 in Austria, a new model of provision and care based on Time Banks, but with certain peculiarities that make it unique and different from traditional Time Bank models: volunteers who carry out aid activities do not receive money for their care work, but are credited with hours in their time accounts, which they can redeem later if they need them for their own care work. However, all those who have not yet saved up hours can pay eight euros per hour for each hour of care. This money is used for the administration and support of the project, another part is used for a group liability insurance and another part is used for an emergency account in case there are few active volunteers and professional care services need to be paid for.

ZEITPOLSTER as an organisation has developed four major impact objectives:

- Local care and prevention networks contribute to the prevention of poverty in old age and the reduction of loneliness;
- Regardless of the family and economic situation, care provision itself can also be actively shaped in old age;
- It is easy to self-determine local and low-cost assistance;
- Through successful cooperation between organisations, those affected benefit from adequate and sufficient care services.

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.zeitpolster.com/es/>



Care services range from help with shopping, travel services, help with housework or gardening to joint outings or simply donating time together and relieving family carers, i.e. non-professional activities, but at the same time very necessary for the well-being of people in need of care or simply companionship or help.

Another novelty is that it is a social franchising service that can be exported and implemented in other countries or cities thanks to the advice and training of Zeitpolster, currently present in different Austrian cities and in the State of Liechtenstein, thanks to the governmental support in this country for this initiative.



#### 1.9.7.- CAPABILITY TB FROM ORGANISATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

CAPABILITY TB<sup>69</sup> is a European Erasmus+ project managed by six European entities and developed from 2019 to 2022, considering that the Time Bank is a tool for social participation capable of providing great opportunities to all people without distinction. Specifically, the Consortium is made up of 5 entities in the field of disability and mental health: AMICA, coordinator of the project and COPAVA (Spain); CECD Mira Sintra (Portugal); KSDEO EDRA (Greece) and CSS Forlí (Italy) and two entities expert in Collaborative Economy: FORBA (Austria) and development of digital platforms: IED (Greece).

Its main objective was the development of a Training Programme<sup>70</sup> and a platform<sup>71</sup> for the improvement of the Inclusion and Participation of people with disabilities and support persons through the Time Bank, with the aim to increase their competences (attitudes, knowledge and skills) and to improve their inclusion and participation.

According to the World Bank (2022), 15% of the world's population lives with some kind of disability, that is 1 billion people in the world. Despite the efforts made and the strategies and mechanisms put in place by public and private bodies, the participation of people with more support needs, on equal terms, is still a priority issue in society, due to physical, attitudinal and social barriers that place them in a position of risk of social exclusion.

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<sup>69</sup> <https://capacity-tb.eu/es/pagina-web/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://platform.capacity-tb.eu/login/index.php>

<sup>71</sup> <https://timebank.capacity-tb.eu/>

CAPABILITY TB believes that Time Banks offer the opportunity to:

- Focus on people's capabilities rather than their limitations;
- To increase the inclusion and participation in the community of people with disabilities, offering a new social network or improving the existence of some of them, involving all people regardless of their needs through the performance of the different roles that exist in these community networks (service provider or claimant);
- Promote the provision of support and accompaniment, in a disinterested manner, without expecting financial remuneration, eliminating barriers or inequalities of this type.

#### **1.9.8.- THE MODEL OF THE TIME BANK IN THE NORTHERN AREA OF MADRID, ACTIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Created in 2005 on the initiative of a citizen of the city of Alcobendas<sup>72</sup> and the enthusiasm of a group of local residents (a city 15 km from Madrid with more than 120,000 inhabitants), it had the support of the city council in providing a working space in the local HOTEL OF ASSOCIATIONS, where more than 50 social organisations and local NGOs lived together. 000 inhabitants), was supported by the city council in the cession of a work space in the local HOTEL OF ASSOCIATIONS, where more than 50 social organisations and local NGOs lived, which allowed it to have all these organisations and their volunteers as users, providing a database with all the resources that were available to all the institutional members of the hotel and the bank itself, with an added compensation system of the Banco de Tiempo and a first class reputational tool. Another added advantage was that the members of the different associations themselves could become individual users of the Time Bank, which meant more resources available to everyone.

All these collaborative synergies between different organisations that passed each other in the corridors and hardly knew each other, allowed for joint activities with other organisations, as well as the participation of their members in new group activities generated by individuals, in the form of workshops and exchange fairs promoted by the Time Bank.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcobendas>

## 1.10.- THROUGH MIXED MODELS OF VOLUNTEERING AND TIMEBANKING

**OBJECTIVE:** to find synergies between the altruistic formula of volunteering and the reciprocity system of the Time Banks, without the need for financial resources.



In this proposal we take up the work done by university professors John M. Carroll and Jessica Kropczynski, Patrick C. Shih and Kyungsik Han<sup>73</sup> under the title of *"Coordinating Community Cooperation: Integrating Timebanks and Nonprofit Volunteering by Design"*<sup>74</sup>.

These authors propose the possibility of being able to combine the dynamics of NGO volunteering with the activity of the Time Banks, by means of a new software design for Time Banks - based on previous research with Red Cross volunteers and users of the international Time Bank platform HourWorld<sup>75</sup> - adapted to the possibility that the NGOs themselves can offer volunteering activities within the Time Bank as if they were another user - users that they call institutional - and the volunteer can be rewarded in time as if they were another Time Bank user, or the volunteer can donate that time to other users, to the NGO they collaborate with or to any Time Bank community project. Institutions could solicit and provide services to each other, publicising what they can offer to other similar organisations.

This design proposal would benefit both Time Banks and non-profit volunteering: it benefits Time Banks by incorporating a large number of community transactions into their framework, as volunteering is a much larger and more established community activity space than Time Banks themselves. Time Banks could also benefit from access to more diverse populations and skill sets. It would also benefit volunteering: the community Time Bank could be a comprehensive clearinghouse for volunteering opportunities in a given community, as well as being able to effectively record all volunteering activity undertaken, especially that which can be categorised as such because the hours received for that volunteering activity have been donated to another organisation or individual.

This idea can unify the usual separation that exists in Spanish city councils regarding the treatment and management of volunteering and the municipal Time Bank - sometimes even in different councils, although both initiatives are the main paradigms for citizen

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<sup>73</sup> From the following universities respectively: Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA and Ajou University in Suwon, South Korea.

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/2302/763>

<sup>75</sup> <https://hourworld.org/index.htm>

cooperation, social equality, civic contribution and community building, allowing them to be unified in a single collaborative platform with the advantages of both systems.

It can also be a tool for involving members of NGOs if these organisations create their own Time Banks, as it is a very effective formula for members to get to know each other and have an added benefit to their sometimes-passive work of members who only contribute money for the cause.

#### **1.10.1. - THE SAN JAVIER TIME BANK MODEL: TIME BANK VOLUNTEERS**

The Banco de Tiempo de San Javier<sup>76</sup> in the Autonomous Community of Murcia (Spain), created in 2004 by the town council of this Mediterranean town, has been characterised since its foundation by the development of dozens of training workshops for all the inhabitants of the town based on the knowledge and resources of these same citizens, so that it has become one of the most important social, cultural and educational agents of the town; When the Time Bank periodically offers citizens the different workshops given by its users, each registered person must sign up for a voluntary activity previously planned by the Time Bank as a requirement to be able to sign up for any of the more than 100 workshops that they carry out, so that this voluntary activity - duly quantified - serves as payment for the training received, apart from the dynamic of exchange between all the users like any other bank.

#### **1.11.- FROM CIVIL SOCIETY, THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF INFORMAL NETWORKS OF MUTUAL HELP**

**OBJECTIVE: to create networks of mutual aid as an alternative to the classic care and social protection system, based on the resources of each community or group.**



local support



employee involvement

Community help among neighbours can be a very valuable formula for recognising the work done for the benefit of others, whose reward is none other than the common good and that I can also be the beneficiary of this same help, as can be the case in those organisations - whether physical or virtual - that can be classified as formulas of the economy of gift or gratuity.

Here we can find informal networks of neighbours who help each other or collectives of people concerned or affected by the same issue - such as organisations affected by rare diseases - or people who simply publish their needs or objects they need or no longer use so that other neighbours can provide them or use them in each case, in a

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<sup>76</sup> <https://bancodeltiempo.sanjavier.es/index.php>

disinterested manner; Long-standing platforms such as freecycle<sup>77</sup>, couchsurfing<sup>78</sup>, or bookcrossing<sup>79</sup> are good examples of this, in their respective fields (donation of recycled objects, offers of free accommodation and books circulating freely around the world, respectively).

This also includes traditional forms of community work, such as the Hacenderas in Castile, the Andecha in Asturias or the Auzolan in the Basque Country, as well as other names in other territories, which are characterised by the promotion - sometimes by local public authorities such as town councils - of community work in the construction of paths or small constructions for common use, cleaning rivers and paths, etc. In the end, it is the whole village or locality that is the real beneficiary of this activity.

Other informal networks are those generated by alternative economic formulas to the traditional ones, either because monetary resources are scarce or because of the need to promote issues such as the local economy or the integration of certain vulnerable groups, by means of private local currencies and local exchange networks, experiences that are sometimes promoted by local public entities, as we can see in some of the examples that we will explain below.

#### **1.11.1.- THE LADDER**

La Escalera<sup>80</sup> is a project created by a Sevillian woman, Rosa Jiménez, within the framework of the Madrid-based citizen innovation centre MEDIALAB PRADO, whose aim from its beginnings in 2016 was to create networks of mutual support among neighbours, foster solidarity and create more united and transversal communities in what is physically a staircase of a community of neighbours, after the realisation that in our big cities people die alone and do not even know the neighbour across the street. Through a simple kit provided on their website - which no longer exists - different materials could be downloaded and printed so that any citizen could place a sign and four simple initial stickers on their front door: "I water your plants", "I share wi-fi", "I'll bring up your shopping" and "I'll buy you a coffee", as well as providing blank templates so that everyone could write whatever they were willing to offer.

At the time it had the support of Madrid City Council for its dissemination - specifically in the Arganzuela neighbourhood - although, like other community projects, it was unable to withstand the effects of the confinement caused by the pandemic and disappeared in 2020.

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.freecycle.org/>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.couchsurfing.com/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.bookcrossing.com/>

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.madridsalud.es/pdfs/guia\\_vecinas\\_interactiva\\_difu\\_web\\_logos.pdf](https://www.madridsalud.es/pdfs/guia_vecinas_interactiva_difu_web_logos.pdf)





### 1.11.2.- COMMUNITIES OF CARE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF QUINTANA (MADRID)

The COMMUNITIES OF CARE is a proposal that emerged from the *TimeLab* innovation laboratory in MEDIALAB MATADERO, a laboratory created in 2015 in MEDIALAB PRADO, promoter of different initiatives related to innovation in Time Banks and in community exchange networks of mutual help, and currently under the tutelage of the Ibero-American Association of Time Banks.

The idea arose during the pandemic, when it became clear during the confinement that people were willing to help others in need, but also that there was loneliness and isolation, the result of both the digital divide and increasingly smaller or sometimes even non-existent family structures. Moreover, this willingness could not be translated into truly effective help precisely because of the lack of training and coordination on the part of both public and private aid organisations, which were overwhelmed and unable to channel the help of all these people willing to act on behalf of others.

The proposal is that the CARE COMMUNITIES integrate all the people who need emotional and real support from other neighbours - either in times of crisis or structurally - in a permanent and constant way, facilitating training by local institutions and NGOs that collaborate so that this help is effective and also favours their integration and social insertion. In addition, these new networks are complemented by a TIME BANK system applied to communities or collectives, transferring the model of mutual aid and valuing the favours that neighbours do for each other to a broader, more inclusive and community-based format, and based on the reflection that we need other structures beyond the individual and families as a new effective complement to social transformation.

Other essential resources for this proposal are all those that promote socio-occupational reintegration, self-employment and entrepreneurship based on different training and collaborative aid dynamics that can be implemented among the users of these communities, also opting for the promotion of lifelong education and especially among

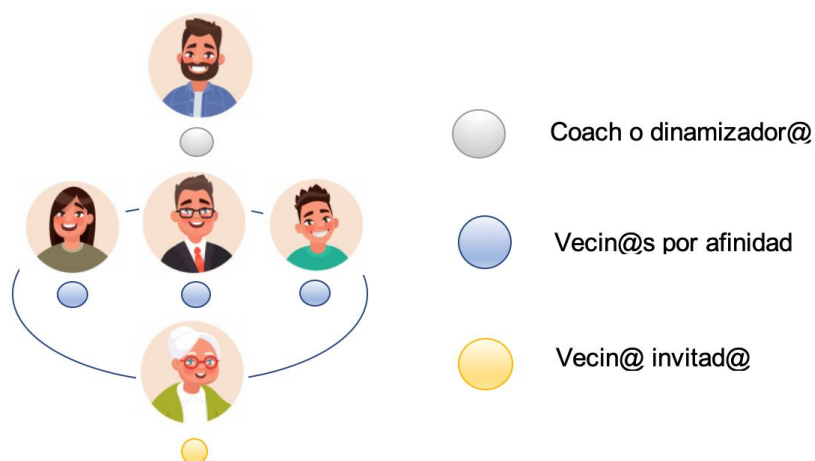


our children and young people, turning these communities into a real school of knowledge throughout their lives.

The CARE COMMUNITIES are made up of a minimum of four people, with the added figure of a coach who dynamises their training and activities; the initial nucleus is made up of a minimum of two like-minded people - whether they are family, neighbours, work colleagues or simply friends - who want to form a community of this type, and the organisation provides both a coach and a person or people from nearby vulnerable groups who need initial help for their social integration. Each community, once formed, meets on a voluntary basis using a common platform as a means of communication. The coach promotes different group and training activities based on topics of interest to all participants:

- Housing and inclusion
- Immigration and interculturality
- Responsible consumption
- Employability and resources
- Use of social networks and computers
- Financial education and home economics
- Equality and gender-based violence
- Self-esteem and coaching
- SDGs and daily action
- The focus in all of them is on active citizenship and social action.

Each is committed to welcoming more people into their community who need their support and care, either on a temporary or permanent basis and up to the limit of numbers they consider feasible and appropriate, with the aim of integrating them as if they were a member of that community.



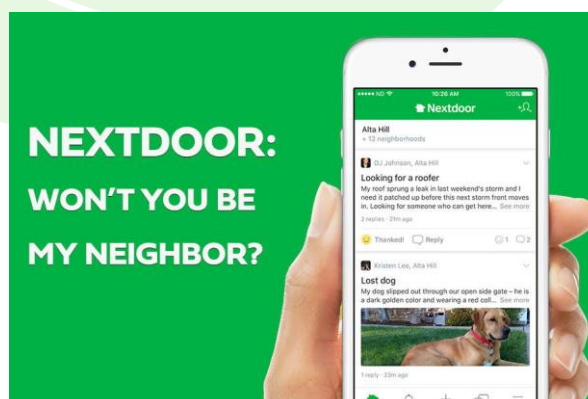
Each COMMUNITY OF CARE has an account in time with which it can request and offer services to any other community, institution, collective, company or individual that offers its services within the platform's Marketplace or virtual market, where both training and educational services and care services of the institutions involved in the

initiative are offered, as well as services and products between the Communities themselves.

This MARKETPLACE or virtual marketplace will be open among the communities by proximity, and there may be a general Marketplace in collaboration with other organisations, associations, public institutions and companies. The ASIBDT will manage the commitment of volunteers to certain tasks specific to each Community of Care, granting a specific payment in hours on a regular basis; these activities are those that correspond to the COACH, MENTORS and the DYNAMISERS of each COMMUNITY OF CARE. The organisation may also grant loans or scholarships in time for studies or for specific projects presented to it by the different CARE COMMUNITIES based on the needs of its members; it may also grant, in certain cases, a BASIC INCOME IN TIME.

Finally, the CARE COMMUNITIES can generate new forms of employment based on the service requirements of each community, work that we pay for in time and that will allow users of each Community to obtain services and inputs that they would not be able to obtain if it were not for the monetisation of these new activities. They also become a school of new professions and trades, as they promote education for employment through workshops and classes by professionals and experts who train people who are unemployed or looking for their first job, becoming a sort of community labour university where both the trainee and the trainer are rewarded. The aim of these new forms of work and employment is in no way to replace legal employment or work: the aim is to complement, rehabilitate and reinsert people into the formal economy through formulas such as self-employment and the creation of cooperatives and SMEs.

