

# ¿Qué? Podcast, Season 2, Episode 8

## Many thanks to listener Ryan V. for the transcript!

**Melissa:** And one of his first decisions has to be \*gibberish\*

**Simon:** Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English edition of EL PAÍS and this is *¿Qué?* a podcast from EL PAÍS that likes to dive headfirst into the swimming pool of Spanish news. Whether you're running with the bulls in Pamplona, kayaking up the Alto Tajo, or hurtling down the waterslides of Aquopolis, we are here for you. Confiad en nosotros. So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say "What on earth are the builders doing, if Barcelona's Sagrada Familia is still not finished?"

As ever, I'm here with my treasured colleague, Melissa Kitson. Hello Melissa.

**Melissa:** Hi Simon.

**Simon:** How are you?

**Melissa:** Good. Yeah. I'm excited.

**Simon:** About what?

**Melissa:** I don't know!

**Simon:** It's just good to be here. This is episode eight of season two. As always – sorry about this – but I call on you to please rate our podcast

**Sound bite:** Could you please??

**Simon:** And leave a comment on itunes or wherever you get the podcast. Plus, share it on social media. I've got a review here which is a fantastic review. It says "Excellent podcast. Don't miss it. A podcast that is de puta madre if you'll excuse my Spanish. Brilliant way into giving an insight into some of the stories in the news. Great presentation. Lively, witty and informative. Love it! Moved to Madrid four years ago and although learning Spanish, still need help like this at times. Could wish for it to be longer" - Mmmhmm Veronica – "or more frequent but I guess you guys have other work to do at EL PAÍS. Keep it going though. Us listeners will spread the news."

That was from Caza Wilson. Thank you very much. If you would like the podcast to be longer, please tweet @ThisIsOrteg which is the address of our producer Verónica Figueroa. I have been asking Verónica if we can have more time since we started the podcast so let's uh, let's get some tweets to Verónica about that.

**Verónica:** No!

**Simon:** And here's another one of those reviews on Itunes. "Splendido! An enjoyable, quick jaunt through the Spanish news that gives you the background on stories and then brings you right up to

speed. Tip Top!” and that was from Tears4Queers so thank you for that Tears4Queers! If you want to tweet me you can drop me a line directly @simoninmadrid or with the hashtag #QuePodcast. This was from Amy Bold “#QuePodcast is perfect for helping me to understand Spanish news before I move there in September. @melissakitson’s laugh is the best!”

That was a very nice comment. Thank you for that Amy Bold. Also, we turned up in a chat about Brexitcast. Brexitcast is this fantastic podcast from the BBC about – surprisingly enough – Brexit, and they were asking for transcriptions of the Brexitcast show, and Alice Palmer replied and said “The @elpaisinenglish podcast has some great ones!” and that is all thanks to our friend Ryan V, who is still – our listener Ryan V – sending us weekly transcripts, so if you do need a transcript, check back to the actual article on our website where the podcast is embedded.

Now, last week we were talking about weddings and wedding gifts, and it caused a lot of controversy about how much you should give to the bride and groom at a Spanish wedding. This was all based on an article that said you should give a lot of money! As much as €500 per couple. My wife Rosa ended up getting into it on Facebook about this issue with three of my friends. My wife was defending the practice – the Spanish practice – of asking for money at your wedding. The three friends of mine were all against. They were all three of them women, non-Spanish, and not married. Make of that what you will. Stuart Holland has been in touch again. He’s been in touch before. He said “two things I noticed at my first Spanish wedding. one: It was in the middle of nowhere, and second: It was very clear that I was socially required to strongly acknowledge the quality of the ham.” Definitely recognize that!

And of course we heard from our friend of the show Christ Thompson. He starts his email this week with “Rambling? Me?” That was because I may have referred to him as having sent a fairly rambling email last week. He was referring to the weddings again. He was talking about what is the average income of an English teacher? Probably about 8.50 per hour. Wedding cost then” says Chris “would be around 58 hours work for a close friend or 12 hours for the vaguest acquaintance. Here’s a suggestion for the next article – good excuses for avoiding friends’ weddings without causing offence.” And he signs off, I’m glad to say, with “un abrazo fuerte y viril. So we’re back to the manly hugs so I’m very glad to hear that.

And we’ll leave the last word to @grahamhunt or @grayhunt. He just says about the wedding gifts “Better to have no mates.” Well there you go. Can’t go wrong there. If you never get invited to a wedding, you never have to shell out, but you would be missing out on a lot of fun I would suggest.

All right, so, our first topic this week. Since Saturday, we have a new mayor in Madrid. And already he’s shaking things up. So, tell us what’s going on Melissa.

**Melissa:** Yeah, so, on Saturday, the right-wing Popular Party took control of Madrid City Hall, with the support of Ciudadanos (Citizens) and the far-right Vox.

