

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Jobless in Spain Seek Solutions Through Social Currencies

Continued from Page One

of vacant land with those willing to plant vegetables in them and share the harvest.

The growth of time banks revives a concept pioneered by 19th-century anarchists and socialists in the U.S. and Europe, who wanted to test their philosophy that prices of goods and services should more closely reflect the labor involved in producing them.

The number of such banks in Spain—some run by neighborhood associations, others by local governments—has nearly doubled to 291 over the past two years, according to a survey by Julio Gisbert, a banker who runs a website called Vivir Sin Empleo, or Living Without Work, that tracks mutual-aid initiatives. Some economists worry that the rise of such informal systems of economic exchange is pushing more of Spain's economy underground—out of the view of regulators and tax collectors, and effectively sending the country back in time developmentally.

"It's a step backward not only for a euro country, but also for a developed country," says José García Montalvo, an economics professor at the University of Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona.

Banks and social currencies, he says, can backfire on the broader economy since the income received from such arrangements often goes undeclared, therefore depriving the government of tax revenue. Social currencies and time banks also preclude taking on debt, adds Mr. García Montalvo, which in moderate levels can help people start businesses and access beneficial goods and services that they can't afford upfront.

Others, though, say the measures represent a significant sta-

### Informal exchanges are helping those in need but add risks for the broader economy.

bilizing force in society. For "people who can't find work, these kinds of possibilities of exchanges and mutual help can help make bearable a situation that otherwise would be unsustainable," says José Luis Álvarez Arce, director of the economics department at the University of Navarra.

Similar efforts are also emerging in Southern Europe's other troubled economies. In Greece, for example, hundreds of people in one town use a currency called the TEM, which stands for a local alternative unit. Time banks in Modena, Italy, and elsewhere in the country have mobilized to help people affected by earthquakes there earlier this year. Spain's economy has been in dire shape since a real estate bubble burst in 2008. Unemployment hit a record of nearly 25% in the second quarter, and the government sees the economic contraction continuing into next year.

Meanwhile, Spain's public-assistance system has been battered by national and state budget cuts aimed at soothing financial markets. As jobless benefits run out for long-term unemployed, the percentage of out-of-work Spaniards receiving assistance has fallen to 65% from

78% in 2010. Last month, the national government announced the most severe budget austerity plan in the country's modern history.

The crisis has been an especially tough blow to people in their 20s and 30s, who came of age in a period of democracy and prosperity following the death of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. They were the first Spaniards to enjoy the fruits of a strong welfare state that included universal health care, accessible higher education and generous worker protections, says Rodolfo Gutiérrez, a sociologist at the University of Oviedo. They watched their parents' living standards rise dramatically, and entered the workforce in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when jobs were plentiful and credit and consumer goods readily obtainable, he says.

Today, workers 16 to 24 face an astronomical 53.3% unemployment rate. For 25- to 34-year-olds, the rate is 27%. It tapers off for older workers, who can be costly to lay off under Spanish labor law.

Half of the young unemployed have been seeking work for at least a year, according to Spain's national statistics bureau, and the few jobs that are available are often low-paying, temporary positions. The number of people in their 20s and early 30s who live with their parents began to tick up in the past 12 months after declining for years.

"It's not a lost generation, it's a frustrated one," says José Ortuño, a 35-year-old film writer and director. He recently made an animated Web series called "Treintaños," or Thirtysomethings, featuring a fast-food worker, Pedro, with four college degrees who represents a generation "living off their parents until they can afford to live off their children," Mr. Ortuño says.

Amid flagging faith in efforts to shore up the euro, Spain is witnessing a surge in local currencies. "It's increasingly hard for anyone in my generation to have much confidence in the euro or the authorities controlling it," says Eduard Folch, 28, a Web page designer in the Catalonia region. A couple of months ago, he and some friends decided to launch their own currency, the eco. Desperate for money of any kind, a score of businesses and two town governments in the area have agreed to accept the eco.

Spaniards are also bartering goods—say, books or furniture—in exchange for fresh produce—at markets that are being organized in seemingly every neighborhood. In the Catalonia region alone, 60 barter markets have been held during the first seven months of this year, three times as many as there were during all of 2007, according to Intercanvis.net, a website tracking the barter economy.

A growing number of Spain's young people are visiting websites like No lo Tiro, I Won't Throw it Out, a three-year-old site similar to Freecycle that connects people who want to give an item away with those who need it. About 6,000 to 10,000 items a month—everything from automobiles to mother's milk—change hands on the site, whose target audience is unemployed women in their 30s, says Daniel Remeseiro, 39, the site's founder.