At the moment, the Ibero-American Association of Time Banks is implementing a pilot project in the Quintana neighbourhood in Madrid, together with a private cultural centre in the neighbourhood - Zigia28 - neighbourhood associations and the international platform of neighbourhood networks NEXTDOOR.<sup>81</sup>



<sup>81</sup> <https://es.nextdoor.com/>

## 2.- ORGANISATIONAL MODELS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VOLUNTEER REWARD MODELS

### Introduction

Over the past 50 years, as shown in Chapter 1 of this report, different forms of recognition of volunteer work have been developed internationally; in this chapter we will focus on the many models that have mostly been developed by civil society and subsequently adopted by local authorities and other public and private institutions; while state models of recognition are often well secured and in many countries based on legal regulations, many of the models of recognition have emerged through the participation and initiative of civil society. However, many of these bottom-up initiatives<sup>82</sup> fail or simply do not last, but their social impact deserves to be recognised in any case.

In this chapter we will try to identify the factors that contribute to the long-term survival of these models, based on the experience of the different actors involved in this European project, with extensive experience in the field of volunteering and the implementation of different models of rewarding or compensating volunteering.

### 2.1 ORGANISATIONAL MODELS

For a better differentiation we will distinguish between different sponsors or organisational models and how these affect the sustainable implementation of these initiatives:

#### 2.1.1 Partnerships and local networks

In the first developments of these recognition systems and from the 1970s onwards, many initiatives emerged in Europe at local or regional level, in most cases freely organised as groups without legal personality or through civil associations; Many of these models, such as the so-called tauschringe<sup>83</sup> or barter rings in Germany, the LETS<sup>84</sup> networks in the UK or the barter networks in Spain, which deliberately did not want to organise themselves as associations, ceased to exist within a few years of their inception, or appeared and disappeared according to the occurrence of different national or international economic crises and their end. The decision-making processes in these groups, sometimes quite large in terms of participants, were very complex and were in themselves a major disadvantage, although they proved to be very formative and an important learning and development ground for future groups. In addition, their

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<sup>82</sup> <https://aecpa.es/es-es/ciudadania-co-creadora-la-gestion-bottom-up-de-las-politicas-publicas/congress-papers/4098/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://tauschwiki.de/wiki/Tauschring>

<sup>84</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local\\_exchange\\_trading\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_exchange_trading_system)

unclear or non-existent legal basis in these unstructured or unstructured groups was also perceived as a burden when it came to involving other less aware or militant groups.

On the other hand, the models organised as associations or legal associations have a relatively longer period of existence: the democratically elected leaders favour greater continuity in the relationship with their associates in order to achieve their objectives, initially well defined by previous statutes approved in Assemblies and normative meetings - the general assemblies of members - and an incipient professionalisation and specialisation which in some cases resulted in social organisations of great importance and which still survive today. Although, as mentioned above, the pioneers often brought a great deal of knowledge to the development and management of these organisations, it was often not possible to transfer this dynamic to a second or third generation, as is the case with many family businesses: the initial, almost vocational impulse disappears, as do all those original ideals of social change and transformation. However, today there are numerous examples that show that these types of organisations are still very much alive and effective even after 30 years, even if the number of participants decreases due to less direct involvement of citizens in matters of general interest through these organisations.

Currently, the management of these organisations poses a particular challenge in developing solutions for a wide range of issues of local or regional application: the complexity of legal issues, new technologies such as platforms and social networks, new communication structures, community building, etc. represents an immense challenge for mostly small and low professionalised voluntary organisations: many boards committed to their activity fail due to the complexity of all these tasks, terminating their activities or keeping them as small as possible.

### **2.1.2 Organisational structures**

In Austria, umbrella organisation structures such as ASIBT or ZA:RT (cooperation of regional barter systems) in Austria can contribute significantly to the creation and development of local partnerships through support measures, coordinated lobbying, software standards, shared platforms, etc. But even in this area, various umbrella organisations or network structures show that committed volunteers invest an immense amount of energy, but significant expansion of partnerships seems to be unsuccessful. Unlike umbrella organisational structures such as alpine clubs, umbrella organisations of recognition systems cannot offer any financial incentives to members that would represent a significant additional benefit due to the absence or scarcity of income. Such financial incentives, such as insurance, cost reductions for services, etc., would even contradict the objectives of many of these models.

In Spain, other organisational structures coexist which can also be called umbrella organisations and which have formed part of the associative DNA of specific regions of the country for many years, as is the case in Catalonia with the Casals or the sports groups, the musical bands in Valencia or in Andalusia the brotherhoods and brotherhoods in Andalusia, the latter more closely linked to religious organisations, but with strong roots among the local population, as well as sports clubs linked to certain

mass sports, as in the case of football. The Catholic Church has also played and still plays an important role in Spain in the field of volunteering, with numerous NGOs and secular institutions concerned with different social issues.

And beyond the associative movement, there are the FOUNDATIONS, which are also sometimes very involved in the field of volunteering, assistance and care. One example is the Zeitvorsorge Foundation in the city of St. Gallen in Switzerland, which also receives funding from public bodies, but there are many examples throughout Europe.

### **2.1.3 Public entities**

However, the long-term nature of public sponsorship depends on policy makers, and this commitment can also change over the years, leading to the end of these models, even if they have the desired social impact. Examples are the application of such models at city level, where these programmes had to be discontinued after several years.

Public sponsorships, such as the AHA+ model in Austria in Vorarlberg already referred to in the previous chapter, demonstrate impressively how recognition models can be legally guaranteed and managed by professionals employed in institutions. The financial backing of the organisation by public authorities and the politically positive attitude towards the objectives of these models can be a guarantee that such models will also work in the long term. The models in Bavaria, where districts commission associations to organise voluntary services for older people for older people, are also excellent examples of successful approaches.

It is clear that the PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY<sup>85</sup> should be applied to all these issues of social responsibility, directly involving those public bodies closest to citizens, such as town councils and local corporations, even promoting active policies to increase associationism and a civil society more involved in public matters of general interest, starting without any doubt with care and supporting any initiative that arises from the citizens themselves (see examples in chapter 1 of this report).

### **2.1.4 Non-governmental organisations**

NGOs often manage to bring together the commitment of many people for a common cause, where collaboration is most of the time reduced to a periodic financial contribution, when the objective is also alien to the reality of their members' environment. But when this objective is close and near, the organisation can manage collaborative volunteering of proximity, beyond this much-needed financial support. Some NGOs even recognise this work as a possible membership fee, which in this case would be an ancillary form of gratification for the voluntary help provided.

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<sup>85</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/es/sheet/7/el-principio-de-subsidiariedad>



### 2.1.5 Social enterprises

Social enterprise is defined as an enterprise whose primary objective is to address social, environmental or community problems in a sustainable manner, generating a positive impact on society while operating profitably. Social enterprises are usually not as well known as NGOs and also have different names in each country. In the case of Spain, we can refer to social enterprises as reinsertion companies, B-CORP companies<sup>86</sup>, labour limited companies and cooperatives.

We have also considered as a successful model that of certain consumer cooperatives in Spain, which use a tool for rewarding voluntary work with their cooperative members, a model that can be replicated as a model for other types of cooperatives, although in the Spanish case it depends on legislation, in this case at regional or autonomous community level. A more detailed description of this model is included as an appendix to this document.

In the case of Austria, social enterprises are organisations, such as the Austrian Zeitpolster, that generate income in the market, clearly state their social impact and, if they make a profit, reinvest it mainly for their own purpose. Although these organisations operate in the market, they are not for profit. These organisations depend on subsidies, e.g. from foundations or grants, at least in the start-up phase, but sometimes also beyond.

In the framework of the Social Entrepreneurship Initiative, the European Commission defined three lines of action to improve the framework conditions for social enterprises:

- better access to finance
- more visibility for social entrepreneurship
- Improving the legal environment

Improving access to finance should be achieved, on the one hand, by mobilising public money and private investment in the form of various European funds. On the other hand, innovative financing mechanisms such as social stock exchanges, micro-credits and crowdfunding should also be used. The visibility of social enterprises can be increased by improving the networking of enterprises at European level and by raising the awareness of national authorities about the role of social entrepreneurs in their own countries (More-Hollerweger, Simsa et al., Simsa, Neunteufl et al.)

Source: 3rd Report on Volunteering, Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs.<sup>87</sup>

If these organisations manage to bring a high level of stability to their core business through market revenues, they will have the opportunity not only to provide socially relevant services, but also to ease the burden on the public sector.

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.bcorpspan.es/>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.freiwilligenweb.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Freiwilligenbericht-2019.pdf>



Austria has introduced its own label for such organisations. The Ministry of Economic Affairs, AWS Austria Wirtschaftsservice and SENA (Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria) award the VSE - Verified Social Enterprise Label<sup>88</sup>. This label is awarded to organisations regardless of their legal form if they meet the three criteria described above. These criteria are reviewed every three years.

Several European countries and cities have developed their own policy strategies for the creation of social enterprises.

## 2.2 NEW SOCIAL OBJECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

While state recognition systems such as certificates and competence documents emerged later, the first civil society recognition systems such as time banks emerged in the 1990s in Europe. The objectives of these systems were very different and were often set according to local needs, outside of any public support policy. In many cases, these objectives were also set as alternatives to the capitalist system and the consumption model, in favour of a circular economy or the valorisation of voluntary work, among other issues. Many of these early efforts form the basis of now established and recognised recognition systems.

Today, however, the objectives are often defined by higher and more distant political bodies or according to social impacts defined from above, even from international organisations such as the United Nations and its Sustainable Development Goals 2030,<sup>89</sup> currently in the portfolio of all States and public institutions. Issues such as the fight against loneliness, simple support services for the elderly, help for families, etc. are coming to the fore, but always from increasingly targeted and restrictive regulations that do not favour them. These recognition systems and alternative care plans have developed from an alternative niche and are now examples of how current social problems can also be solved from another perspective closer to the citizen, to the people.

By working with the first models, it is possible to understand more quickly what is useful for successful implementation and what factors speak against it; as recognition models become more focused on socially desirable goals and thus increasingly become the focus of administrative and political attention, demands on forms of organisation and funding change. Scalability or transferability to other regions and even countries is therefore becoming increasingly important.

This puts standardisation, objectives and safeguarding of already functioning and efficient systems in the foreground, provided that both their independence and

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<sup>88</sup> <https://www.aws.at/en/verified-social-enterprise-label/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

professionalisation are favoured. If public bodies are to work towards recognition systems, a model must be created that can achieve broad public and social acceptance.

## **2.3.- CHALLENGES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RECOGNITION SYSTEMS<sup>90</sup>**

Addressing the question of why many of the civil society models have failed or why they have not become widespread leads us to the challenges that need to be overcome.

### **2.3.1.- Legal issues**

Depending on how these models are organised, the legal issues will have to be clarified in each country. The fact that voluntary work should be recognised can already be found in many examples - see chapter 3 - but it is very important to clarify the legal issues in each case and situation, even without legislation to cover it in reference to our proposal for a social sandbox for these situations of legal vacuum. However, the creation of legally clear regulations is important for the expansion of these models, whether from the European Union or from different national legislations.

### **2.3.2 Organisational models**

Sustainable organisational models require organisations to be professionally designed without overburdening them with administrative tasks. In addition to creating a legal basis, the internal organisation of these organisations then becomes a very important issue for their own effectiveness and results. The laboratories emerging from civil society can give us very good clues, as well as the great experience gained in this field and in the last 10 years by foundations, NGOs and social enterprises.

### **2.3.3 Financing**

As described above, solid funding of the models is a central foundation that can be achieved through public or private funding and own income such as membership fees, service income or a combination of all of these, although the funding model will also depend on the objectives of the organisation. Without a financial basis, it is difficult to imagine a targeted implementation and thus the achievement of a broad social impact, as numerous examples show.

### **2.3.4 Attitudes towards volunteering are changing**

The framework conditions for volunteering have changed significantly in recent decades. Digitalisation, in particular, has created new opportunities for participation: digital platforms and social networks make it possible to organise volunteering activities independently of time and place, giving rise to new forms and ways of action such as

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<sup>90</sup> Source: 3rd Volunteering Report of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, 2019.  
<https://www.freiwilligenweb.at/freiwilliges-engagement/freiwilligenbericht/>

micro volunteering, where tasks are completed at short notice and with little time commitment. This type of volunteering is particularly suitable for people who have little time but still want to volunteer.

Long-term engagement, as traditionally takes place in associations or non-profit organisations, is nevertheless still relevant. Many people yearn to take a break from the digital world and participate in real initiatives, such as community gardens, sharing circles, time banks, food banks, etc. These activities also offer the opportunity to build long-term relationships and make a lasting contribution to the community. These activities also offer the opportunity to build long-term relationships and make a lasting contribution to the community.

The way volunteers are approached has also changed: organisations today need to be more responsive to individual interests and offer flexible engagements that allow for both short- and long-term involvement. Episodic involvement, for example through events, is a common form of short-term volunteering, while other long-term opportunities tend to focus on ongoing tasks and relationships over time.

The role of the state has also changed. The Volunteering Act and other legal frameworks have made volunteering more regulated, which in some cases makes it more complicated and complex, both for the organisations and for the volunteers themselves. At the same time, companies and non-profit organisations are increasingly taking on social responsibility, which promotes both short- and long-term forms of engagement.

While recognition systems for young people aim at short-term commitment or are often directed at the initial experience with volunteering, time bank models that address foresight, such as projects like Zeitvorsorge in the city of St. Gallen or Zeitpolster in Austria, show that volunteers commit themselves in the long term under new framework conditions. The aim is to anticipate one's own old age, i.e. the time when one is in need. This development responds to the tendency to give something back to others and, at the same time, to defend one's own benefit. However, the long-term perspective is difficult to achieve.

Time provision models, including those focusing on care services for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities or children, are a more recent phenomenon, even among time credit models. Both in all Time Banks worldwide<sup>91</sup>, as well as the already mentioned initiatives of Zeitpolster in Austria and Zeitvorsorge in Switzerland manage to attract through their pension schemes a high proportion of people who were not active volunteers before. In the case of Zeitpolster in Austria, depending on the region, 60-70% of the volunteers were not previously active. This shows the great potential of these schemes to motivate people to engage in long-term volunteering, although this goes against the general trend.

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<sup>91</sup> There are more than 1000 Time Banks all over the world dedicated to care, especially the Asian models of care for the elderly: <https://www.asibdt.org/2024/10/iv-informe-mundial-de-bancos-de-tiempo.html>

### **2.3.5 Experience and progress are not transparently accessible.**

It would be important to research and compare models to understand their impact in this area. Over the years, these new models of recognition and delivery have demonstrated the potential for engagement that can be unleashed beyond traditional volunteer organisations. Well-founded accompanying research on the different models could lead to improvement measures and model comparisons, which would provide decision-makers in administrations, NGOs and relevant political organisations with an important basis for an establishment strategy.



### **3.- HOW SUCH SYSTEMS CAN BE LEGALLY CLASSIFIED AND WHICH CONDITIONS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK MUST BE OBSERVED IN THEIR IMPLEMENTATION.**

#### **3.1.- SPAIN**

In the case of Spain, the only applicable legislation for exchange networks or the promotion of volunteering that add a remuneration formula should be those referring to the Time Banks and to the Volunteering Law itself, Law 45/2015, of 14 October, on Volunteering, with the considerations regarding the possible conflict between both concepts, volunteering and remuneration, which we commented on in the introduction to this report. It is in this sense that we propose what we call a social regulatory sandbox for some of the proposals referred to, in very well-defined contexts and from a local perspective. In the case of Spain, we then stick to the possible existing legislation on Time Banks and to legal formulations on the legality of the exchanges carried out in Time Banks.

##### **3.1.1.- THE GALICIAN LAW**

Galicia is the only Autonomous Community in Spain which has so far created a legal regulation for the development of Time Banks (in Galician *municipalities*) at the municipal and rural level, specifically with Law 2/2007 of 28 March, on Work and Equality for Women in Galicia<sup>92</sup>, passed by the Galician Parliament on 13 March 2007, specifically in its Title VI on the "Autonomous Promotion of Municipal Measures for Work-Life Balance" and in its Chapter I, which is explicitly dedicated to "Municipal Time Banks".

The Galician Time Banks - there were more than 90 Time Banks with their own online platform - are converted by this law into a municipal system for the exchange of services and knowledge between citizens, which uses time as a currency of exchange and seeks above all to reconcile family and work from a gender perspective.