### **Sound bite**

José Luis Martínez-Almeida is now the new mayor of Madrid and one of his first decisions has been to freeze the low-emissions zone in the center of the city known as “Madrid Central.” Madrid Central was introduced by the city’s former mayor, Manuela Carmena, of the leftist Ahora Madrid party at the end of last year. The pioneering program made 472 hectares of the city off-limits to traffic, except for local residents and public transportation. The goal of these traffic restrictions was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the city center. And it has been meeting this goal. In May, 14 of the 24 monitoring stations

in the Spanish capital recorded the lowest levels of pollution in a decade. But the new right-wing local government has announced it is putting Madrid Central on hold.

### **Sound bite**

Starting on July 1, cars that violate the rules will not be fined. Now, there is division within the new administration about what happens next. During the election campaign, Almeida had promised to scrap Madrid Central and go back to an earlier traffic-restriction system based on priority for residents. But deputy mayor Begoña Villacís, from Ciudadanos, says “it would not be good policy to reverse all of Madrid Central.”

### **Sound Bite**

Meanwhile, Vox, unsurprisingly, wants to ditch the program entirely.

### **Sound Bite**

The argument is that Madrid Central is inefficient, chaotic and bad for business. But getting rid of Madrid Central not only harms public health, it also puts Spain in the firing line of the European Union. The Madrid Central project was instrumental in sparing Spain legal action by the European Commission last year. So, if Madrid Central is ditched, Spain could face fines from Brussels. Over 280 European cities have introduced initiatives to restrict traffic in order to improve air quality. Madrid however, looks set to become the first European city to scrap a measure aimed at curbing pollution.

**Simon:** Yes, so, I think it was Ryan V who complained all those weeks ago about the lack of uh, the lack of-

**Melissa:** Objectivity

**Simon:** Objectivity in our podcasts. So brace yourself Ryan because you're in for a slightly bumpy ride here. This is really, really depressing isn't it because Madrid is basically on the cusp of being the first European city to reverse an anti-pollution scheme. Not the kind of you know, reform it or introduce stricter measures to combat the pollution but actually to reverse it, which just seems insane and just seems really just based on the worst kind of politics whereby it's just like ok, we're going to come into office and we're just gonna roll back everything that my predecessor did. \*mmhmm\* Donald Trump. Do you know what I mean? It just sounds like that kind of approach.

On bad pollution days in Madrid, as you drive into the center from the – as you drive in your diesel car – from one of the ring roads you can actually see this kind of like, cloud of gunk just hanging over the city. They've even got a name for it. They call it the *boina* which is – a boina is one of those berets they wear up in the Basque Country. Let's think about what the last PP administration did to combat the problem. They started moving the measuring stations, the pollution measuring stations. I mean, that was their thing. It was like “oh let's put a measuring station in a hole, then it won't pick up on the, on the pollution.”

And we've got this great scheme – and as always with schemes like this, everyone complains, and all the local residents are up in arms, and the business people are saying “oh we're never gonna get our deliveries anymore.” But in the stories that we ran about this, the main group that sprung up in opposition to the Madrid Central plan, they've already changed their tune. They're already saying “Well,

it's not as bad as we thought it was gonna be and maybe we could just, we need to change the name" I think they said. Everything's fine with the scheme but it needs a new name. A kind of bizarre take on it, because they were concerned that their delivery vans weren't gonna be able to get to the uh, you know to bring them their supplies.

But as I've said here and I've said on the, talking on talk radio in the past, it does seem insane you know until Madrid Central, you could drive down the Gran Via. Any traffic could drive down the Gran Via. I don't think there's any other major city in Europe where you can drive through all the main thoroughfares with no restrictions. So now the question is, what are they going to agree on, and what's going to happen? As you said Melissa, we've got the Popular Party and Ciudadanos (Citizens) in coalition in the city council but Vox holds key votes so Vox again is going to be key for getting things done, getting stuff passed. So these three parties, they're going to have to agree, you know, and not just in Madrid City Hall but all over the country, in, you know, regional governments, and you know, and going back to the December elections in Andalucia and Andalucia as well, which is exactly the same situation where you've got the PP, Citizens and Vox trying to get on. And I wonder if we're sort of heading towards a period of, well, certainly lots of political conflict but also quite a lot of stalemate as well, because I think the key problem is going to be between Citizens and Vox. Citizens really doesn't want to do any kind of public deals with Vox, but they're going to have to do something. They're going to have to bend some way or otherwise we're going to be going back to elections.

