

# 152 Where jobs are a lottery:

## Spain eurozone crisis:

By **Beth McLeod** The World Tonight, BBC Radio 4, Alameda



Unemployed electrician Jose Antonio won a street-sweeping job

**In a Spanish town where one in three people are without a job, getting one can depend quite literally on the luck of the draw.**

Alameda is surrounded by neat rows of olive trees that stretch for miles towards the distant sierra. Two hours east of Seville, the town is a maze of narrow streets lined by orange trees and whitewashed houses.

The mayor, Juan Lorenzo Pinera, seems to know most of the people he passes in the town square. Many of them shout greetings or stop to ask him a question. Since Spain's housing bubble burst, the thing most people want to know is whether he has any work going.

"The situation is very difficult," he says.

"All the men who were working in construction lost their jobs, and now many of them are no longer eligible for government help.

"We have families who have been thrown out of their homes and everyday people come to the town hall asking for food."

He has come up with an idea to share out the work that is available at the town hall: a jobs lottery.

### **'Amazing help'**

Those who are unemployed - 34% of the population of 5,600 people - can sign up to be in the running for jobs as cleaners, street sweepers or builders.

Each month eight women are selected at random to clean the town's public buildings.

They work four hours per day, and are paid 650 euros (£526; \$843) for the month.



More than 600 women have signed up to the cleaning lottery and many of them squeeze into a room at the town hall every month to watch the mayor pick folded slips of paper out of a cardboard box.

At the local school, three of this month's winners are sweeping and mopping the empty classroom floors.

Montse Solsona is a housewife and used to work in the fields during the olive harvest but she says the unemployed men in the town now do the olive-picking, so she has not had any paid work for two years.

"This cleaning job is an amazing help," she says.

"I only wish it was for longer. At the end of the month I'll go back to doing housework but we're struggling because my husband is also unemployed and our government benefits have been cut off."



Mayor Juan Lorenzo Pinera

introduced the lottery

Maria Jose Bastida's husband used to have a well-paid building job so she has never needed to work before. She was delighted when her name came up in the lottery.

"My husband has been unemployed for five years," she says.

"At the moment we get 426 euros each month in family allowances, and the money I earn cleaning will go towards our mortgage."

### **'Something to hope for'**

Men cannot sign up for the cleaning lottery.

Instead, 750 of them have put their names down for the four building jobs which were available each month. But since the summer this lottery has been suspended because there is no public money to fund building projects.



Men are now doing the traditional women's job of harvesting olives

The street-sweeping lottery is held every three months, and the names of more than 200 men and women are on the list. Jose Antonio was one of three people selected in the most recent draw.

He pushes his cart around the small square next to the town hall, sweeping up leaves and litter. He is a qualified electrician but has been out of work for five years.

"Working makes me feel like a man again," he says. "I have a small son and it's good to be able to provide for him, even if it is only for three months."

Signs hanging from palm trees high above the square read: "We should save people, not the banks!" and "Shame on you, politicians, we don't applaud your cuts".

The central government has enacted severe austerity measures and the subsidies that once flooded into the region from Madrid and the EU are drying up.

Which is why, the mayor says, the town's jobs lottery is so important.

"People here know that they won't have work for some time," he says.

"The economy is dead. They don't see a future. The lottery at least gives them something to hope for each month."

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