##### **3.1.2.- LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EXCHANGES IN A TIME BANK**

Thanks to a publication on Time Banks in legal terms<sup>93</sup> by our colleague Ms. María José Blanco Barea, Law graduate and president of the Zamora Time Bank Association, and Ms. Dori Fernández Hernando, graduate in Gender Equality from the URJC, we can draw the following conclusions regarding the legality of the exchanges that take place within a Time Bank:

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<sup>92</sup> [https://noticias.juridicas.com/base\\_datos/CCAA/ga-l2-2007.html](https://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/CCAA/ga-l2-2007.html)

<sup>93</sup> "Banco del Tiempo en clave jurídica y de género", Diario La Ley, No. 9028, Tribuna Section, 25 July 2017 (<https://diariolaley.laleynext.es/>)

- For these two researchers, the services that are exchanged in a Time Bank are neither labour nor mercantile, they are not work in the sense of paid work; they are not labour, as they are excluded from labour legislation.
- The help and service provided by members of a Time Bank are jobs excluded from the scope of the Workers' Statute, as they lack some of the characteristics that define an employment contract, specifically remuneration, or because they are jobs excluded from the scope of both self-employment and dependent or salaried work: This is what the Workers' Statute refers to as services in the context of friendship, family or temporary collaboration for reasons of friendship or benevolence, neighbourly relations, or by virtue of a clearly altruistic purpose of collaboration.
- They are also excluded from the General Social Security Law (LGSS), although this law adds that they are services performed on an occasional basis. In fact, the statutes of Time Bank associations usually include a clause excluding activities which, because they are carried out on a continuous basis, could be considered to be the subject of an employment contract. However, it should be borne in mind that the lower courts have accepted as friendly, benevolent or good neighbourly work cases in which the services have been provided over a period of years. At the same time, they have declared sporadic or occasional work as employment.
- The exchanges in a Time Bank fit into what are known as relationships of complacency, one of the sources of social capital. In these relationships, the parties are under no obligation to act, but once one or both of them have acted, they cannot claim back the fruits of their actions, nor can they ask for any kind of compensation. They are not bound by law, but there is a minimum duty of care for the counterparty's assets and a basic duty of loyalty. They are not legal relationships because they are governed by and have their origin in social relationships. They are so private that they are not even regulated by law and arise in areas such as family, kinship, friendship, neighbourhood or community.
- The essential aspect of the relationship in a Time Bank is not the provision of services but the donation of time, the donated time. This donation is a consideration with a non-binding clause, a recommendation or suggestion to the donee to provide the service in favour of a third person who, in due course, will be determined by the board of directors or the system itself. Insofar as the clause is not obligatory, the donation of time establishes a relationship analogous to the so-called "complacency" clauses. This better explains the purpose of any Time Bank to operate outside the logic of the market.

As can be seen, one of the requirements for exchanges within a Time Bank is that they should be of an occasional and non-continuous nature and that they should not collude with regulated professional activities of the formal market, in order to avoid both professional intrusion and illegal practices typical of the informal economy.



However, we insist on the concept of the social Sandbox as an unprecedented context where continuous exchanges can be facilitated within the framework of a Time Bank or a local exchange network, as long as these relationships are for life support in cases of real need or economic hardship, or are used for the social and labour reinsertion of the users who make use of them; Restrictive rules and laws for *bottom-up* inclusion policies managed by grassroots organisations should be placed outside of these contexts of need, as their strict application only promotes the chronification of situations of poverty and social unrest.

### 3.2 AUSTRIA

In Austria, the new Volunteering Act (2024) also regulates some aspects of recognition systems.

The website of the Ministry of Social Affairs states:

In principle, the Income Tax Act distinguishes between small and large voluntary lump sums (§ 3 (1) Z 42 EStG).

- The small voluntary allowance can be paid up to a maximum of EUR 30 per calendar day or EUR 1,000 per person per year.
- The large voluntary allowance is intended for certain activities specified in the law. It can be paid up to a maximum of EUR 50 per calendar day and EUR 3,000 per calendar year per person. The law defines the activities that qualify for the large lump-sum allowance as follows: The lump sum may be paid for days and activities that:
  - serve charitable purposes in accordance with Article 37 of the BAO,
  - are exempt from municipal tax pursuant to § 8 Z 2 of the Municipal Taxes Act,
  - are intended to provide assistance in disaster situations in accordance with Article 4, Paragraph 4, Number 9, or...
  - represent a role as an instructor or trainer.

It is not further defined whether this regulation is also applicable in the field of social insurance.

There is no specifically defined legal basis for systems with computation points such as time banks, time provision models or recognition points.<sup>94</sup>

A distinction must therefore be made here between models based on the use of units of account.

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<sup>94</sup>Source

<https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/Gesetzliche-Neuerungen/archiv-bgbl-2023/freiwilligengesetz.html>

For a legal categorisation in Austria, the following legal areas in particular must be taken into account:

- Income tax issues
- Questions of Social Security Law
- Voluntary law
- Monetary laws

### **3.2.1 Tax-free models with point counts**

In the AHA Plus model, points received are not exchanged for direct value or benefits. The points earned can be used, for example, to attend seminars, receive vouchers provided by companies, etc. Therefore, this type of model is not taxable.

If long-term time credits are saved in these models and there is no option to exchange them directly for benefits, it can be assumed that tax or social security issues are not affected either. As in the case of time credits, there is no possibility of reciprocal exchange in these models. Credit balances are kept for the long term. There is no right of repayment. Credit balances also lapse in the event of death.

It is important that these systems do not provide for immediate redemption in exchange for benefits. This is because the principle of reciprocal provision would then be assumed to be an exchange relationship. Barter transactions are subject to taxation.

### **3.2.2 Reciprocal benefit models**

Models such as barter circles, time banks, etc. In principle, they are taxable in Austria.

If time credits or settlement points are used for the reciprocal exchange, they represent a non-monetary benefit. If a painting company exchanges its services with a car dealership and in return receives a car instead of money or points to buy another good, both companies must record this in their accounts. Even if no money has been paid, tax obligations arise. As there are no exemptions, this mechanism also applies to the private sector. For this reason, barter systems such as Talente Vorarlberg point out to their members in their rules that there is a tax liability for each individual situation.

In Austria, the principle of affectation is also anchored in the Social Security Act. This means that the tax liability arises when the value is received. In other words, at the moment when a payment or non-cash benefit is received and not only when points or hours are redeemed.

Since the entry into force of the new law on volunteering (2024), all the regulations pertaining to flat rates for volunteering are also applicable to these settlement systems, as the legislator is not limited to payments in euros, but to the value of the transaction.

There is a limit to the modelling if such settlement systems were to exchange their units in euro. Settlement systems whose units can be purchased in euro or, conversely,

exchanged for euro are subject to e-money legislation. These are strictly regulated and leave no room for manoeuvre for operators.

### **3.3 - GERMANY**

Hugo Godschalk has carried out a detailed analysis of the models described above for Austria. He shows that counting systems, regardless of whether they charge points or hours, are taxable if services are exchanged between participants and can be compensated.<sup>95</sup>

For models such as the Austrian AHA Plus or for hourly caps, almost the same conditions apply in Germany as in Austria. The main difference is that in Germany, unlike Austria, there is no accrual principle for social insurance.

#### **3.3.1.- Certificates and documents of recognition**

In Germany there are national systems for the recognition of voluntary work. A distinction is made between volunteer certificates and volunteer cards. Volunteer certificates are purely formal proof of voluntary work. Like a certificate, they attest to your commitment. These certificates are called differently in each federal state; you will find some examples in the following table.

##### ***Juleica***

The Youth Leader Card (Juleica)<sup>96</sup> is a nationally standardised identity document for volunteers working in the youth field. It legitimises volunteers vis-à-vis public authorities, in the sense of an identity card. It also entitles them to discounts. To obtain the card, a group leadership course and a first aid course are required.

In some Länder (e.g. Lower Saxony and Bavaria), the Juleica can be used to apply directly for a volunteer card. With the Juleica, the requirements of "at least x years for x hours" no longer apply.

##### ***Volunteer cards***

Unlike the volunteer card, there is a volunteer card. This is a thank you card that offers different discounts in each district: from swimming pool tickets to restaurants, goldsmiths and car dealerships. The amount of volunteer work required to obtain it also varies from state to state. A selection of the differences can be found in the table below.

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<sup>95</sup> <https://paysys.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/letshb6.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.juleica.de/>

Here you can find out what you get as a holder of a recognition card in Hamburg:  
<https://doin-good.de/engagementkarte/>

<b>Volunteer card (discounts)</b>	<b>Proof of volunteering (certificate)</b>
<b>Baden-Wuerttemberg</b>	
<b>Only tested in model municipalities since 2023</b>	Qualipass: volunteering certificate; supplement to school certificate available
<b>Bavaria</b>	
<b>Minimum age: 16 years Volunteering for 2 years 5 hours per week/ 250 hours per year</b>	Recognition test
<b>Brandenburg</b>	
<b>For 3 years: 240 hours/year For 5 years: 120 hours/year</b>	Volunteer Pass
<b>Hamburg</b>	
<b>Minimum age: 16 years Honorary position for 1 year 100 h/year</b>	Hamburg Test
<b>Hesse</b>	
<b>Minimum age: 14 years For 5 years: 250 hours per year (under 21 years old: committed for 3 years)</b>	Proficiency test Supplement to the certificate
<b>Lower Saxony and Bremen</b>	
<b>Cooperation between Lower Saxony and Bremen</b>  <b>Minimum age: 18 years For 2 years: 250 hours/year</b>	Proficiency test
<b>North Rhine-Westphalia</b>	
...	

Sources:

<https://www.engagiert-in-nrw.de/was-ist-die-ehrenamtskarte>  
<https://www.freiwilligenserver.de/ehrenamtskarte>  
<https://service.niedersachsen.de/detail?pstId=440534748&ags=03&pstCatId=454393292>  
<https://sozialministerium.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/soziales/buergerengagement/ehrenamtskarte>  
<https://qualipass.de/>  
[https://verwaltungsportal.hessen.de/leistung?leistung\\_id=L100001\\_343066148#Vorau-ssetzungen](https://verwaltungsportal.hessen.de/leistung?leistung_id=L100001_343066148#Vorau-ssetzungen)  
<https://www.ehrenamt.bayern.de/vorteile-wettbewerbe/ehrenamtskarte/index.php>  
[https://www.brandenburg.de/media\\_fast/lbm1.a.4856.de/AntragEhrenamtskarte2015.pdf](https://www.brandenburg.de/media_fast/lbm1.a.4856.de/AntragEhrenamtskarte2015.pdf)  
<https://ehrenamt-in-brandenburg.de/anerkennung-2/freiwilligenpass/>  
<https://www.hamburg.de/resource/blob/768038/007e4f4ba53a68952a5914b0c0792478/faq-engagement-karte-data.pdf>  
<https://www.hamburg.de/politik-und-verwaltung/behoerden/sozialbehoerde/themen/soziales/engagement/hamburger-engagement-nachweis>

### **3.3.2.- Pre-allocated amount per volunteer**

The volunteer allowance is an expense allowance that can be paid to volunteers. This lump sum or pre-allocated amount is intended to encourage commitment and is exempt from tax and social security contributions, which means that neither the association nor the volunteers have to pay tax. It is very common, for example, in the case of volunteer referees.

The allowance is EUR 840 in advance for voluntary work. The exercise instructor's allowance is EUR 3 000 and is mainly intended for trainers in sports clubs. The flat-rate allowance for voluntary work in the care sector can be paid if the work is carried out through an approved care centre.

The prerequisite for this voluntary care is the free care courses offered, among others, by the care insurance companies.

Sources:

<https://deutsches-ehrenamt.de/steuern-finanzen/aufwandsentschaedigung-verguetung/ehrenamtspauschale/>  
<https://www.ppm-online.org/pflegedienstleitung/ehrenamt-in-der-pflege/>  
<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/service/begriffe-von-a-z/e/ehrenamtliches-engagement-in-der-pflege>

### **3.4.- ITALY**

#### **3.4.1.- Italian legislation on volunteering**

Italian legislation on volunteering. The first organic law on volunteering is Law no. 266 of 11 August 1991, also known as the Framework Law on Volunteering.

The volunteer's work cannot be remunerated in any way, not even by the beneficiary. Volunteers can only be reimbursed by the organisation through which they carry out the activity for the expenses actually incurred and documented for the activity carried out, within predetermined limits. Reimbursement of flat-rate expenses is prohibited in all cases. Expenses incurred by the volunteer may also be reimbursed on the basis of self-certification, provided that they do not exceed a predetermined small amount and provided that the type of expenses and volunteer activities for which this form of reimbursement is authorised are determined by the competent social organisation. Voluntary activities related to blood and organ donation are in any case excluded from this regulation.

The role of volunteer is incompatible with any form of subordinate or independent employment relationship and with any other remunerated employment relationship with the organisation to which the volunteer belongs or with which the volunteer carries out his or her voluntary work. However, these provisions do not apply to certain groups of persons, such as volunteers in the General Civil Service or staff working abroad as volunteers in the framework of international development cooperation, as well as employees of the National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps.

Third sector organisations that deploy volunteers must insure them against accidents and illnesses related to their voluntary activities and against third party liability.

Having clarified the legal provisions on volunteering, the "Erasmus Learn to Care" project can be compared with the experience of time banks in Italy. The legal recognition of time banks can be found in Article 27 of Law 53 of 2000 entitled "Time Banks". This provision regulates the relationship between time banks and public organisations, especially those closest to citizens.

#### **3.4.2.- Timebanks in Italy: legislation**

Firstly, we could say that it is a system in which people exchange activities, services and knowledge with each other. We could then define them as: "free associations of people who organise themselves and exchange time to help each other, especially in small daily needs". They are "places where lost habits of mutual help, typical of good neighbourly relations, are rediscovered".

Time banks are organised like credit institutions, where transactions are based on the circulation of time and not money. The major difference is that interest is never charged, not even negative! The only obligation you have is to balance your account.



### ***Who benefits?***

Anyone, men and women of any age, can join a Time Bank. The vast majority of sponsors and members are women, but after the initial, almost exclusively female phase, there is also a good proportion of men who, by joining, discover that they can satisfy an area of need far removed from their own culture.

### ***Units of measurement***

That the exchange refers to activities and that the unit of measurement of value is the hour (with its fractions and multiples), regardless of the market price of the service. For example, an hour spent cleaning vegetables is worth the same as an hour of music lessons. The system is thus based on the principle of equal dignity of the activities exchanged and on the principle of reciprocity, with each subject acting as a common bearer of needs and resources.

### ***Current accounts***

People who join a time bank and between whom an exchange takes place are generally referred to as current account holders (or time current account holders) or members, as they become current account holders into which they deposit the hours they have worked on behalf of other "current account holders", acquiring a credit balance of equal value in the form of hours. They spend this credit to benefit from the services of Time Bank members.

To facilitate transactions and accounting, "cheques" are generally used, which each account holder can draw from the "passbook" provided by the Time Bank. Therefore, the hours worked by the volunteer cannot be assigned a financial equivalent, but only the right to the same number of hours that other volunteers have worked for them.

This cannot be otherwise, as current legislation establishes that the consideration received for a service becomes income subject to taxes and contributions. In general, all income from work, i.e. all income from employment relationships involving the performance of work in any capacity for the account and under the direction of others, including home work if it is considered as employment within the meaning of labour law (Article 49(1) of Presidential Decree no. 917/1986), must be included in taxable and contributory income.

As an alternative to time banks, Italian legislation has provided for the "voucher" system (Law no. 197/2022, art. 1, paragraphs 342 to 354, which amended DL 50/2017). The amount of labour vouchers foreseen for 2024 is €12.41 per gross hour (about €9 net), compared to €10 until their introduction in 2017. They are tax exempt, but subject to INPS and INAIL contributions. This instrument is also often used by families to pay for small odd jobs (babysitting, gardening, etc., etc.).

Conclusion: Under current Italian law, it is not possible to attribute an economic value to the services provided by a volunteer for the benefit of a third party.

#### **4.- RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the above, the following recommendations are addressed to public and private institutions, as well as other social agents involved, in order to facilitate the implementation of these models of rewarding volunteering:

##### **4.1.- THE NEED FOR A UNIQUE SOCIAL AND FUNDING SANDBOX**

Originally, the word 'sandbox', which literally means sandbox, refers to the original sandboxes as small enclosures where children can play and experiment in a controlled and stipulated environment, but the term has taken on new meanings. In the world of computing, a sandbox is a closed test environment, designed to safely experiment with web or software development projects, a secure test environment where potentially insecure software code can be run without affecting network resources or local applications, also used as a test environment for running code prior to large-scale deployment.

In turn, the concept has been transferred to the digital economy in the form of so-called "regulatory sandboxes": testing grounds for new business models that are not yet protected by regulation and supervised by regulatory institutions. These testing grounds are particularly relevant in the fintech world where there is a clear need to develop regulatory frameworks for emerging and innovative models in economics and finance. The aim is to ensure that strict financial regulations do not affect the growth and pace of the most innovative companies, without relaxing the protection of the future rights of the consumers who will use them. Many countries have opted for this model - there are now more than 20 countries with projects underway - including Spain. However, in their products and business proposals, these fintech companies avoid targeting groups with scarce resources and at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a population that accounts for 21% of the European population, according to EUROSTAT data.<sup>97</sup>

What is our proposal? The need to implement regulatory sandboxes, exempt from taxation and regulatory standards, but with the control of future results and regulatory needs by European, national and local public authorities and the citizens themselves through the social organisations involved, in order to:

- Innovation projects in the field of social assistance through new technologies, which can also be used as a tool for integration and support for vulnerable groups, such as immigrants and undocumented migrants or other groups.