Also, we're recording this on Wednesday. We just got the news – the very sad news – this morning that we have confirmed victim #1,000 of domestic violence in Spain since records began in the year 2003. And what's that got to do with this story? Well, the other first thing that the new PP administration in Madrid City Hall has done is to take down a load of posters with anti-domestic violence slogans on them that were hanging outside certain council buildings in the city, and as we've discussed in previous podcasts, Vox is very much in favor of rolling back legislation aimed at combating domestic violence because it says that it discriminates against men. So, yes, slightly sort of worrying start depending on what side of the political spectrum you are on, in terms of the new city council in Madrid.

Alright, now, let's move on. We're going to look at just briefly two interesting stories that caught our eye. Two stories that are very "Qué!?" Melissa's going to take the first one, so tell about this story Melissa.

**Melissa:** So, Spain's top soccer league La Liga has been fined €250,000 by Spain's AEPD data protection agency for failing to inform users about how its cell phone app was being used. The La Liga app provides Spanish soccer results online and also provide information about First and Second Division teams. But it also has another function. If you granted the app permission to use the microphone on your cell phone, you were unwittingly helping La Liga to crack down on bars and other establishments that were broadcasting soccer games via a pirated signal. So, how did it do this? Like Shazam which identifies songs, the La Liga app could detect the sound of television broadcasts. The app also tracked your geolocation. So if you were watching a game in a bar, it would look up where you were and check if that place was paying the proper cable television fees. And you would be none the wiser. This, according to the AEPD, is a serious breach of transparency rules. As well as the fine, the data protection agency has told La Liga it must let users know when the microphone is being activated. But La Liga has said it will appeal the fine. It claims the technology was implemented for a legitimate reason, arguing piracy costs it around €400 million a year. For those who have downloaded the app, La Liga has said the microphone

function will stop being used at the end of this season on June 30th. But while this function may no longer work, the organization has warned it is continuing to test and implement new technologies to fight against piracy.

**Simon:** I think that's amazing! I don't think they should be fined for this, I think they should be getting a prize for this. I mean, you know, it's technology that basically can detect, if you're in a bar, it can detect if you're listening to a soccer match and if there's the noise of a bar going on as well. So, it's not like it was, you know, if you're in your house it wouldn't kind of ping. Oh, someone's in a bar, and then they cross check it, you know, your location at the time according to your cell phone, and then detect if the bar was emitting, was broadcasting a pirated signal. You know, I think that's amazing!

**Melissa:** It is! It's very sneaky, but it is like, it's quite amazingly clever.

**Simon:** Absolutely, yeah. And it's not like they were recording your conversations. It's not like they could play back the audio. It was an acoustic fingerprint, a bit like how Shazam works. It's not like Alexa, she's listening to you (laughs) at all times and spying on you.

### **Sound Bite**

**Simon:** Alright, yeah and the story I want to talk about this week is a bit of an ad for Netflix but last week the streaming platform released its first original Spanish documentary. It's called, in English *The Alcàsser murders*. In Spanish *El Caso Alcàsser*. And it's about a really famous, and – well notorious – and really grisly triple murder that happened in the early 1990s in Spain. It happened in '92 which was a time when Spain was really flying high. You know, we'd had the Barcelona Olympics, we'd had the expo in Seville. Then in November, all that kind of good feeling came crashing down when these three girls who were, you know, doing something that was very common at the time in this small Valencian village, they went to a discotheque hitchhiking and they disappeared on the way. This sparked this massive search to try and find them, huge media interest, and then 75 days later their bodies were discovered and two men were accused of committing the crimes. One of them disappeared as the police came to arrest him and has never been found and the other one served 21 years in prison. So basically the documentary is very very well done. It covers, you know, what happened at the time. It's got extensive interviews with some of the main protagonists of the story including the father of one of the victims, and it throws up loads of questions about the case, about the Civil Guard investigation, but also really interestingly it throws up lots of questions about the ethics of what the Spanish media was doing at the time, because this was at a time when the new private networks were really at their infancy so Telecinco, Antena 3 and the coverage of the case became extremely morbid. All of the victims' families were there, and half of the village was there, half of the town I should say, and it was a live broadcast which was really just exploiting the very fresh grief of these families. It's quite an extraordinary thing to see now – what is it? – 26, 27 years on. And so yeah, it really examines the role of the media. And what they say is that, in Spain, this was really the birth of what they call *telebasura* basically trash TV. I started watching it Saturday morning. I woke up early and just sort of ended up binge watching through the day, finished by the afternoon. Five episodes, about five hours. So I would definitely recommend that you check that out if you've got Netflix.

Alright, so we shall wrap up episode 8 there. My name is Simon Hunter

**Melissa:** I'm Melissa Kitson.

**Simon:** And this was *¿Qué?* a podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to those of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation.

This is an EL PAÍS production, it was recorded right here in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our producer Verónica Figueroa, and you can listen to it on your favorite podcast app.

You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant. We'll be back next week with a brand new host of issues. Thank you for listening, adiós!