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“Spain—A great place to live, a terrible place to work?” Reading Report

In this elpais.com article, many are under the impression that Spain is a great for one's social and personal life, but not the best to economically prosper. One Spanish researcher in particular says “The clichés about Spain are more or less true...this is still a great place to live, but let's admit it, working practices are poor, we're not really professional about our work”. In response, Iberdrola head of human resources Ramón Castreana says he disagrees with many aspects of what the researcher said, and says that “Spaniards are highly professional, especially those who have gone to work abroad”. From my experience, I would say that I fall between the middle of those two viewpoints. I currently intern at ISDI, which is a company that trains other companies to integrate more digital technology into their business practices, and thus to become more competitive against other companies in their respective markets. ISDI also offers a Digital MBA program that trains younger professionals looking to become more familiar with digital methodologies and be a compelling job applicant. I think the fact that there are an increasing number of students per year enrolled in this program proves that there are people in Spain who want to be professional and accelerate at their jobs. I also work with the in-house training program for Ernst & Young, and I have noticed that all of their employees are professional in their attire and their attitude towards the program. However, the reason that I think the work practices in Spain are not as serious as the United States is because of the high amount of socialization that is integrated into the work day. The lunch breaks, for example, can take up to two hours on any given day. It is a cultural practice to socialize at lunch, so it is expected of us to all eat together if you take your lunch at the same time as others. My lunch break is one hour, but there have been times that I have exceeded this amount because I am eating lunch with my boss and other employees and I feel it would be rude of me to leave early just to get back to work. Also, there would be times that my boss would ask me to take a coffee break with her, and we would sit and talk for 30 minutes even though a long lunch break was taken that same day. I noticed that some people do leave work later to make up for a later start time and longer breaks, but I still think that frequent breaks throughout the day make Spaniards seem less productive. I agree with the head of the US-Spanish Chamber of Commerce, who says, “Productivity would increase if office hours were more rational...we have to move toward a more compact working day, by reducing lunch breaks”.

The article suggests that some structural reform is needed to increase productivity, not only in the hours but in the labor force's integration of women. A former public administration minister points out that “We still organize work around the needs of men, and we are ignoring that women are now part of the workforce. This is contributing to our low birth rate and our aging population”. I thought this was an interesting aspect to highlight, as it is already a conflict for women in America who need to work 9-5 jobs to provide for the family. I cannot imagine how it is like for women here, with work hours that can extend longer into the night. From this

statement, it seems that women are choosing jobs over having children which results in the low birth rate. It would be nice for women to not feel the need to choose between the two, and I think this is a problem that exists not only in Spain, but in America and other countries as well.