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<sup>97</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20211015-1>

- Specific projects in economically and socially depressed places or territories in Europe or in other countries, from European and national cooperation in each country in the latter case, allowing the continuous flow of resources without any kind of regulatory control, whether in a situation of structural poverty or in an emergency or disaster situation.
- Local regulatory sandboxes from local institutions and organised citizenship, in neighbourhoods or areas with serious chronic economic and social situations that facilitate experiences of social and labour insertion from the informal to the formal economy.

For all these proposals it is necessary that local institutions - as the political entities closest to the citizen - use the same subsidiarity control mechanisms established by the European Union<sup>98</sup>, based on the view that the very principle of subsidiarity establishes that measures should be taken at EU level when they are more effective than the individual action of Member States at national, regional or local level. In our case it is not only states that can be the only ones to use this control mechanism, but also local authorities over and above regional or national entities, if they are not effective in their action with regard to the basic rights of citizens.

With regard to funding, SICs or Social Impact Contracts, also known as Social Impact Bonds, also offer the possibility of experimenting, with the support of private investors, with new social interventions before they are scaled up as public policies, interventions where new formulas for rewarding voluntary work in the care sector, as well as in other settings, could be experimented with. Since the launch of the first CIS in Peterborough Prison (UK) aimed at reducing the rate of juvenile prison recidivism, CISs are considered a winning model for social innovation for two reasons: their ability to align the objectives of all participants towards maximising social impact and the multiple advantages they offer to each of the participants, mainly three: the payer (whether public administration or donor), the impact investor and the service provider implementing the CIS intervention. In this direction, a good example of social finance would be the one carried out by the company SOCIAL FINANCE in the United Kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

#### **4.2.- THE USE OF SOCIAL PRESCRIPTION AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR THE PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN THE CARE SECTOR**

Social prescribing is the process by which medical and health professionals recommend services, resources or activities available in their community that could be beneficial to improve their health and wellbeing. Social prescribing promotes social capital and offers

<sup>98</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/adopting-eu-law/relations-national-parliaments/subsidiarity-control-mechanism\\_es#:~:text=El%20principio%20de%20subsidiariedad%20establece,nivel%20nacional%2C%20regional%20o%20local.](https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/adopting-eu-law/relations-national-parliaments/subsidiarity-control-mechanism_es#:~:text=El%20principio%20de%20subsidiariedad%20establece,nivel%20nacional%2C%20regional%20o%20local.)

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.socialfinance.org.uk/>

a response to problems of loneliness or social isolation from a community perspective; it helps to address more frequent mental health problems in primary health care and offers an alternative to the medicalisation of problems arising from social causes.

These programmes are already being developed in many countries at the initiative of both national and local public administrations, especially after the COVID pandemic and the loneliness crisis that ensued, when it was also realised that many patients did not need any type of medication or treatment but simply to socialise and interact with other people. In this sense, these services recommend voluntary activities that can be considered as healthy activities for the patient, thus improving their circumstances and enhancing their individual and collective skills and abilities.

In Spain, eight autonomous communities are developing social prescription adapted to the different local contexts and with different nomenclatures: asset recommendation, social prescription of assets, etc.

#### **4.3.- USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

AI can help volunteer organisations and promoting institutions match stakeholders with volunteering opportunities by using machine learning to understand the preferences, skills and availability of both volunteers and organisations.

For example, AI can create personalised profiles for volunteers based on their demographics, interests, motivations and feedback, and recommend opportunities that match volunteers' profiles. It can also rank opportunities according to the likelihood that volunteers will apply, accept and complete them. In addition, the AI can adjust recommendations based on volunteers' behaviour, feedback and results after their activity, providing information and analytics on volunteer engagement, satisfaction and loyalty.

The Internet also facilitates numerous tools through platforms for the promotion of volunteering, which, added to some of the reward formulas we have proposed in this report, can generate alternative employment and employability markets for vulnerable sectors or those with special needs.

It is symptomatic and somewhat contrary to the spirit of volunteering what is happening in some countries with regard to the dependence they are going to have on technology to be able to care for their elderly, as is the case in Japan, with a severe problem of an ageing population and a lack of manpower and volunteers in the care sector. In this sense, the Japanese executive has set itself the goal that Japanese firms should be able to mass-produce low-cost robots capable of performing the care that is currently carried out by volunteers in its most informal aspect and by nurses, nursing assistants and orderlies in nursing homes and hospitals. Among the tasks expected of the robots, both in the home and in nursing homes, are areas such as transport and grooming, carrying patients to the toilet and washing them, assisting in walking to help them walk, monitoring to ensure that elderly people are well hydrated, fed, following their

treatment, and also locating them to prevent people with dementia from getting lost. Japan, a country traditionally averse to immigration, would really need more foreign labour to tackle its serious demographic problems, as do many countries where the care sector is mainly provided by immigrants, without relying on high investments in technology, which are dehumanising and alienating for the elderly themselves.

## **5.- APPENDICES**

### **5.1.- VISION FROM ITALY ON REWARDS**

#### **(BÜRGER\*INNEN-GENOSSENSCHAFT BRIXEN - B\*COOP)**

In Italy, volunteers play an important role in care work, especially in the social and health sectors. They make a valuable contribution to society by using their time and skills to help people in need of care.

However, it is important to note that volunteers are not always formally recognised through specific recognition systems. Their commitment is often based on volunteerism and the personal satisfaction that comes from supporting others. Many volunteers experience appreciation and gratitude from the beneficiaries of their services and from the organisers of volunteer activities, but it is not common for them to be recognised through formal recognition tools or programmes.

Tax legislation has a negative impact. Because in Italy this is excessive and leads to an attitude among all actors that the tax authorities see everyone as criminals from the outset. In particular, voluntary work constantly finds itself in tax grey areas. As a result, most organisations prefer not to talk publicly about how voluntary work is handled. And this, in turn, means that research has hardly yielded any results.

However, awareness of the importance of volunteers in care work could increase and their appreciation could come to the fore. Initiatives could emerge to promote training, skills development and support for volunteers in care work. In addition, efforts could be made to increase collaboration between volunteers and public institutions or non-governmental organisations to improve the effectiveness and impact of volunteer care work.

It collects stories and testimonials from health care volunteers to recognise their contribution.

In summary, we find the following information:

- \* Certificates of contribution and commitment to nursing or care work, such as personalised badges and plaques.
- \* Recognition events: These events may include acceptance speeches, award ceremonies, beneficiary testimonials and experience-sharing events, social networking reports...

- \* Provide training and development opportunities to improve their skills in care work.
- \* Incentive programmes, such as discounts on services or products, access to cultural events or experiences, or the opportunity to participate in international exchange programmes or volunteer opportunities abroad.
- \* Mentoring programmes in which more experienced volunteers act as mentors to new volunteers.
- \* Feedback and evaluation procedures.
- \* Tax breaks or other economic incentives (e.g. tax deductions or reimbursement of expenses).
- \* Informal recognition: In addition to formal forms of recognition, it should be noted that the care work done by volunteers is often also recognised and valued informally by the people who benefit from their services. The sense of gratitude and appreciation from local communities can be an important source of motivation for volunteers.
- \* Publications and articles.
- \* Prizes
- \* Good practice platforms (e.g. *Volunteering New Zealand* or *United Nations Volunteers*).
- \* Scholarship programmes.
- \* Tax benefits.
- \* Fee-based models: In some cases, volunteers may receive compensation or fixed fees for their services.
- \* Flat rate for voluntary work: In some countries there is a legally defined model called a flat rate for voluntary work. Volunteers can receive a certain amount of money per year without this being tax relevant.

### **Summary of trends**

- Digitalisation: The trend towards the use of digital platforms and technologies to coordinate and promote volunteer work.
- Culture of recognition: It is increasingly important to properly recognise and honour the work of volunteers in care work.
- Flexibility and diversity: Increasing attention is being paid to offering more flexible volunteering models that accommodate different schedules, responsibilities and interests.
- Training and development: Providing training and development opportunities for volunteers is increasingly important.
- Networking and peer support: Volunteers working in care benefit from opportunities to exchange ideas and establish contacts with like-minded people.

### **Elderly cooperatives in Italy**

In Italy there are several cooperatives and organisations that specialise in the needs of older people. These cooperatives provide services, support and social activities to enable older people to live a dignified and fulfilling life. Some examples are shown below:



- **ANESCAO:** ANESCAO (Associazione Nazionale Cooperative di Solidarietà eassistita) is a national organisation specialised in solidarity services and relief. It promotes the creation of cooperatives for older people and supports them in the provision of care, social activities and other services.
- **Legacoop:** Legacoop is the largest association of cooperatives in Italy and also includes cooperatives focusing on the needs of the elderly. These cooperatives offer services such as home care, assisted living, leisure activities and other support services for the elderly.
- **Cooperative Sociale:** Many local social cooperatives in Italy have developed programmes and services for older people. These cooperative Sociali often offer meal delivery, companionship services, childcare and other social activities to help older people remain in their own homes while maintaining social interactions.
- **Co.Ge.S :** Co.Ge.S (Cooperativa de Gestion Sociale) is a cooperative that provides services to elderly and disabled people. It helps older people to cope with everyday life, organise medical care, life and social integration.

These cooperatives and organisations work to provide high quality care and support to older people in Italy and promote their social participation.

## 5.2. - HEALTH AND TIME BANKS IN THE UK

### 5.2.1.-Notes on the book "GIVE AND TAKE, how Time Banks are changing healthcare".<sup>100</sup>

Many of the innovative experiences described in this book confirm that human relationships themselves are vital in health, especially for isolated or lonely people; spending time with people and building a social network where you feel valued and useful is as crucial to recovery from illness as it is to staying healthy. And the problem is that our public health systems are not organised to manage this, nor are they aware of it. We now give details of the most suggestive paragraphs of the book, which we believe should be included as an appendix to this report, due to their uniqueness and importance:

An example of such good practice is the Ashworth Time Bank, a member of Timebanking UK<sup>101</sup> and one of the most successful and active Time Banks in the UK, with over 400

<sup>100</sup> The English translation is available free of charge from the ADBDT at the following link, in its original English edition it can be purchased from AMAZON and other similar platforms:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3VdF85vJxh1OVg3S3YxaWxqeUlBelMtUnpuYzFPb053QTgw/view?usp=sharing&resourcekey=0-ixolLKDIxcHcSnhFEELWw>

<sup>101</sup> Founded in 2002, Timebanking UK is the umbrella organisation for the majority of UK Timebanks, facilitating their management through common software and an exemplary consultancy and training service. By March 2021, our members had exchanged six million hours across the UK:  
<https://timebanking.org/>

members working in 14 nearby locations. Its members have had considerable success in connecting Timebanks with the Health System, including connecting members with therapists and specialists who could volunteer their time. The Time Bank has a holistic therapy group, which covers four locations and involves 30 complementary therapists, some of whom volunteer time on a weekly basis in exchange for trainings and trainings that the Time Bank organises.

Ashworth is also involved with the homeless and drug dependency programmes of the Turning Point social enterprise near Northwich, to whom they offer acupuncture 3 times a week. There is also a prostate cancer meeting group three times a week, as well as pilates and tai chi classes. There is also an aquafit class, two "keeping history alive" discussion groups and several sewing groups. All of this is managed by a Time Bank which is run largely through voluntary effort. It has many health promotion activities and is of a reciprocal, peer-to-peer nature. They also include a Parent and Carer Support (PACS) group that offers help and accompaniment or support to carers, especially of the terminally ill.

But there was a teething problem with this collaboration: at first local GPs enthusiastically supported the idea, but then came the surprise; when they were in their GP practices, they never sent anyone to these parallel support groups. However, the Ashworth Time Bank revealed at the outset a new vision of public services where professionals, patients and the wider community had an equal role and enjoy equal respect for the health of their neighbourhood. It is a vision of a new kind of health system that recognises the vital importance of relationships and social networks and does not draw obscure lines of demarcation and administrative boundaries that can be so exhausting or difficult to cross.

In 2012, TIMEBANKING UK undertook a nationwide project called "Resilience and Reciprocity", commissioned by the UK Department of Health to look at how Time Banks can provide a partial solution to three problems they considered particularly difficult:

- Fragmentation in the provision of health services
- The reality of an ageing population with growing social and physical needs
- And how to implement the Health and Social Care Act, which was back in the code of practice, with extra responsibilities for local actors - not only to identify need but also to reduce it.

By the end of 2013, when the project ended, it had involved 92 GPs and 1,660 people over the age of 55 through more than 29,000 hours exchanged. All in all, it had been a success.

In fact, Time Banks already had a good track record in health services since their inception in the late 1980s. They had an excellent track record of reducing isolation and loneliness, improving the health and wellbeing of older people and strengthening local communities.

The study indicates that the Time Bank had an impact in four key areas in the following areas importance for patients:

- Relief of symptoms of depression and other chronic health problems
- Make new friends in the community and reduce social isolation.
- Economic savings
- Sharing and developing new skills

Here are also some concrete examples of what was achieved:

- GPs "prescribing" home visits where practical and emotional support was offered by Time Bank members who were also patients who were going less and less to their GP thanks to their own participation in this programme.
- Community "wellness classes", paid with hours of time for taking greater control of their health and support needs, from how to react to an asthma attack to how to spot early signs of depression.
- Self-help telephone services provided by Time Bank members, using an assessment procedure designed by specialists but carried out by other patients, which drastically reduced hospitalisations.
- A social network born within a residence for women in recovery from drug dependence, where training and support were exchanged between women, and "paid for" in hours of time through its own Time Bank.
- A rural Time Bank that offered "health insurance" whereby all members were guaranteed two weeks of support and help at home from other participants after an accident or illness.

These are small ideas, done on a small scale, but they make a big difference to the people involved, both the givers and receivers of these semi-formal or informal services. The key question is: what would public services, particularly health services, look like if this kind of idea was adopted and became the core of a National Health Service?

As described in detail in the book, the health care system in the UK and elsewhere is beset by a series of interlocking challenges that threaten to raise its costs to an unsustainable level. These challenges are as follows:

- An ageing population (see introduction of the report)
- Modern lifestyles: The problem is that many of the hidden ties that bind communities and families together have been broken in the last 40 years. Two related changes have been shaping society: one is that we tend to do things alone, whether it is watching television or participating in social networks. The

other is a growing lack of trust. Modern lifestyles mean that people are moving much further afield and the image of the typical family is changing rapidly. A typical family has on average 1.6 children, and parents are increasingly likely to be single, divorced or remarried. In short, there is a danger that, as people grow older, they will enter a prevailing culture of mistrust and increasing isolation and loneliness.

- Social limits to health care: The gap between rich and poor continues to widen and the health of the socially disadvantaged or at risk of social exclusion is even more at risk. Coronary heart disease is three times higher among unskilled men than among professionals, and the gap has widened over the last 20 years. In addition, deaths from stroke among people born in the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent are one and a half times higher than people born in the UK, a differential that has persisted since the late 1970s.

Another pioneering Time Bank in the UK was the Fair Shares Community Time Bank in Gloucestershire, England, which offered its participants a new "health insurance" scheme called *Rest Assured*. All active members of the Time Bank were guaranteed that in the event of an accident or unexpected admission to hospital, other participants would visit them, do their shopping, take care of their errands and anything else they might need for the next two weeks after returning home.

One of the most substantial, consistent and overlooked discoveries in all of medicine is that the presence and support of family and close friends protects us against the impact of disease. We know that a lack of friends can be as dangerous to health as smoking; staying fit and healthy is easier when there is someone to encourage and support you, either with kind words or friendly comments.

*Timebanking UK* shares the dream of having a Timebank in every doctor's surgery. Combating loneliness usually involves making a series of connections with and between different local organisations. Most Timebanks maintain contacts with all kinds of local organisations, seeking opportunities for more or less informal collaboration with self-help, religious, arts, sports, environmental, cultural and other social groups.

These factors confirm the large-scale findings of *the Corporation for National and Community Service* in Washington DC, bringing together 32 studies on volunteering and health, with the following conclusions:

- Volunteers suffering from chronic pain received benefits from helping others, beyond the relief that any medicine could have provided. This included a decrease in the intensity and frequency of physical pain, also reducing depression.
- Heart attack victims who subsequently volunteered reduced their risk of anxiety and depression, two factors that could lead to a fatal outcome.
- Reduced levels of depression in people over 65 years of age.