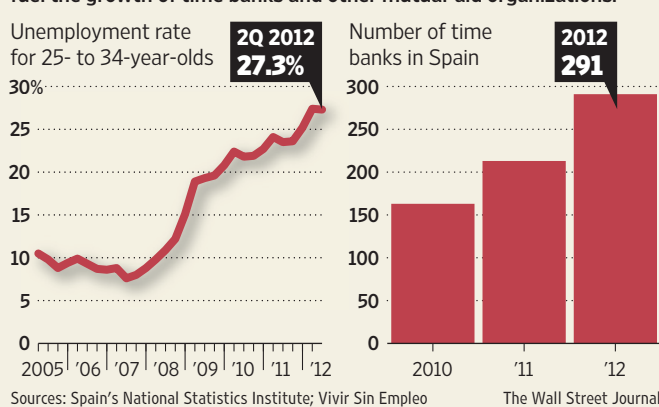
"I think the model of the wel-



Eduard Folch, left, and Israel Calvache work in a shared garden near Barcelona. Members of the group are primarily growing food for themselves, but they also plan to sell their excess fruits and vegetables for ecos, a local currency that was created by Mr. Folch and his friends.

### Time on Their Hands

SkYROCKETING unemployment among Spain's young workers has helped fuel the growth of time banks and other mutual-aid organizations.



fare state has reached its limit, and it's up to individual members of society to pull our chests out of the fire," says Laia Serrano, 38, an economist who last September created a non-profit organization called BarcelonaActua, Barcelona Acts, which connects those in need with people who can donate a good or service. Ms. Serrano says she was moved to action during Christmas of 2010 while listening to a radio program in which an unknown Good Samaritan called in to invite down-on-their-luck listeners to share the holidays at her house.

Spaniards on tight budgets are also tapping online resources like Sindinero, Without Money, a site whose estimated 10,000 daily readers learn tips like how to make a mosquito trap out of a soft-drink bottle, or where there are public offices offering free Wi-Fi and air conditioning.

Of course, even the architects of these self-help actions recognize that they won't solve the fundamental problems of the euro or bring long-term stability to the Spanish economy.

"We are inside of a pressure cooker, and all we can do is let some steam off so it doesn't explode," says Francisco Romero, head of the municipal employ-

ment office in the town Totana, which has launched an urban gardening project, a barter market and a local currency to help its jobless youth.

Carlos Bravo, a 35-year-old information technician who helped launch a small bank in central Madrid this year, says at time banks have a different sort of value: helping urban Spaniards rekindle a sense of closeness among neighbors that facilitates asking for favors and other forms of mutual assistance.

"They're people you can count on," he says. "And in this time of economic crisis, for people who lack the resources to get things on their own, they know there are people here to give a helping hand."

The Valladolid Time Bank, started by the city government just before the crisis started, has attracted more and younger members with the crumbling of Spain's economy. The new unemployed appreciate the bank's egalitarian ethos, says 32-year-old administrator Juan Manuel Primo. "Everyone's hour has the same value here," he says: An hour's labor by a seamstress is worth as much as that of a lawyer. Members write one another invoices for services rendered.

Every month, Mr. Primo enters the invoice data into his computer to track how many hours each member has given and taken. He doesn't allow imbalances more than 20 hours in either direction.

"Having a network of support like this is really important at a time when you're vulnerable," says Alessandra Melis, 30, who recently lost her housekeeping job after her employers were themselves laid off. She has been using the bank to get rides for her errands around town, in exchange for offering cooking lessons and dog walking services.

When a hair stylist who belonged to the bank had to shut down his slumping salon not long ago, he was able to count on meals and other necessities from members in return for cuts.

On a recent morning in the town library, bank member Cristina Altable, 38, was teaching English to Camila Gil, 17, whose mother pays for the lessons by doing ironing and cleaning for other members. In return, Ms. Altable has gotten Pilates classes, and is now having a graphic designer in the bank jazz up her resumé.

"In this economy, the resumé has to be perfect," says Ms. Altable, who has been struggling

to re-enter the job market after leaving an administrative job a few years ago to have a baby. Ms. Altable, who has degrees in English and commerce, says she hopes a more polished resumé does the trick. After repeated re-buffs, she says she'd even consider working at McDonald's.

