

Weekly English Practice



16th April 2015
English Coaching Projects

weeklyenglishpractice.wordpress.com

How long is your lunch break? Do you take a packed lunch. Would you consider it?

Region will be first in Spain to bring working hours into line with the rest of Europe, ending long days and late-night dinners

to spell: *to be a sign or characteristic of; to mean (context)*

prime-time: *time when TV/radio has the largest audience*

to lobby: *to try to influence decision-makers*

chores: *a routine task, especially a household one*

to underpin: *to form the basis for something*

backing: *support*

stalemate: *a situation when further progress seems impossible*

to stick to: *not to change from; to stay with*

Catalonia is aiming to become the first region in Spain to bring its working hours into line with the rest of Europe, **spelling** the end for long working days and late-night dinners.

The Catalan government has promised to put together a proposal to reform working hours by July. "The time to make decisions has come," said Francesc Homs, a spokesman for the Catalan regional government.

Across Spain, most working days start early and are interrupted for a late-morning coffee break and again for a long lunch break around 2pm. Few arrive home before 8pm.

This sees Spaniards working nearly 300 hours more a year than Germans, a statistic often highlighted when explaining why Spaniards sleep about an hour less than the rest of Europe, why 10pm dinners are the norm for many and why **prime-time** television programmes continue until well after midnight.

The announcement comes after a decade of **lobbying** by campaigners, who argue that a shorter working day would set off a chain of positive outcomes, from higher productivity and less workplace accidents to a more equal division of **chores** in Spanish households.

Underpinning much of the campaign has been a push to roll back the clocks by an hour, reversing a decision made by General Francisco Franco in 1942 to synchronise Spanish clocks with those in Germany, his fascist ally.

"Because of a great historical error, in Spain we eat at 2pm, and we don't have dinner until 9pm, but according to the position of the sun, we eat at the same time as the rest of Europe – 1pm and 8pm," campaigner Nuria Chinchilla explained to the Guardian in 2013. "We are living with 71 years of jet-lag and it's unsustainable."

In 2013, MPs in Madrid said they would consider the reform after a parliamentary commission recommended they explore the issue. But Catalan politicians have raced ahead, unanimously signing up to the changes.

He was unsure how far-reaching the reforms could be without Madrid's **backing**. "There are limits to the competency of the Catalan parliament," he said, pointing to labour issues, commercial hours and **prime-time** TV, while the **stalemate** between Madrid and Barcelona over Catalan nationalism suggests there would be little will to work together. "This is like a puzzle. If we move one piece we have to move others." But he was thrilled that the first steps towards change were being



CATALONIA TO SAY ADÉU TO LONG WORKING DAYS

taken. "Ten years ago, we started to talk about this and nobody paid attention."

He likened the movement to tackle working hours to the explosive growth of political parties such as Podemos and Ciudadanos. "Now we're in a moment where people want to change everything.

Spaniards aren't content any more

to just stick to what we inherited from the past."

www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/10/catalonia-long-working-days-spain-europe

Something to chat about

- Can you imagine having a couple of extra hours free every evening? How would you feel?
- Should we try to follow this Catalanian idea?
- Is it important to "stick to" traditions, or is it better to change and adapt to changing times?
- Would you prefer it to be lighter in the morning or to be lighter in the evening? Why?
- Would productivity improve if we changed our working hours to GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) instead of CET (Central European Time)?



“iLook, iThink, iSpeak” Express yourself better!

“Socialising is learning”

Changing customs and habits

Look at these different comments taken from the same article that is on page 1. Chat about them with your colleagues and your ECP coach. Do you agree, disagree or not really care?

Changing clocks and banning bulls. Is there a connection?

"After the bullfighting ban, this is one more positive step for Catalonia, and not just a symbolic one. More like the rest of Europe, and a little bit less like Spain."

Is it the rest of Europe that needs to change rather than Spain?

"Moving the clocks back is really a backwards step. The rest of Europe should move them forwards."

"Changing the working hours might not be a bad idea but changing the hour from Central European Time is a disastrous idea. In Spain you have light and usually sun until at least 6 in the depths of the winter. It is life enhancing!"

"I think this is a very needed change, not just in Catalonia but in the whole of Spain. The hours really do not make sense."



How can you work in the middle of the day when it's so hot?

"There is a logic to the long lunch break in the summer. I was in Catalonia a few years ago and it was so hot I could barely leave the shadows of buildings. It was exhausting and surely impossible for anyone working outside."

"When I lived in Barcelona I never understood how Catalans fitted their working day into their lifestyle. If you eat at ten, go out at midnight and start work at nine the next day it's no wonder you need a lie down in the afternoon."



Do you like coffee?

Do you like beer?

Do you want to speak English with other students?

Let's do it!



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Student Socials

To participate:

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with the **days** and **times** and **how often** you want to **meet other students to practice your English.**

Let's get social!