- People over the age of 70 who volunteer 100 or more hours per year are one-third less likely to die than a person in the same situation who does not volunteer. They are also two-thirds less likely to be in poor health.
- Volunteering has a protective effect that lasts for years after leaving volunteering.

All the activities described above seem quite varied, and are carried out by both the public and voluntary sectors. The role of Time Banks is to bring these two sides together in order to intervene in the social life of our community and to involve excluded groups who at the same time gain mutual benefits by changing the image of those who are usually recipients of aid and feel they are a burden, into people who are valued and who contribute to society. It also provides services whereby its users who experience a "silo" mentality (when individuals, departments or groups within an organisation do not wish to share information or knowledge with other people in the same organisation) can help each other navigate the system and fit into departments by understanding the language and protocols that the system uses.

**CONCLUSION:** A National Health Service sized Time Bank could add to what it can achieve, and become more flexible and more humane for patients and their families. The evidence also implies, coincidentally, that it would also be more cost-effective.

### 5.2.2.- THE NESTA HEALTH PROGRAMMES

One organisation that has made a strategic effort to think about new strategies for health and communities is the innovation agency NESTA<sup>102</sup> (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts in the UK). The NESTA-promoted Health project looked at how we may have been missing out on an untapped resource: the users of the system, their families and their neighbours. Conventional thinking suggests that this approach - from mutual aid and support to collaboration - is fraught with danger.

The current experience, as described in a series of films made from NESTA's People-Powered Health programme<sup>103</sup>, is that it can be transformative, shifting the balance of power between individuals and professionals. There is a huge untapped demand from patients and service users to use their time and skills to help other people, as long as it is, in some way, mutual and reciprocal. NESTA estimates that People Powered Health would save at least 7% of NHS costs.<sup>104</sup> NESTA conducted a further report in 2015<sup>105</sup> with the Stockport population and with similar conclusions.

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<sup>102</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/project/people-powered-health/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/press-release/people-powered-health-could-save-the-nhs-44bn-a-year/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/blog/empowering-patients-and-communities-in-stockport/>

This programme looked at different innovations that had been developed over many years, from mutual help and support networks to expert patient groups, doctors prescribing exercise, group consultations and Time Banks, and asked what would happen if they became a regular part of an organisation. A people-promoted approach to health along these lines would entail:

- Mobilise people and recognise personal strengths such as family, friends, communities and peer networks that can work alongside and together with health professionals.
- Redefining the relationship between patients and health professionals, focusing on patients' needs and aspirations, but with both sides of the relationship gaining and getting more out of it.
- Blurring the artificial barriers between health, public health and social services and between formal and informal support and help for patients.

Time Banks were one of the mechanisms promoted by NESTA's *People Powered Health* programme because of their ability to engage people who would never normally volunteer, and have proven to be successful in building viable social networks and strengthening ties in communities.

NESTA also developed, within the same programme, an ambitious project<sup>106</sup> under the name of the *Lambeth Living Well Collaborative*, which brought together a wide range of people to radically improve the way mental health services worked, specifically in the city of Lambeth. This included people who used services, as well as clinicians, carers, secondary mental health services, voluntary sector providers, primary care practices, public health and commissioners.

### **5.3. - THE MODEL OF CONSUMER COOPERATIVES IN SPAIN AS A TOOL FOR REWARDING VOLUNTARY WORK**

From the perspective of the Spanish Cooperative Law - with the consideration of the respective laws in each Autonomous Community but with similar characteristics between all of them - we see the cooperative as the legal umbrella for carrying out certain services, which in our case can be transferred to the field of care and with the legal limitations that may apply, The model we are looking at is that of consumer and user cooperatives in supermarkets, which exists not only in our country, but also in the USA and France, with great success, and in an increasing number of countries, with similar circumstances with regard to the consideration of the voluntary work of their cooperative members.

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<sup>106</sup> <https://www.nesta.org.uk/case-study/transforming-mental-health-services-lambeth/>



We base ourselves in this case on the document *"report on the provision of ancillary services by members in consumer and user cooperatives"* produced by the Spanish Confederation of Consumer and User Cooperatives HISPACOOB<sup>107</sup>, available on its website.<sup>108</sup>

In our case, any person can join a consumer and user cooperative, becoming a consumer member, a condition that grants them a series of rights and obligations, both of a political and economic nature, an essential right (which the law configures as a right-duty) to carry out the cooperative activity: the consumption of the products or services offered by the entity.

As mentioned above, many initiatives have arisen with the aim of setting up cooperative supermarkets, under the formula of consumer and user cooperatives, through which consumer members participate in the economic activity of the cooperative, purchasing goods and services in the field of food, cleaning and personal care, and any other goods or services that contribute to improving the quality of life of cooperative members.

All these initiatives, however, have an additional common element: the performance of an ancillary service by consumer members in the co-operative, which may even be compulsory in order to have access to certain services and products; in this way, the social mass is not limited to participation in the co-operative's social bodies or committees or to the performance of the co-operative's consumer co-operative activity, but is also involved in restocking products, acting as a cashier, liaising with suppliers, to cite just a few examples.

Of the two possible cooperative options, worker cooperative or consumer and user cooperative, the aforementioned report concludes that if the cooperative intends that the consumer members perform an ancillary service in the entity, on a recurrent and compulsory basis, it is considered that the most suitable legal structure should be a consumer and user cooperative, as an obvious manifestation of the self-organisation of consumers in order to "meet their social and cultural needs". The corporate relationship existing between the consumer member and the cooperative of which he or she is a member may entail the provision of ancillary services by the cooperative, provided that such an obligation exists:

- a) Is provided for in the Articles of Association.
- b) Non-financial penalties for non-compliance with this obligation should be provided for in the articles of association.
- c) The provision of ancillary services must not be remunerated, either directly or indirectly.
- d) A system should be set up to enable consumer members to organise themselves.

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<sup>107</sup> <https://hispacoop.es/>

<sup>108</sup> [https://hispacoop.es/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021.12\\_InformeJuridico\\_Colaboracion-voluntaria-del-socio-en-la-Cooperativa\\_FINAL.pdf](https://hispacoop.es/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021.12_InformeJuridico_Colaboracion-voluntaria-del-socio-en-la-Cooperativa_FINAL.pdf)

In addition, it is argued that if the cooperative entity only distributes its products to consumer members, this is an argument that will help to defend the model.

The text insists on the need for the provision of ancillary services to be a non-remunerated obligation, which is absolutely fundamental to the defence of the model, and there must be no conduct on the part of the cooperative from which it can be deduced that the provision is remunerated, whether through the imposition of a differentiated price, through the imposition of financial penalties or through the distribution of the positive results at the end of the financial year.

Possible risks to be considered arising from the ancillary services provided by consumer members:

- The possible consideration of an employment relationship: in the face of a hypothetical Labour Inspectorate, it will be necessary to analyse how the cooperative has acted internally with each of its members and how it has presented itself externally.
- Risks in the development of the activity, such as accidents: we consider it necessary for the co-operative to take out an insurance policy to cover any accidents that may occur in the co-operative, both to working members and to consumer members and third parties.

## **6 - INTERVIEWS WITH VOLUNTEER MANAGERS**

### **6.1.- SPAIN: Mar Amate, Director of the Spanish Platform for Volunteerism**

#### **PERSONAL DATA**

First and Last name: Mar Amate

Organisation and position: Director of the Spanish Volunteering Platform

<https://plataformavoluntariado.org/>

#### **Professional relationship with voluntary work:**

Degree in Psychology from the Autonomous University of Madrid. Higher Degree in Sign Language Interpreting and interpreter guide for deafblind people. Degree as Director of Social Services Centres. Master's Degree in Organisational Development Consultancy from the University of Valladolid. Currently Director of the Spanish Volunteering Platform.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### What are the personal and community benefits of volunteering for you?

*Personally, volunteering helps to become aware of social problems, of realities that the volunteer might not be aware of. Of course, to reflect on these problems and to develop a greater social conscience.*

*In terms of the community, volunteering is a conscious way of generating social capital. Volunteering increases the value of the community, provides frameworks for relationships and creates opportunities for people.*

### Is the role and importance of volunteer work sufficiently recognised in our society?

*Yes and no. There is undoubtedly a global or abstract recognition of volunteering, it is valued as something positive, good; probably because of the altruistic nature of volunteering.*

*However, I believe that there is a lack of recognition of its concrete importance, the value it brings as a key element of community intervention.*

### Which groups and age groups are less involved in volunteer work?

*Our studies indicate that there is no clear or linear relationship between age and volunteering. We believe that it has more to do with age than with personal situations. For example, it is common for people to volunteer while they are studying, then move away from volunteering during a more demanding period in their lives as they enter adulthood, and then return when adulthood stabilises.*

*What we do detect are different forms of volunteering, with less stability among young people, who tend to do more things, to change their activities.*

### How do you think we can attract them to volunteer?

*Focusing on the cause. The data tells us that people are increasingly looking for a concrete link; rather than "volunteering" they want to engage with something concrete, be it the environment, disability or any other cause. It is important to shift the focus from what to what for.*

### Can you name at least one threat, one weakness, one strength and one opportunity in volunteering today?

*Threat: the social context that rewards individuality to the detriment of a sense of collectivity.*

*Opportunity: in the same context, volunteering can be an element of confrontation "there is an individual sense, a utilitarian way of understanding life, but we have another one".*

*Weakness: the difficulty for organisations to recognise and manage volunteering.*

*Strength: Technological development can be a valuable tool for effective volunteer management.*

### **Do you think there is an abuse of volunteering?**

*It is difficult to quantify, but it is true that there are spurious demands for volunteers, especially in the organisation of events, where people are asked to volunteer for the sole purpose of reducing costs.*

*There is also a tangential use of volunteering by some companies that in their CSR actions propose "volunteering" activities of a purely episodic nature in which what they are looking for is a certain impact in the media and some apparent photos for corporate memory.*

## **VOLUNTARY WORK AND CARE**

### **How important is voluntary work in the care sector compared to other types of voluntary work?**

*Professional care, which cannot and should not be confused or mixed with volunteering, must be clearly delimited.*

*In care settings, we believe that volunteering should focus on relational aspects, fostering connections, and providing attention and emotional support.*

### **Estimate what percentage of volunteers in your country are active in one-to-one care or attention to others. Is this a very small, small, large or predominant proportion of volunteers in your country?**

*In Spain, around ten percent of people over the age of 14 volunteer. Of these, a large majority carry out activities that can be classified as care activities in the above sense.*

## **VOLUNTEERING AND TRAINING**

### **Do you think that volunteers receive sufficient training to do their job properly?**

*By law, volunteers have the right to receive training in volunteering from the entities in which they carry out their activities.*

*This training is essential, but the training of volunteers in this initial training should not be limited. Work must be done on the management of training that allows volunteers to carry out the activity independently and with the necessary resources and knowledge.*

**In which areas do volunteers need to be trained and in which areas do they not?**

*It is essential to train volunteers so that they can carry out their voluntary activity in a safe, appropriate and targeted manner.*

*Based on this idea of training as a central element of volunteer action, beyond initial training, we must work on training that is adapted to emerging needs and issues such as emergency volunteering, or social problems such as unwanted loneliness or mental health.*

*Volunteers must be trained in current issues so that they can be active, committed and aware of the current social reality and, in this way, be able to respond through good practices.*

**Do you think that new technologies and social networks can favour the development of volunteering and the training of volunteers? From some examples**

*Thanks to new technologies, volunteer training is made easier, more accessible and universal. We can reach a wider range of volunteers and adapt the training to their needs and time.*

*It is not necessary to be geographically located in a specific space in order to be able to carry out the training, which favours access to information at any time.*

*In relation to social networks, a larger number of potential trainees can be reached.*

**VOLUNTEERING AND RECOGNITION**

**Do you think it is positive or necessary for volunteers to be rewarded, compensated or recognised in any way for their work?**

*Yes, recognition is key both to make visible the contribution made by volunteers and to thank them for their commitment and selfless contribution. We do not see recognition in terms of a reward, but as a right of the volunteers and an obligation of the organisations and society in general.*

**Can you share some good examples of volunteer recognition that you know of?**

*Recognition can have several facets, one can be social, linked to public recognition, for example in the events of 5 December "International Volunteer Day", or it can be a recognition linked to the competences (skills) obtained in their voluntary action through accreditation tools and validation of prior learning. The VOL+ programme of the Spanish Volunteering Platform validates (there is an evaluation phase with external tutors) and*

*recognises volunteering competences such as analysis and problem solving, leadership of initiatives, teamwork, among others. The process itself generates learning, which allows the volunteer to be more aware of what he/she is capable of doing and to continue improving his/her skills, which has a direct impact on the improvement of his/her performance when carrying out the solidarity task. Moreover, it can mean a plus in the improvement of their employability profile as these are transversal competences that are highly valued in companies.*

*Here are two articles that analyse the impact of the VOL+ programme linked to the improvement of the employability profile of volunteers:*

- Methaodos Journal of Social Sciences: <https://www.methaodos.org/revista-methaodos/index.php/methaodos/article/view/489>
- Electronic Journal of Creative Research and Teaching (ReiDoCrea) of the University of Granada <https://www.ugr.es/~reidocrea/14-03.pdf>

**What, in your opinion, would be an appropriate and important form of recognition for volunteers?**

*I believe that public recognition is very necessary and important in order to highlight the value of selfless contribution and to promote social participation and commitment. But it is equally important that volunteers seeking recognition of their acquired skills can do so through a validated, transparent and quality tool. To this end, the associative movement must be able to provide information to its volunteers. The European guidelines published by Cedefop (2023) on the validation of non-formal and informal learning motivate all those directly or indirectly involved to be promoters so that all people, in our case volunteers, are aware of this opportunity.*

## **INVOLVEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

**Which public administrations should be more involved in promoting volunteering?**

*According to the Law on Volunteering, public authorities have the task of promoting volunteering in their sphere of action, a matter which, for the time being, is not among their priorities.*

*It would certainly be very positive if public administrations could see potential volunteers in their workforces. In addition to the benefits of volunteering for the community, it is a fact that volunteering improves people's skills, as well as their emotional situation and thus has a positive impact on the working environment.*

**Do you think that companies and the private sector can contribute to the development of volunteering? Are there other social actors outside the public and private sectors?**

*The same can be said of the company, with the added positive impact on corporate reputation. Companies should consider whether a sporadic action is more valuable (even*



*if it has a fixed frequency, something like "volunteer day"), more or less massive in terms of participation, or a sustained activity over time, perhaps less numerous, but which generates a link with the community in which they operate.*

## **THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING**

**How do you see the future of volunteering in the face of an increasingly ageing society in our countries?**

*It is difficult to gauge the effect of ageing on volunteering. Increasing life expectancy and ageing with increasing quality of life may have a positive impact on volunteering.*

**What is your vision of volunteer work in 10 years' time?**

*More proactive and committed to social change and the promotion of solidarity.*

## **7.- LEGAL REPORTS:**

**SPAIN:**

**"VOLUNTEER PAY AND ECONOMIES OF RECIPROCITY"**

**Ignacio Collado Gosálvez and Luis Fernández Alonso**  
[www.elrogle.es](http://www.elrogle.es)

### **1. Introduction**

This report aims to analyse the legal possibility of establishing forms of remuneration in a context of non-commodified work. That is to say, to observe the feasibility, in our legal system, of carrying out work that is not considered as a commodity but as a voluntary, cooperative and/or community autonomous social phenomenon. Aware of the problematic nature of the issue and the importance of labour law as a guarantee for dependent workers in our economic system, it is important to be able to clearly define this type of work in order to avoid legal loopholes. That is to say, subterfuges through which forms of dependent work could flow and escape the application and guarantees that labour law provides. And, at the same time and on the contrary, to avoid a closure to formulas of communal and non-dependent economic relations that have been perennial in human history.

It is necessary to study some key concepts in order to be able to respond to the subject of the report. To do this, firstly, we must look at the exclusions made by the Workers' Statute with respect to its own scope of application. Specifically in section "d)", where it excludes from its scope those that are carried out because of "friendship, benevolence and good neighbourliness". That is to say, where the cause is not onerous, and the relationship is not one of dependence, as there is no sale of labour force considered as

merchandise. Consequently, it is important to analyse and delimit these exclusions. In order to do so, an approach must be made to the concept of economy and to the historical and conceptual background of those jobs which, because they are friendly, benevolent and good neighbourly, have been excluded from the application of the Workers' Statute. We find it in the idea of commonality and mutual aid. Finally, everything will be grounded on the legal meaning of "onerous" and the delimitation that jurisprudentially and doctrinally has been carried out in Article 1.3.d) of the Workers' Statute in its different derivatives.