Ms. Martin, the unemployed 22-year-old, says she has struggled to find work in the career she studied for, caring for the physically incapacitated, and has had to settle for temporary jobs. She adds that it's dispiriting seeing her friends with degrees emigrating or working at very menial jobs.

But she sees hope in projects like the time bank and thinks they are the wave of the future in Spain. "There has to be a change in the mentality for there to be a change in the country," she says. "We can't continue to spend resources we don't have. We have to learn to live with less."

### Eco Friendly»

Scan this code to see a video about the Eco and other alternative currencies or watch online and see more photos at [WSJ.com/PageOne](http://WSJ.com/PageOne).

## Programmer 'Pairing' Brings Tech Couples Close Together

Continued from Page One

left the company in 2010. Grockit CEO Roy Gilbert said the practice has proven a success, and his developers "continue to evangelize the method."

If the ideal for pairing is soul-mate-level bonding, the reality can be more like an endless bad blind date. Annoyances that plague partners everywhere can quickly pile up: from poor personal hygiene and table manners, to feet on shared desks and loud chewing.

Sydney, Australia-based software company Atlassian spoofed the practice on April Fools' Day with a mock instructional video called "Spooning."

In the two-minute short, viewed by more than 100,000 people, a burly engineer sits on a colleague's lap, wraps his arms around his partner's waist and types along with him hand over hand. "Take turns," the presenter says. "No one wants to be the outer spoon all the time."

The popularity of pair programming has its roots in the 1999 book "Extreme Programming Explained," written by Facebook's Mr. Beck. According to the book, software should be released quickly and improved along the way, something double-teaming projects can make happen more quickly.

Mr. Beck developed many of the concepts while working with Ward Cunningham—developer of



Software developer Pivotal Labs pairs its engineers, including Cameron Cundiff and Sabrina Staedt, all day.

the first wiki—at a software company in the 1980s. The relationship began when Mr. Cunningham asked Mr. Beck to check for bugs in a software application he was working on. But eventually the collaboration grew deeper, and the two would pair up to knock out assignments so they could move on to their own pet projects.

"When I walked in in the morning, the first thing I did was look for Kent," Mr. Cunningham says. "And at the end of the day, we were walking out to our cars together."

The pairing broke up when Mr. Beck left the company.

"When it stopped, it was like, 'Wait, who's going to notice when I get tired or when I go off

into the weeds?'" Mr. Beck said. "I need someone to help me with that."

The practice is now blossoming. Pivotal Labs, a software-development shop that was bought by technology giant EMC Corp. in March, has its 175 engineers pair all day, every day. Some play the field, changing partners daily in a practice called "pro-

miscuous pairing."

There are other flavors as well. Ping-pong pairing involves hopping back and forth between partners. Remote pairing is the computer world's version of the long-distance relationship, with programmers sharing the same screen via the Internet.

San Francisco-based Square allows developers to choose when and how they want to pair. The company says about 15% of its engineers pair full time, while half do it occasionally.

"There's a joke that pairs, like fish and house guests, go rotten after three days," said Zach Brock, an engineering manager at Square and a former Pivotal employee.

Working out problems with a pairing partner can be a lot like working out problems with a significant other.

During one recent rough patch, Jamie Kite, a developer at Durham, N.C., software consultancy Relevance Inc., sat her partner down for a talk.

"Hey, it feels like we're driving in different directions," she recalls saying. "I'm putting on the gas and you're pressing the brake. What's going on here?"

The two went to a whiteboard to draw out their competing solutions. They eventually reached a compromise, said her partner, Jon Distas.

"It's like any relationship," Ms. Kite said. "If you don't talk

about the problems, it's not going to work."

When those timeouts don't solve the problem, partners at Relevance can turn to on-staff coaches who can help with counseling. "People who have been pairing a while, they'll start acting like old married couples," said Marc Phillips, one of the company's coaches.

People can be as much of a challenge as writing software. Bryan Kocol, chief technology officer at San Diego software consultant Drive Current, says one engineer at the company had a habit of talking through coding problems out loud. "Some people have idiosyncrasies like talking to themselves and that can drive the other person nuts," Mr. Kocol said.

Jon St. John, a software developer at Drive Current, says when he was paired with more experienced programmers, it could sometimes feel like the other person was pushy or not giving him a chance to finish his thoughts or develop his own ideas. He says more junior partners probably had the same problem with him.

After two years of asking the company's engineers to spend three hours a day pairing, Mr. Kocol phased out the practice in September.

"I don't think anyone misses it tremendously," Mr. St. John said.