

Can I talk to a human? Spain presents customer service bill

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Tired of speaking to a machine when you call the bank or power company?

Spain's government wants to end those nerve-shattering, one-sided conversations with a computerized answering service by making it obligatory for companies to offer a real, flesh-and-blood [customer service](#) worker when so requested by a caller.

That is one among a battery of measures included in a [customer service bill](#) presented by Spain's left-wing coalition government on Tuesday. The bill will need the approval of Spain's Parliament before it can become law.

"Customer service is a critical part of our relations with consumers which unfortunately and far too often causes endless headaches for Spanish families because far too many companies create bureaucratic labyrinths to stop you from exercising your right to service," said Consumption Minister Alberto Garzón.

"These are difficulties which unfortunately waste an enormous amount of energy, time and money."

The bill would also seek to do away with long wait times by forcing companies to answer calls within three minutes.

Providers of basic services, such as utilities, phone and Internet, will have to offer customer service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All other companies will have to provide customer service during working hours. All customer complaints will have to be responded to within 15 days.

The law will apply to all utility providers regardless of their size and all other companies with more than 250 workers or whose business exceeds 50 million euros (\$53 million) a year.

Fines for breaking the law will range from 150 euros to 100,000 euros

(\$160-\$106,000).

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