From here we will be in a position to analyse the differences between the different types of non-monetary work. Specifically, to distinguish between those that would be included in what we have called "economies of reciprocity", on the one hand, and those commonly known as "voluntary work". Although they share the same characteristics, the latter can be considered as a current speciality of the former, and their legal treatment is different.

### 1.1 Substantive economy

#### CONCEPT MAP

**Anthropological concept** → i.e. empirical, the result of scientific observation of behaviour, in this case human behaviour.

**Concept of logical order** → Linguistic reasoning that starts from two premises, one major and one minor, and with which an inferred deduction is obtained from the first.

"All humans are mortal / Marc is human / therefore Marc is mortal".

**Substantive economy** → Anthropological concept. Human form of interaction with nature or society for material satisfaction.

**Formal economics** → Concept of logical order. In this case the major premise of rational choice theory. The lesser, the necessity of choice between scarce goods. Given two opportunities, the one that yields the greatest individual value will be followed.

In modern Western societies, a striking paradox can be observed. Although more fragmented than ever, social interdependence is, at the same time, more inescapable than in any previous era (César Rendueles, 2024). Due to this fragmentation, the conditions necessary for the creation of effective channels for cooperation have deteriorated. This, among other things, has led to a conceptual framework that shapes our thinking being increasingly reduced to a fundamentally market-driven and competitive model. As a result, community-based practices that have been anthropologically common are often constrained by a specific linguistic framework. This ultimately affects not only our behavior but also the legal constructs we develop around these practices.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the broad and material sense of the economy, which is frequently confined to a formal and commercial perspective. Here, we focus on a domain where this issue is especially clear: non-market economic action. This includes solidarity-based, voluntary, and reciprocal activities—various forms of relationships that have historically played a central role in the economic organization of societies but today struggle to find both social and legal recognition. When analyzing the legal framework of reciprocal and/or voluntary economic action, the first step must be to examine the economic phenomenon itself.

In order to be able to study the phenomena affecting the economy from a social science perspective and in a holistic sense, it is necessary to go beyond formal approaches. That is, by means of a logical order of the "means-end" type. This refers to the concrete situation of choosing between two non-cumulative options (means) in search of maximum value. This, known as rational choice theory, is the foundation of a large part of the economic studies of a univocally "mercantile" approach. It is a very controversial theory, since it abandons any consideration unrelated to profit, such as community interests, solidarity (Rendueles, 2016), or mere individual or collective enjoyment.

Thus, the study of the issue requires a substantive approach to economics that becomes fundamental to address the complexity of economic relations. That is to say, the analysis of relations with the natural and social environment in order to provide the means for material satisfaction. This approach, always important, is crucial to be able to read the phenomenon of voluntary or reciprocal economic action, to be able to understand it and, thus, to try to frame it legally in a legal framework that does not always seem to be suitable for this type of activity. This is why it is so important to broaden the traditional conceptual framework beyond the forms of exchange institutionalised by the market.

Any human society develops substantive economic forms. This is an empirical concept. As opposed to the formal one, which is logical. Thus, anthropology (Polanyi, 1957) has discovered that the economy, as human interaction with the environment and society, requires movement, or process, and the institution of that process. Process refers to changes of location or appropriation of objects or goods. Thus, the economic act takes the form of reciprocity, redistribution and exchange (Kottak, 2019). For its part, this economic action requires social conditions to occur on an ongoing basis. In order to become models consistent with a social function, they require a certain institutionalisation. Thus, reciprocal forms require symmetrically organised human structures; reciprocity, central points of distribution; and exchange, market systems (Polanyi, 1957). These three forms occur, to a greater or lesser extent, in all social forms. Also, of course, in those that perceive themselves to be governed by the free market. A brief explanation of the three models is therefore necessary in order to study and understand economic processes.

- **Reciprocity.** Reciprocal economic behaviour implies co-responsibility. It is the act of reciprocation; the exchange between social equals ((Kottak, 2019)). In order to be instituted within economic processes, beyond individually analysed behaviours, they require, as we said, organised groupings of multiple symmetry ((Polanyi, 1957)). The more intense the ties of the surrounding community are,

the more these types of relationships become generalised. Kinship or neighbourhood, for example, would be common stable groupings. Informal work, family care, neighbourhood associations, communal work in the rural or urban world would be reciprocal economic forms.

- **Redistribution.** This is about pooling production and, from a central point, redistributing it in an egalitarian manner. It thus requires a certain hierarchy backed by some kind of juridification, such as law, custom or agreement. Cooperativism, as an economic structure, is redistribution. Voluntary work, framed in the law on voluntary work, could also be circumscribed in this typology.
- **Exchange.** It is the movement of objects or goods back and forth in one direction or another. In order to be integrated as a social economic model, a market is needed to generate prices. In Western societies it has become the prototype formula of the current economic model, even hindering other approaches.

In reality, none of the three models is purely and univocally present in societies, but they are related to each other and appear in different intensities depending on where the focus is placed. Moreover, the boundaries between one and the other are often difficult to delimit. This, as we shall see, does not facilitate the legal interpretation of economic formulas other than market exchange. Sometimes, it even entails the constriction of such formulas in legislation specific to the former.

## 1.2 The idea of the commons and mutual assistance

As we know, economic processes have been mediated in most human societies and in almost all historical epochs by dynamics of cooperation and common property. Also, and contrary to what was believed until not so long ago, in agricultural and complex societies (Graeber, 2022, pp. 312- 313). The market, although it existed in our societies, maintained a subsidiary character. Its homogenisation, affecting aspects such as labour, has been a recent anthropological shift that has led to strong social imbalances and conflicts (Polanyi, 1944).

Solidarity and mutual support have been a paradigmatic form of economic organisation and are still present in our societies (Ostrom, 2019). This has often crystallised in the form of social organisation known as the commons. The commons are spaces of communal ownership or collective possession, or forms of organisation, which combine tasks of production and social reproduction and which enable a certain degree of popular independence (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2023, p. 42). In them, since there is no exchange of goods, in this case labour, there is no surplus value in favour of the organiser of the work, but the profit is assumed to be communal. Following the parameters explained in the previous section, a reciprocal economy develops.

It is the paradigm of the commons. Of work carried out in a framework of reciprocal economy. For example, that which is generated within the family, or among neighbours,

in the shared work of the farmer among small garden plot owners or in the management of their irrigation, political or religious militancy, among many other examples.

At the time of writing this report, we are observing a very significant example. That of the people who come to help the people affected by the Dana of October 2024 in the region of l' Horta Sud, in Valencia. Tens of thousands of people have come to work in different functions, in solidarity, generating an economy of reciprocity. Cooking, mud extraction, cleaning, coordination, logistics, distribution of material. In one way or another, all these people have contributed, for example, by cleaning up, and have received, for example, material or food, without any onerous cause.

### 1.3 Labour law. Social conflict and the need for regulation

With the transition to labour companies, the extension of the condition of dependent and wage labour due to the dissociation between labour and capital (García Ortega & Goerlich Peset, 2023), and the loss of autonomy and independence of the working classes (Thompson, 1980), the need to regulate the labour market arose. Pressure from the labour movement in Spain led to the enactment in 1873 of the first labour law regulation known as the Benot Law. It established certain measures to protect the industrial proletariat, especially minors. Historically, this branch of law has been considered a success and a democratic advance of the law, and at the same time, as the necessary obligation of the loss of the minimum conditions of subsistence and autonomous ways of life of a large part of the population in industrial societies. That is to say, the loss or cornering of those non-commercialised economic practices.

Today, neoliberalism has imposed a metaphysics of the contingent, a radical scepticism about the capacities of human agency (Broncano, 2020), which entails an extreme distrust of any initiative that does not conform to socially self-granted legal-formal channels. In the case at hand, the framework imposed here means that a widespread anthropic practice is seen as, at best, a folkloric oddity and, at worst, a subterfuge to avoid labour or tax regulations. This is why it is necessary to systematically delimit and configure a legal framework for those economic-labour practices that are not part of the exchange-market duality, but rather of the reciprocity-community duality.

Labour law doctrine is systematised according to the following pairs related to the nature of work:

- Depending on the worker's **cause**
  - \* **Voluntary work** → the worker decides freely and without formal coercion to put his or her labour force to work.
  - \* **Compulsory labour** → the worker is compelled or coerced to work without healthy consent.

- Depending on the **purpose** of the work
  - \* **Paid work** → the worker receives a direct consideration in exchange for his or her labour.
  - \* **Free labour** → the worker does not receive any direct payment in exchange for his or her labour.
- Depending on their **form** of organisation
  - \* **Dependent work** → the worker is subordinate to an employer who determines the form of organisation in the production process. In our legal system, subordination is understood in a legal sense.
  - \* **Independent work** → the worker organises his or her own production process.
- According to the origin of the **means** of production
  - \* **Work for hire or reward** → the worker does not have them, so he sells his labour power in the production process to an employer who does have them. He is hired by the owner of the means.
  - \* **Self-employment** → the worker owns his own means of production so he would sell the goods or services directly. There is no employment contract, but a commercial contract.

Depending on these characteristics, the legal system regulates economic employment relationships in one way or another. For example, by prohibiting all non-voluntary employment relationships. For its part, "labour law deals specifically with work that has the characteristics of being subordinate and employed, as well as being voluntary and paid" (García Ortega & Goerlich Peset, 2023). Thus, labour law regulates salaried employment relationships. Other labour-economic relations are regulated by other legal systems, whether civil law, with the leasing of services, commercial law or administrative law.

Finally, the law must respond to situations of social conflict and protect the interests of those most at risk of suffering material imbalances in their legal relations. This is the case, for example, of employees or consumers. For its part, Article 1.3.d) of the Workers' Statute excludes from its scope of application, as stated above, "work carried out as a result of friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness", which is where voluntary, solidarity or social action work would be circumscribed. Object of this study.



#### **1.4 From good neighbourliness and benevolence, to volunteering and the collaborative economy**

As we have seen, not all work consists of the exchange of labour power through the market. There are other forms, also economic, in which this exchange does not take place. For example, reciprocal or voluntary work. As has been said, these are those that are specific to families, communities, militancy or those that are exercised out of solidarity. This does not necessarily mean that there is no remuneration, but that the remuneration is neither direct nor necessarily equivalent to the work provided. In fact, some empirical studies indicate that there is no single altruistic motivation among people who do voluntary work (Jovani, 2013). Although this is very present, there are others, such as the production of an improvement in a specific field, for example, those who act in the field of environmentalism; or the so-called instrumental ones, of those who seek socialisation, reciprocity, curricular improvement, or others.

Although it has been a common approach to work, and mutual aid, cooperation and, in short, reciprocal economic models have been fundamental in human development, today the legal system leaves very little room for these formulas. Perhaps because they are forms of economic approximation that are not onerous, i.e. in which the interests of the members of these communities do not directly contradict each other. At least as far as the execution of the concrete economic act is concerned. But this lack of express regulation or doctrinal development, together with the linguistic-conceptual map of our times, which identifies the economic act with an individual profit motive, leads to difficulties for the extension and generalisation of these non-commercial economic forms. In this way, the economic practices of the commons are artificially constrained and given the status of anecdote or folklore. In many cases, their development in everyday situations, their promotion by administrations, or their limitation to mere altruistic or gratuitous acts more related to charity than to a healthy and consolidated community life, is prevented.

This type of work falls outside the scope of labour law, but this does not mean that it is always unregulated. They are those that the legal system has defined as "friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness". A variety of different typologies fall into this category. From common and mutual aid work, more traditional and currently neglected, to new, more regulated and institutionalised typologies, such as voluntary work, regulated by Law 45/2015. Attempts can also be observed on the part of commercialised economic operators to use these economic institutions in search of subterfuges in order to occupy unregulated spaces that correspond to completely different economic forms. This would be the case of some of the digital platforms that have been referred to as "collaborative economy" or "platform". Finally, we find a new particularity in our legal practice. This would be Work for the Benefit of the Community which, although with important nuances, would be a crystallisation of this category of work. In terms of its regulation and fit, it would be similar to voluntary work.

Volunteer work, regulated in Law 45/2015, on Volunteering, has been considered a specificity of the benevolent work included in article 1.3.d) of the Workers' Statute. In other words, it has been treated as a specific species within the broader genre of

benevolent work. A contrary, not all benevolent work must, inevitably, be governed by the aforementioned regulation.

There are different approaches that define a volunteer. These would coincide in pointing him/her out as a subject who, in a free manner, with the absence of compensation and in association with other organised people, carries out a task, in his/her free time, oriented towards a social utility (Jovani, 2013). They would be motivated by a practical reason. In other words, voluntary action would not be a means to an end (direct remuneration), but would itself be the end (Jovani, 2013). Its results would be immanent to the work carried out.

Work for the benefit of the community was included in the 1995 Penal Code as a form of custodial sentence aimed at the re-socialisation of convicts. It was understood, and this has been accredited in some empirical studies (Boldó Prats, 2013), that work focused on the general interest could have a positive impact on convicts.

Once again we are dealing with work which, although unpaid, is not completely altruistic. Work for the benefit of the community cannot be imposed without the consent of the person convicted, as it could not be otherwise in a democratic legal system where forced labour is strictly forbidden. Compulsory labour can only occur, as provided for in the Civil Code, in filial relationships. While this, its acceptance by convicted persons seeks to avoid other types of penalties that could be considered more burdensome, such as fines or deprivation of liberty. It is seen as an example that these expressions of work, of community interest, are not entirely alien to our current legal practice.

For its part, we see in the platform or collaborative economy other forms of work that could be included in these community formulas. What is certain is that this type of digital applications cannot be directly circumscribed to benevolent or good neighbourly work. We will have to look at the specific case.

New technologies allow the creation of digital spaces where needs and skills can be connected. In some of these, the figure of the producer and the consumer are effectively identified in the same subject. Some authors have come to refer to this as the "prosumer". In others, the platform has become a subterfuge to avoid regulation and facilitate exploitation dynamics or spaces of non-taxation. The key here, as in other cases, to understand whether we are dealing with cases of salaried or self-employed work, is to consider whether there is onerousness (Serrano Olivares, 2020).

## **2. Regulatory framework**

The subject of this report is the possibility of payment, not onerous, for work. It has been seen that this, far from being a socially strange practice, has been common in human societies. Work that is not institutionalised by the market. In other words, reciprocal forms of economic relations. Although the legal system in Western societies has not paid much attention to them, it could not be said that they have remained totally outside the

law. Partly because such socially rooted forms are difficult to deal with, even if only to exclude them from the framework of application of some norm.

Thus, some basic rules must be followed in order to meet two fundamental conditions. The regulatory framework for the work carried out and the taxation framework.

## **2.1 Workers' Statute. The excluded forms.**

The legislation for the protection of **salaried work** makes it clear, in its first article, that the Workers' Statute shall apply to work that is carried out voluntarily, for the benefit of an employer and performed in an area of organisation and management established by the latter.

### **Article 1. Scope of application**

1. This Act shall apply to workers who voluntarily provide their paid services for hire or reward and within the scope of organisation and management of another person, whether natural or legal, called an employer or entrepreneur.

Immediately afterwards, in the third point of the same article, a series of **exclusions** from its scope of application are listed. Some of these are expressly referred to specific or singular regulations. This is the case of civil servants, for example. And others which, although redundantly, are expressly excluded because they do not meet the characteristics that define the scope of application of the law. This is the case of

- 3.d) Work carried out as a result of friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness.

The definition of **wages**, i.e. remuneration for the sale of labour power, can be found in Article 26. In other words, they refer to a direct payment by the beneficiary of that particular labour force, which in the case of the employee is the employer or contractor.

### **Article 26. Wages**

1. Wages shall be considered to be the total financial compensation received by workers, in cash or in kind, for the professional provision of employment services as an employee, whether in return for actual work, whatever the form of remuneration, or for periods of rest that can be counted as work.  
In no case, including the special employment relationships referred to in Article 2, may the salary in kind exceed thirty per cent of the worker's wages, nor may it lead to a reduction of the full amount in cash of the minimum interprofessional wage.
2. The amounts received by the worker as compensation or allowances for expenses incurred as a result of his work activity, social security benefits and compensation and compensation corresponding to transfers, suspensions or dismissals shall not be considered as salary.
3. Collective bargaining or, failing this, the individual contract, shall determine the wage structure, which shall comprise the basic wage, as remuneration fixed per unit of

time or work and, where appropriate, wage supplements fixed according to circumstances relating to the personal conditions of the worker, the work performed or the situation and results of the company, which shall be calculated in accordance with the criteria agreed for this purpose. Likewise, the considerable or non-considerable nature of these salary supplements shall also be agreed, and those that are linked to the job or to the company's situation and results shall not be considered considerable, unless otherwise agreed.

