



**LA COLABORADORA**

*Un espacio de inteligencia colectiva*

## **LA COLABORADORA: THE FIRST P2P COWORKING FUELLED BY SHARED TALENT**

Everything started in 2013 during an informal dinner between Raúl Oliván, director of Zaragoza Activa and Javier Fernández, project coordinator of La Colaboradora. They both shared an extensive background in community organising in the city of Zaragoza and were experiencing the social hardships resulting of a brutal economic crisis in Spain: the massive destruction of jobs and an inexistent access to financial credit. For some time, Oliván and Fernández had the urge to enable an innovative space within Zaragoza Activa, a public ecosystem that promotes entrepreneurship and social innovation, that would empower Zaragoza's citizens towards self-employment by enabling collaboration among peers.

At the dinner, Oliván and Fernández brainstormed about the possibility of mixing the model of a P2P co-working space with the philosophy of a time bank community. The local council had space available in Zaragoza Activa – the steam room of an old sugar factory - and the city had plenty of free talent as thousands of well-prepared people were out of work. In this municipal context, La Colaboradora was born on May 30th, 2013 and 100 members – *collaborators* - joined the community.

Anyone who needs support in launching their project or improving their employability skills can join the community and use the space, from entrepreneurs and freelancers to non-profits or creative professionals. In exchange, they share 4 hours per month with other members of the community, either by providing services or know-how, or helping to run La Colaboradora by joining one of the 6 working groups: Communication, Participation, Dynamization, Business Consulting, Trainings and Time Bank. Each working group is led by a connector, also a collaborator, who together with the other five group connectors plus the project coordinator form the Steering Committee who holds open meetings once every two weeks. Together with the General Assembly they define the two main participation channels and lead the community on a day to day basis. They are also our main monitoring tools as meetings are open to all members and the minutes published and shared on our blog.

Two evaluations by the local council have led us to improve some practical issues regarding our original framework. We've measured the level of participation and permanence of our members and know that collaboration among peers works specially well during the initial stage of the members' projects, its first year. To make La Colaboradora an active space for collaboration we've learned that we need to rotate members and invite 80 new people to join us every year. In addition, we've

added other new areas like business consultancy, employability and individual trainings. La Colaboradora is an incredible experience and achievement for Zaragoza's government as it has generated an out of the box, self-governed community with a strong sense of public space ownership. Up to Feb 28th 2017, 300 collaborators have shared 9.800 hours. Out of these, 3.500 hours have been dedicated to run the project through the working groups. The collaborators have organised 592 activities - a great number of them open source trainings for the citizens of Zaragoza, with no cost for the city council or attendees - 210 new entrepreneurships are now running and we have organised 8 Social Challenges to support 3rd sector initiatives.

One of La Colaboradora's main achievements is its capacity to adapt to changes, seize new opportunities and overcome challenges. Since 2013, the project has been able to adapt to strong shortcuts in its activity budget without losing the collaborative essence. It has also empowered its community members and grabbed opportunities that have led to whole new approaches. A great example is the employability skills programme '25 Talents' that a community member - a human resources executive - put into place as one of our Social Challenges in 2014. The inspiring outcomes after two editions: 30 long-term unemployed (out of 50) found jobs and a whole new area dedicated to improving employability skills since 2016.

In 2015, La Colaboradora was recognized as a good practice of citizen driven innovation by the Secretary of Ibero-American States (SEGIB) and received the Quishare Award for the best P2P Finance Initiative in Spain. One year later in Milan, La Colaboradora received the Cooperation Eurocities Award 2016. A milestone in our story that tied the community stronger and supported Zaragoza Activa's aim of involving local communities in the search and application of solutions to their own challenges by introducing the richness of civic innovation in public services with bottom to top planning dynamics.

One of our members defined La Colaboradora as a school of collaboration. Other cities are already watching us and studying how to adapt our model to their local contexts. Being able to support and inspire their communities is a great responsibility which we proudly take and see as part of La Colaboradora's current priorities. We hope that being an URBACT Good Practice will support our collaborative philosophy and help us extend our effective model across Europe.