4. All tax and social security charges payable by the employee shall be borne by the employee, and any agreement to the contrary shall be null and void.
5. Compensation and absorption shall take place when the wages actually paid, as a whole and on an annual basis, are more favourable for the workers than those fixed in the reference statutory or conventional order.

## **2.2 The Statute of Self-Employment. Economic activity**

This refers to work carried out directly by the producer. It is the type of work performed by craftsmen or professionals. In principle, it should be associated with those who, using their own means of production, engage in remunerated work for those who purchase their products or services.

### **Article 1. Included cases**

1. This law shall apply to natural persons who habitually, personally, and directly engage in an economic or professional activity for profit, on their own account and outside the scope of direction and organization of another person, whether or not they employ workers.

## **2.3 Law 45/2015 on volunteering**

Article 3 defines volunteer work as that which is based on solidarity, carried out freely, without financial or material compensation, and developed through volunteer organizations via specific programs. The reimbursement of expenses is allowed, and activities carried out for family reasons, friendship, or good neighborliness are excluded from the definition. As mentioned above, it does not exclude those performed out of benevolence, which would be the broader category to which “volunteer work” belongs.

### **Article 3. Concept of volunteering**

1. For the purposes of this Act, volunteering is understood to be the set of activities of general interest carried out by natural persons, provided that they meet the following requirements:
  - a) They must be of a solidarity nature.
  - b) That their performance is free, not caused by any personal obligation or legal duty and is undertaken voluntarily.

- c) That they are carried out without financial or material consideration, without prejudice to the payment of reimbursable expenses incurred by volunteers in carrying out the voluntary action, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12.2.d).
- d) That they are carried out through volunteer organisations in accordance with specific programmes and within or outside Spanish territory, without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 21 and 22.

...

3. The following shall not be considered as voluntary activities:

- a) Isolated or sporadic, periodic or not, provided outside voluntary organisations.
- b) Those executed for reasons of family, friendship or good neighbourliness.

The same law on volunteering allows for curricular recognition of volunteer work, reimbursement of expenses incurred in the exercise of the work carried out, training or materials. They are a specificity of a non-monetary or commercial remuneration.

#### **Article 10. Rights of volunteers.**

- a) Receive regular information, guidance and support during the performance of their duties, as well as the material means necessary for the exercise of the functions entrusted to them.
- b) To receive at all times, at the expense of the volunteer organisation, and adapted to their personal conditions, the necessary training for the correct development of the activities assigned to them.
- c) To be treated equally, without discrimination, respecting their freedom, identity, dignity and other fundamental rights recognised in international conventions, treaties and the Constitution.
- d) Actively participate in the organisation in which they are involved, collaborating in the elaboration, design, execution and evaluation of programmes or projects, in accordance with its statutes or rules of application and, as far as these allow, in the governance and administration of the volunteer organisation.
- e) To be covered, at the expense of the volunteer organisation, against the risks of accident and illness arising directly from the exercise of voluntary action and civil liability in cases where required by sectoral legislation, by means of insurance or another financial guarantee.
- f) Be reimbursed by the volunteer organisation for the expenses incurred in the performance of their activities, in accordance with the provisions of the incorporation agreement and taking into account the scope of the volunteer activity they carry out.

- g) Have an accreditation identifying their status as a volunteer and stating the volunteer organisation in which they participate.
- h) Carry out their activity in accordance with the principle of universal accessibility adapted to the activity they carry out.
- i) Obtain recognition from the volunteering organisation for the social value of their contribution and for the competences, aptitudes and skills acquired as a result of their voluntary work.
- j) That your personal data will be processed and protected in accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 15/1999, of 13 December, on the Protection of Personal Data.
- k) To cease to carry out its activities as a volunteer under the terms established in the incorporation agreement.

## **2.4 Tax legislation**

The tax regulations are fundamental in order to know whether the persons carrying out the work or the organisations organising and implementing volunteer programmes should be taxed. Again, the key concept here will be the onerousness of the work process and the activity promoted by the organisation in question.

### **2.4.1 Personal Income Tax Law**

Income tax is levied on income earned by individuals. Income can be earned, capital, economic activities or property income. In other words, it is income mediated by the market in which there is a profit motive or an onerous purpose.

#### **Article 6. Taxable event.**

1. The taxable event is the receipt of income by the taxpayer.
2. They make up the taxpayer's income:
  - a) Income from work.
  - b) Income from capital.
  - c) Income from economic activities.
  - d) Capital gains and losses.
  - e) Income imputations established by law.



3. For the purposes of determining the tax base and calculating the tax, income is classified as general and savings income.
4. Income which is subject to Inheritance and Gift Tax is not subject to this tax.
5. The supply of goods, rights or services likely to generate income from work or capital shall be presumed to be remunerated, in the absence of proof to the contrary.

#### **2.4.2 Corporate Income Tax Act**

Again, this refers to the income of the taxpayer, which is generally, Article 7, the legal persons with a commercial purpose.

##### **Article 4. Taxable event**

1. The taxable event shall be the receipt of income by the taxpayer, irrespective of its source or origin.
2. In the special regime for Spanish and European economic interest groupings and temporary joint ventures, obtaining income shall be understood to mean the allocation to the taxpayer of the taxable income, expenses or other items of the entities subject to that regime.

Under the international tax transparency regime, the earning of income means the imputation in the tax base of the positive income obtained by the non-resident entity.

Furthermore, Article 5 defines economic activity as that activity which organises the means of production and/or human resources to intervene in production or distribution. Here, the definition clearly refers to the economy that we defined earlier as formal. That is to say, to that means-end crossed by that institutionalised by the market.

##### **Article 5. Concept of economic activity and patrimonial entity.**

1. Economic activity means the self-management of the means of production and human resources or one or both of them for the purpose of being engaged in the production or distribution of goods or services.

...

#### **2.4.3 General Social Security Act**

The Social Security Act directly excludes those jobs that fall within the scope of this report.

##### **Article 137. Exclusions.**

The following work shall not be included in this General Scheme:

a) Those which are performed occasionally by means of so-called friendly, benevolent or neighbourly services.

### 3. Dogmatic and jurisprudential conclusions

**Table 1: systematisation of working characters**

Main Characteristics of the Workforce				
	Workers' Statute	Self-Employment Statute	Friendship, Benevolence, and Good Neighborliness	Volunteering Law
<b>Cause</b>	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer	Volunteer
<b>Purpose</b>	Remuneration	Lucrative	Altruistic or free (non-onerous)	Altruistic or free
<b>Dependency</b>	Dependent	Independent	Independent or dependent	Dependent
<b>Contracting</b>	External	Self-employed	Self-employed	External

Having established a basic normative and conceptual framework, it can be seen that the main characteristic that separates the work force regulated by the Workers' Statute, that of Self-Employment and the Code of Commerce, and that of "friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness" from that of voluntary work, is the purpose of one or the other. While in the former the purpose is lucrative or onerous, in the latter it is not. This, then, is the main way of casuistically separating one type of work from another. In this sense, there are some, albeit few, doctrinal and jurisprudential efforts, which will be analysed below. First, the concept of "onerous cause" and "profit" will be analysed.

#### CONCEPT MAP

##### Onerous cause

**RAE** → Onerous → from Latin onerous. Adjective. Heavy, troublesome or burdensome.

**RAE** → causa onerosa → cause involving commutation of benefits.

**RAE** → onerosa title → title involving reciprocal performances between those acquiring and transferring.

**RAE panhispanic dictionary of legal Spanish** → onerosa act → act that causes a sacrifice for both parties, as in a sale. On the other hand, in a gratuitous act one party sacrifices while the other benefits without giving anything in return, as in a donation.

**Civil Code, Article 1274** → In onerous contracts, cause means, for each contracting party, the rendering or promise of a thing or service by the other party; in remunerative contracts, the service or benefit to be remunerated, and in purely charitable contracts, the mere liberality of the benefactor.

Finally, onerous contracts are those in which a legally-formally equivalent amount is received in payment, either in cash or in kind, for the labour force performed.<sup>109</sup>

### Lucrative cause

**RAE** → Lucrative → from Latin, *lucratus* Producing utility and profit.

**RAE** → lucrative cause → cause arising from liberality, as opposed to commutative or onerous.

**RAE** → lucrative title → arising from an act of liberality, such as donation or bequest, without reciprocal commutation.

**Etymology** → *lucrum* - profit, sometimes used as excess or usury.

Profit is understood to relate to a profit or gain of one of the parties involved in the economic or contractual relationship vis-à-vis the other, who will suffer a loss.

### 3.1 Work carried out in friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness

Ludovico Barassi, one of the founders of labour law, explains that "anyone who works for altruistic or charitable reasons or even for religious reasons is not a worker in the sense that is relevant to labour law" (Barassi, 1957). This is why Article 1.3.d) of the Workers' Statute is, from a systematic point of view, a redundancy. In reality, work carried out in the name of friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness is not covered by the labour sphere, not because of the express exclusion made, but because of its very nature, as there is no central element of labour work, the onerous or lucrative cause (Serrano Olivares, 2020).

This type of work, although it is treated indistinctly and with little care by jurisprudence, refers to a plurality of social realities. Some authors (Valdés Dal-Ré, 2011) understand that the concept of benevolence would be the genus from which species such as friendship and good neighbourliness would be deployed. Others (Serrano Olivares, 2020) assume that each one corresponds to a differentiated social reality, where the common place would be the lack of onerous cause or profit.

Thus, in the absence of an onerous or profit-making, i.e. contractual, cause, **no legally enforceable contractual obligations will arise**. This type of work, of economies of reciprocity, is based on social relations interwoven by altruistic motivations. They can be found in all altruistic work capable of being activated and created in, and by, the networks of solidarity and fraternity instituted in today's society (Valdés Dal-Ré, 2011). Although with important nuances, this type of work usually has certain characteristics: non-existence of a contractual relationship in the absence of *animus obligandi*; non-dependence with respect to the business organisation; contractual non-attachment. In addition, case law has been demanding the occasional nature of the economic-labour

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<sup>109</sup> This is debatable in the material-economic field, since it is difficult to consider employment contracts as onerous in that the remuneration received cannot be equivalent to the work provided.

relations that have arisen in order to understand them as being outside the scope of labour or commercial regulations. However, if an attempt is made to categorise according to the typologies-causes set out above, important clarifications must be made.

**Table 2: Cause Systematisation**

Causes of Work in Reciprocity Economies Recognized in the ET		
Medium	Definition	Particularities
<b>Friendship</b>	Actions carried out purely out of affection and selflessness.	Can only be observed in relationships between individuals.
<b>Benevolence</b>	Actions performed out of sympathy and goodwill by the doer. They are aimed at personal or moral satisfaction. This includes social volunteering. Work in a social center, as long as there is no imposed direction (social collaboration), also falls under this category. Additionally, ideological or religious militancy can be considered.	Has both a collective and individual dimension.
<b>Good Neighborliness</b>	Pleasant and beneficial actions towards neighbors. Traditionally found in rural areas or urban peripheries (communes) (Sevilla-Butrago, 2023). However, modern forms of these manifestations can also be observed, such as neighborhood workshops, popular festivals, community radios, rehabilitation of degraded spaces, or sports associations, among others.	Directed towards organizations or communities. The legal requirement of reciprocity is not observed, as ensuring the continuity of the work is necessary. If needed, at least a rotational or generalized participation among other community members is required.

## SOME JURISPRUDENTIAL NOTES

An analysis has been made of much of the case law of the Supreme Court dealing with work carried out in a friendly, benevolent or neighbourly capacity. In this case, the legal treatment is normally indirect and rather delimits its boundaries with other more regulated fields, such as salaried or self-employed work. In reality, it is not a field in which there are quantitatively a large number of rulings, which may be due to various reasons. Amongst others, since there is generally no conflict of interest as a benevolent or community interest is pursued, there are no two parties with conflicting interests.

But also, to a constriction of the social phenomenon of economic reciprocity outside closed institutions such as family, or other institutions such as political or religious ones. In any case, among the judgments analysed, the most frequent factual assumption was that in which the non-commercial work relationship was between an individual and a company. In other words, in cases where the borderline between the economy of mutual interest and the subterfuge of operating in a deregulated manner is blurred or confused. No court rulings have been found, and it is to be assumed that if they exist, they will be very rare, to settle conflicts between people participating in community or neighbourhood networks and these communities.

Often, in the resolutions, there is an indistinct and undifferentiated treatment of the different typologies of this type of work. Nor is there a systematising effort, from a legal perspective, of this type of anthropic phenomenon, limiting itself to a casuistic analysis of the notes of the specific relationship in order to leave it within or outside of the legal system. However, some of them can provide some rules of interpretation to those already analysed.

#### **Judgment of the Spanish Supreme Court of 16 December 2004 →**

The Supreme Court gives a residual or subsidiary character, legally speaking, to the economic-labour relations that are market-driven. Thus, instead of defining them, it proposes a causal analysis a contrary of those regulated by the Statute of Workers and the Statute of Self-Employed Workers.

According to doctrine and jurisprudence, in order to prove the nature of the relationship, certain indications will be relevant, such as the duration of the provision of services, as these are normally occasional jobs, not periodic or permanent; the difficulty, effort or hardship involved in the provision of the services, as these are usually jobs for which neither qualified training nor great physical or intellectual effort is necessary; the intensity of the prior link between the person providing the service and the person receiving it and the compulsiveness or spontaneity of the provision of the services.

#### **Judgment of the Spanish Supreme Court of 24 September 1996 →**

In this ruling, the High Court upheld a company's appeal against a decision of the Labour Inspectorate in which it determined that a person, a minor, was working without a contract. The Court itself dismissed the value of the inspector's report that took for granted the fraudulent employment relationship, as no proof had been provided that this was not due to friendship.

Although Article 38 of Decree 1860/1975 of 10 July 1975 attributes a presumption of certainty - a "iuris tantum" presumption - to the content of the inspection reports, this presumption must be understood as referring to the facts verified by the Inspector and reflected in the report, either because they constitute an objective reality and are susceptible of direct perception by the Inspector acting during the visit, or because they have been verified by the Inspector, duly documented, or through testimony or other validly obtained evidence, with a reflection of these or at least a reference to them in the Minutes drawn up.

### **Order of the Supreme Court of 23 May 2013 →**

A person who carried out various tasks for an employer in exchange for housing is considered to be a non-formally employment relationship, as it is not proven that they were done for any other reason than friendship. Furthermore, when they were not part of an organisational form of the company.

The plaintiff, in view of the relationship he had with the defendant's legal representative, from around May 2009, resided in a house owned by the defendant, which was looked after and under surveillance, as it had been the target of several burglaries, in exchange for which he provided some services for the defendant, such as taking a car to be washed and also to pass the MOT, without receiving any remuneration for such services. In October 2009, the relationship broke down and the respondent prevented the appellant from accessing the above-mentioned property. The appellant argues that the presumption of employment should be applied, considering that there is occasional work for at least five months and that it cannot be classified as friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness, with the free use of a house owned by the company's representative constituting salary in kind. The Court dismissed the claim as the existence of an employment relationship between the litigants had not been proven, since the alleged services were not performed within the organisational circle of the company, with a specific working day and timetable, on a continuous basis and in return for remuneration, but were occasional or exceptional services based on the bond of friendship.

### **Order of the Supreme Court of 26 September 2017 →**

Case law attaches great importance to the type of remuneration and other related issues such as the amount of remuneration or the frequency of payment. In short, it can be seen that one of the key borderline points between formal work and work carried out of friendship, benevolence and good neighbourliness is precisely the receipt of the salary and the way it is configured.

the factual account in the judgment of the Court of First Instance contains the essential fact of the amount received daily by the employees, which the Court considers to be, in itself, an extremely important and significant indication that the relationship between the parties can be classified as an employment relationship. The judgment considers that a fixed sum per day worked, completely independent of the expenses they may have incurred, with the daily amount to be received varying exclusively according to the number of hours of services rendered and therefore completely independent of the hours worked, of any costs for travel or food and of any other factors, for a daily provision of services, in an eight-hour working day, constitutes remuneration that is not particularly ridiculous or purely symbolic, and therefore there is more than sufficient data and determining factors to classify it as remuneration of a salaried nature.

The judgement adds that the lifeguards were subject to the orders and instructions of the employer, who set the parameters of their work and that they had to respect a working timetable and working day established by the defendant.



## **Judgment of the Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Andalucía. Sala de lo Social, of 9 January 2014 →**

The formality of the employment relationship is not to be presumed, but the circumstances that establish the employment nature, or not, of the work action must be accredited. In the case of the ruling, it is understood that a small salary, of less than thirty euros per day, does not have a salaried nature. Nor is there a certain degree of organisation or coordination, which is necessary in any activity. What is essential here is the altruistic nature of the cause of action.

In the reference, a claim for dismissal had been brought against the Town Council of Chiclana, to which the plaintiff had been linked at various times by means of different temporary contracts, the last one ending some time before the claim was brought, although at the same time, as a volunteer, she had been a member of the Civil Protection Group of the Town Council. As a volunteer, she received a daily allowance for living and transport expenses, and it was established that she had stopped attending the Civil Protection Grouping from a date close to the filing of the lawsuit itself. The Court declared that the social jurisdiction did not have jurisdiction, and the Chamber, after analysing the concept and characteristics of the volunteer relationship, and its differences with the employment contract, concluded that there was no employment relationship between the parties, ratifying the lack of jurisdiction, as the work was carried out as a result of friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness.

The referring court dismissed the appeal on the ground that the applicant had failed to prove the existence of circumstances which would allow it to conclude that the relationship with the defendant city council was of an employment nature, which, according to the Chamber, was limited to voluntary work, especially if it is borne in mind that he had been receiving unemployment benefit since his last termination until 14 April 2012 and that the assignment of shifts or tasks of the services provided by the volunteers, within the scope of the aims of civil protection, should only be considered as mere elements of the organisation required in any activity, regardless of its altruistic or non-altruistic nature. As regards the payment of a daily allowance, even on a daily basis throughout the month, it may even be due, according to the reference, to a reimbursement of the expenses and travel inevitably arising from their activity, and the payments of €28.21 per day paid to the applicant and to other colleagues in the service cannot be regarded as a salary, which does not correspond to the amount which should be paid to the professional category to which the applicant considers she should be entitled.

### **3.2 The work carried out in the field of voluntary work**

As already explained, work in the field of volunteering, regulated by Law 45/2015 on Volunteering, is a specificity of work carried out for benevolent reasons. It is not possible to make the mistake of identifying them. Not all benevolent work will have the more

formalised nature of voluntary work. They will necessarily be carried out within the framework of volunteer programmes and within organisations implementing such programmes. Foundations or associations are the most common legal entities.

Perhaps, as they are well-regulated work dynamics, often carried out with public resources, in organisational spaces with a certain level of professionalisation and outside the volunteer's control, the boundary between them and labour action may seem less clear. The law on volunteering specifies that they are carried out for reasons of solidarity and that they do not involve financial or material remuneration. However, it is accepted that compensation for the expenses incurred by volunteering should be made, in order to avoid a loss of assets.

Jurisprudence, for its part, has dealt with the figure of voluntary work in a very similar way, as we have seen above, to other work carried out in the framework of the reciprocal economy. Generally, it limits itself to establishing the borderline between the sale of labour and altruism. For this reason, the main hermeneutic view is the one that analyses the wage as the main indicator to know what kind of social phenomenon we are dealing with. This should not be confused with a certain possibility of indirect remuneration. The Law on Volunteering even includes the possibility of direct remuneration, such as the possibility of curricular recognition of voluntary action, as set out in Article 10 of the Law on Volunteering.

### **3.3 Conclusions**

The main borderline between work carried out in the framework of reciprocity or solidarity and work carried out for remuneration or profit is whether or not there is direct remuneration arising from a contractual relationship. In other words, the existence of a remuneration arising in a compulsory manner from the hiring of a specific workforce in the form, in the case of salaried employees, of a salary. But this is not the only one. Also, if they are carried out within a corporate or, on the contrary, a community organisational framework. Whether there is private profit or rather social or neighbourhood impact. The worker's capacity for agency in his or her action.

Therefore, work carried out within the framework analysed here is fully legitimate in our legal system, and should be able to develop normally and be supported or encouraged by public institutions. But in order to do so, we should not make the mistake of trying to grant them a field of contractual formality similar to market-mediated work, as this could blur the boundary between the two distinct social phenomena. Therefore, should not aim to create a legal-contractual framework that regulates this type of social action and creates legal obligations and collection rights between one and the other. On the contrary, it should be through community controls and autonomous but legally recognised social institutions that conflicts are regulated, made possible and managed. This, by the way, is no stranger to our legal system, where there are already recognised figures of common management, with their own conflict resolution mechanisms, such as the València Water Tribunal (Ostrom, 2019).

## 4. Concrete experiences of reciprocal economies, free labour and volunteerism

### 4.1 Gamification systems in volunteer networks

Gamification is the use of game design elements and principles in non-game contexts to motivate, engage or influence people's behaviour. In other words, it takes mechanics and dynamics commonly found in video games, such as rewards, levels, competitions, challenges or leaderboards, and applies them to activities that are not necessarily related to entertainment.

It can be effectively applied in volunteer placements to make the experience more attractive and motivating for both volunteers and organisations. However, this system can also carry certain risks, such as excessive competition among volunteers, lack of inclusion or discrimination among volunteers, excessive extrinsic motivation, abuse of the system, depersonalisation, unequal access to resources and short-termism.

With regard to the legal treatment of the gamification system, we have to keep in mind the main issues:

- Protection of personal data: the system has to comply with data protection regulations.
- Conditions of participation: Define the rules of the system through terms of use or internal regulations.
- Labour rights and volunteering: Ensure that volunteering remains voluntary and unpaid, with equal treatment.
- Rewards and benefits: Set clear limits on non-monetary rewards and prevent them from becoming salary compensation.
- Dispute resolution and accountability: Establish dispute resolution procedures and ensure that the system is fair and transparent.

With regard to the rewards and benefits obtained with gamification, it is important not to forget that we are dealing with a game and, therefore, these must be merely symbolic or, at most, rewards in kind related to the volunteering itself. If the rewards reach a significant value, it would imply not only that the voluntary work would no longer have an altruistic or gratuitous purpose, which would imply that the legal regime of work for consideration would be applicable to it. In principle, these rewards should not have a legal or enforceable value of their own, but a social value.

Such gamification systems are likely to be **easier to apply in voluntary work that falls under the law of volunteering** rather than in good neighbourly or friendly work. As noted, gamification carries certain risks and it is important to have a good organisation in place that implements the necessary regulatory framework to protect participants from violations of their rights. In any case, however **difficult it may be, they could be**

**instituted through community networks, rather than through voluntary programmes and organisations**, provided that the requirements outlined above are respected.

## 4.2 The Time Banks

Time Banks are a form of reciprocal economy in which people can offer their skills or time in exchange for receiving the hours of dedication performed by others, without the need to use money. Instead of paying with money, people voluntarily "deposit" time by performing a service for someone else and "withdraw" time when they need help or service from another member of the bank. Its operation produces an interesting social value chain in which the provider will not necessarily benefit from the person to whom he or she has provided the service, but by other participants in the same time bank. The very characteristics of the services provided distance it from salaried work, as there is no subordination or outside employment<sup>110</sup>. However, it could be associated with self-employment. This may occur if the activity carried out within the time bank is done on a regular, continuous and structured basis; this would have tax or social security implications.

Participation in Time Banks has certain legal implications also within the framework of civil liability: even if the services are not performed in a professional manner and there is no subordination or commercial contracting, they would still be liable for their actions if they act negligently or recklessly; it is therefore important to inform participants and make them aware of the implications of their actions.

Likewise, time banks must comply with data protection law and keep their participants protected, ensuring that personal data are collected, stored and processed in a secure and transparent manner. Explicit consent must be obtained from users for the processing of their data.

In short, it is a form of reciprocal economy, where there is a kind of indirect non-market retribution, which we try to institutionalise by accounting for the time spent. **In principle, it is conceived in a framework of good neighbourliness or benevolence. However, some voluntary organisations could use it as a tool to develop their programmes.** This is the example of Zeitpolster<sup>111</sup>. However, there is a certain risk of it becoming a subterfuge for economic activities that try to avoid their labour and fiscal responsibilities, especially when the Time Bank reaches dimensions beyond the community and intertwines with private enterprise, so it is advisable to create a solid legal framework for these cases.

### 4.2.1 Time banks and private enterprise

Some companies in the private sector have explored the creation of internal Time Banks, where employees can donate or exchange work hours with each other to help a co-

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<sup>110</sup> Der. The quality of employment relationships, as opposed to self-employment.

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.zeitpolster.com/es/>

worker who may be experiencing a difficult situation, such as an illness or personal emergency.

As an example, there are time bank initiatives where employees can donate working hours to colleagues who need more time off for personal, family or health reasons. These systems are not universal, but in some cases, they could help to create a culture of mutual support within the company.

We must be very alert to this type of practice, especially in companies whose economic activity is geared towards profit and the distribution of profits, because through this type of practice, in principle laudable, subterfuges could be found to divert the company's responsibility for the workers' need for work-life balance towards their colleagues. **Voluntary work would be the most suitable formula as long as, it must be stressed, no work is carried out which produces added value for the company and which should be remunerated.**

It is completely different when companies promote and provide infrastructure, physical or digital, at the disposal of their employees to organise a Time Bank outside the interests and needs of their economic activity. They could **fit in as work done out of friendship, benevolence or good neighbourliness.**

#### 4.2.2 The "Zeitpolster" model

Zeitpolster, in English "time mattress", refers to the custom of keeping money under the bed. It is related to the idea that people can "save" time during their active life to use it when they need it, especially in retirement or when they can no longer perform certain tasks on their own. It has been set up as a social franchise model for care. The Zeitpolster model is another concept related to the economics of time management, but with a specific focus on time provision for old age and intergenerational solidarity. It comes from Austria and seeks to offer a complementary alternative to traditional pension and social security systems, using time as an interchangeable resource between generations.

It has been driven by various initiatives and actors in Europe, primarily in Austria, although the model has expanded to other countries. While it is managed by a single entity that centralizes, coordinates, and standardizes its implementation, it is usually carried out through a combination of community organizations, digital platforms, NGOs, and, in some cases, local public administrations. A precursor to this model was developed in Switzerland for Social Security.

Its uniqueness, compared to other time banks, is that users can pay a fee in exchange for an hour of care. This money is distributed to finance the organisation, to pay for the Social Responsibility group insurance and to increase the funds in the emergency account. The emergency account is a fund in case a shortage of volunteers needs to be filled by professional work. In addition, if it is not possible to make up for a shortage of

professional work, the individual may request to receive from this account half of what the professional third party would have received.

Therefore, while volunteers who contribute hours should certainly be considered to be part of what we have called reciprocal economies, and therefore their remuneration in time will not be taxed, work carried out through the emergency fund will be treated differently. That is, if some participants in the Zeitpolster system work professionally within it - for example, as carers, coaches, or paid assistants - and receive monetary compensation in exchange for their time, the tax treatment would be closer to that of any other self-employed person or employee providing services in exchange for money. In this case, individuals would receive monetary remuneration, which would be subject to income taxes, social security contributions and other associated tax charges. So, it could be seen as a model that would combine the conventional practice of a community time bank, which would fit the definition of benevolent or neighbourly work; and paid labour that would fall under the Workers' Statute. Finally, the right to be paid half the cost of hiring a third party, charged to the emergency account, can be interpreted as accruing as employment income at the moment that this subsidiary condition to the exchange of work is activated.

#### **4.2.3 Time banks and volunteering. The mixed model**

One proposal developed by academia is the integration of the time bank methodology with the dynamics of volunteering. The idea would be to promote a kind of network of accounted reciprocity (time bank) from which the volunteer workers of a given organisation could benefit. In this way, a new layer of economic interactions that are understood to be non-commercialised would be incorporated into the daily practice of volunteering. In this way, they should not be considered as forms of direct payment in kind. In other words, they should not be considered as salary amounts.

The accounting of time and the executability of time, always understood as a social and not a legal obligation, would have to draw an overlapping layer to the voluntary work. In other words, the latter would be recorded in the form of hours which, in turn, would be accounted for in the time bank independently of the execution of his or her function as a volunteer worker.

#### **4.3 Crowdtiming platforms**

These are digital platforms that aim to facilitate the organisation of different volunteers who contribute limited amounts of time so that, by pooling them together, they can carry out more complicated or multi-level tasks than they could do individually.

Depending on the structure of the platform, whether it is a for-profit or not-for-profit platform and other causal considerations, it may be a simple digital community platform, a voluntary work organisation, or, on the other hand, a for-profit company.



#### **4.4 The social currency**

Social currency is a way of accounting for economic activity with the aim of facilitating the distribution of goods, services and knowledge. Unlike traditional money, social currencies are designed to operate under a logic of proximity, usually on a local scale, and to foster projects and activities of social impact and guided by a logic of cooperation.

They are usually designed from a community-based and democratic perspective. They are intended to strengthen local economies and promote reciprocal or non-market economies.

They may be suitable mechanisms for indirectly remunerating work done out of friendship, benevolence and good neighbourliness, provided that they do not replace, but complement, legal tender. In principle, they should not be taxed, nor should they be considered as direct remuneration, but can be considered, like time banks, as social accounting mechanisms. However, this position could change if their practice becomes more widespread and they are no longer seen as complementary to legal tender.

#### **4.5 Informal mutual aid networks**

Communities have always self-organised their economic activity to satisfy their mutual needs. Reciprocal community economies, what our legal system has labelled as work carried out in good neighbourliness, have historically been related to the rural or peri-urban world. The exchange of agricultural work, communal grazing or mutual care.

Today, society is more fragmented than ever, and as we have seen, these forms of community-based work are no longer as widespread. Instead, especially in cities, many people now live in isolation from others. Thus, it seems advisable to encourage a return to a stronger community fabric. This is currently happening through initiatives aimed at social rearticulation and the promotion of non-market-based relationships of mutual support.

We can find completely informal initiatives, such as some attempts to promote neighbourhood care or psychological mutual support groups. These encourage inter-cooperation between people living in specific urban contexts. Logically, since there is no concrete exchange, no relationship of dependence or subordination, and no direct remuneration, it cannot be understood as a disguised commodified relationship. Thus, they will be forms of a relationship of mutual interest that are not onerous. Quite pure formulas of reciprocal economies that are not subject to any labour or tax regulations.

Mutual support networks can also be developed, interwoven with other initiatives from the voluntary sector. This is the case, for example, of the Communities of Care, promoted by the Ibero-American Association of Time Banks. In these, it will be necessary to distinguish which activities involve voluntary work and which are part of reciprocal economic relationships. The former will be subject to the legal framework established

in the Law on Volunteering, while the latter will be subject to the provisions of the previous paragraph.

#### 4.6 Social Sandbox

A sandbox, in the technological and financial sphere, is a sealed space for running tests without the risk of contaminating or perverting the environment. A social sandbox is thus a controlled experimental environment where new ideas, models or social innovations can be tested in a real context, but with certain restrictions to avoid risks, and with the objective of learning from the experience before implementing them on a large scale.

This concept is used in the field of social innovation to create testing spaces where different actors such as governments, NGOs, businesses, universities, or communities can experiment with new solutions to social problems, without fear of the consequences of failure or mistakes in the short term. The results of these experiments can then inform the development of more effective public policies or models.

A social sandbox creates a protected space in which new policies, programmes or social services can be tested and experimented with, without affecting the population as a whole. Risks are carefully managed, and interventions in the community or society are tested on a small scale before being scaled up.

In Spain, and in the field of finance, this idea crystallises with **Law 7/2020, of 13 November, for the digital transformation of the financial system**, which allows experimentation in unregulated fields through an observation system supervised by the authorities.

Perhaps, a similar regulatory framework that would allow for the development, experimentation, and multiplication of reciprocity economies would be a good way to begin to avoid the problems currently detected in this field.

#### 5. Recommendations

This report makes one main point: the lack of specific treatment of reciprocal economies has conceptually and legally sidelined them, abandoning them as a social vestige that is today on the margins. This is why the construction of a singular framework for them is recommended. Not so much to regulate them, which would surely be contradictory to their spirit of community self-regulation, but rather to promote and protect them. Thus, the creation of a **Law for the defence and promotion of reciprocity economies** that delimits their field, defines them and grants them their own legal substantivity and not one that is subsidiary to formal work, would be a good legislative practice.

Furthermore, it would seem interesting to promote and **create innovative legal tools** to facilitate the implementation of different local and social currencies that favour short

production-consumption channels and the circular economy. Also, for the development and expansion of time banks and the implementation of new ones. As well as, again, the implementation of **legal instruments that allow mixed and innovative models** such as the Zeitpolster or others that allow the symbiosis between instruments such as time banks and voluntary work.

The creation of an innovative field of action, **through the social sandbox model** in the field of reciprocity economies where innovative legal tools and instruments are allowed or encouraged that allow the development of non-commercialised economic modalities, volunteering, as well as the creation of popular institutions with the capacity to manage and regulate conflicts and create economies of scale.



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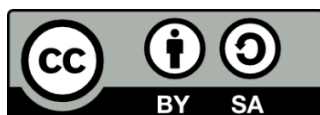
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