

# ¿Qué? Podcast, Season 3, Episode 8

**Simon:** Veronica could I have a bit more volume in my headphones please?...Thank you very much, that's better.

**Melissa:** Nooo!

**Simon:** Yeah sorry I just really love the sound of my own voice \*laughter\*

## Music intro

**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 is brought to you by the kind of people that the Vox party blames for all of Spain's ills.

Whether you are a rojo, a republicano or a plain old facha, we are here for you, agitaremos tu bandera!

So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say,

**“If we have to have another election, I'm going to resign!!”**

Today is Tuesday, November 12, 2019 and I am here as ever with the hardest working woman in Spanish journalism, Melissa Kitson. How are you Melissa?

**Melissa:** Hi, good thanks

**Simon:** Yeah? What's going on in your world this week?

**Melissa:** I had to think about this cos I wanted to have a prepared answer

**Simon:** Haha oh no I like it when you go “errrr..um I don't know what's going on!” \*laughter\*

**Melissa:** I've started writing a short story for children for an English language text book

**Simon:** No way! That's awesome

**Melissa:** It's like 600 words so it's very little

**Simon:** Oh wow and what's it about?

**Melissa:** It's about a giant

**Simon:** Really?!

**Melissa:** A clumsy giant

**Simon:** And what's he called?

**Melissa:** I think I named him Borja

**Simon:** Borja, nice! Brilliant, that's great! Well, I can't wait...will you come round and read it to my children?

**Melissa:** Of course

**Simon:** Fantastic, well I'll be thrilled to hear that!

Now let's start with a bit of correspondence. As always, we encourage you to get in touch, you can find me on twitter @simoninmadrid you can also use the #quepodcast - which I'm very pleased to say some of our more faithful listeners have been using recently - or you can email EnglishEdition@elpais.es

Tell us where you're listening from, why you're listening and suggest topics for us. And please go and review us on itunes or wherever you get your podcasts from and share this episode on social media! Get the word out please!

So we heard from our podcast hero Mr Alan Jones. He says, "A particularly strong episode of #QuePodcast this week, I thought." - Thank you Alan.

"My apparently context-free comment about politicians' qualifications was actually a comment about the El Pais article on Rocio Monasterio who was acting as an architect before being properly qualified." - Yeah sorry I missed that, that was so obvious Alan. But yeah that's a good one.

I also heard from Greg Gibson. He said, "Good luck watching the election coverage tonight. Hope the graphics are better than for the debate!" - and he included a picture of Max Headroom, do you remember Max Headroom?

**[Sound bite of Max Headroom advert: "Max, Max Headroom...Max...He's a computer generated person based on you..."]**

That's before your time Melissa, but yeah that really made me laugh.

Also, we heard from mythical sea creature Chris Thompson, he texted us while we were doing our mad election coverage on Sunday night and said, "And what are Ms. Kitson's views on Mr. Abascal's physique? #quepodcast" - \*laughter\*

**Melissa:** Look, I just can't get past the sort of xenophobia to appreciate his looks

**Simon:** And also mythical sea creature Chris Thompson got back in touch later on in the week, he said, "Reading the piece about Spaniards and their (lack of) language skills. Smiling. Got to the bit about Brits being worse at foreign languages and snorted with laughter. Hence the need for the #quepodcast" - So thank you very much for those messages Chris.

We were talking last week about the debate and how bad the lighting was and we got a lovely text from Sarah Maria Brech, she simply says, "\*\*\*tweet in German\*\*" - haha I'm sure you'll all agree with that

**Melissa:** Yes definitely

**Simon:** Yeah, thanks for that Sarah that's great.

And then we heard from @rriggstx, he says, "@simoninmadrid, with the approaching holiday season, how about a quick #QuePodcast discussion on the local non-tradition traditions? For instance, I've been witnessing the annual pilgrimage to the department store El Corte Ingles to stock up on 'free' gift wrap. Are there others?" - My one would be going to 'Cortylandia,' do you know what Cortylandia is?

**Melissa:** No?

**Simon:** Well, again it involves El Corte Ingles, outside they put up these huge kind of christmas sort of scene with all these figures that move and then every hour or two hours or whatever there's some music and they sing and blah blah blah. And it's this massive tradition! We went one Christmas but oh my god, I'm not going again. It was just really packed with people. I mean it's fine but Mateo was definitely not very impressed by it \*laughter\*!

But yeah do get in touch with us if you've got any Christmas traditions that you've noticed or holiday traditions. I guess the other one is, you know, King's Day is such a big thing here isn't it, the parade. Anything for you too?

**Melissa:** I can't think of anything, we don't really...

**Simon:** Well that's the real spirit of Christmas there from Melissa Kitson \*laughter\* Thank you very much!

Alright so, obviously, what are we going to talk about this week? Only one thing to talk about, and that is the November 10 General Election. So Melissa, why don't you tell us what happened on Sunday night.

**Melissa:** Around 37 million Spaniards went to the polls on Sunday to vote in the fourth general election in four years.

Spain's caretaker Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, called the repeat election on Sunday to break the political blockade, but the results of the vote have only worsened the stalemate. Instead of winning more seats, Sánchez's Socialist Party lost three, while the right made big gains.

The conservative Popular Party climbed back from its worst result in April to claim 88 seats – a rise of 22. But the biggest winner of the night was the far-right party Vox which jumped from 24 seats to 52 and is now the third-largest force in Congress.

**[Sound bite from Santiago Abascal: “Hoy somos la tercera fuerza política de España! Tenemos 53 diputados! Hemos logrado estas elecciones, ser el partido que más sube en votos en este año!”]**

The rise of Vox and the PP came at the cost of Ciudadanos, or Citizens, which suffered a crushing defeat at Sunday's polls.

**[Sound bite Albert Rivera: “Y lo que hoy, hemos tenido, es un mal resultado sin paliativos y sin excusas. Esos es lo que tenemos hoy en las urnas.”]**

The party lost 47 seats to be left with just 10. **[Sound bite Rivera: “La primera decisión que tomado y la comunicado ejecutivas es que omite la presidente Ciudadanos.”]** The dismal performance led to the resignation of Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera who admitted: “bad results belong to the leader.”

**[Sound bite Rivera: Los líderes tenemos que saber que los éxitos son de todos. Pero los líderes también saben, y sabemos que los mal resultados son de líder.”]**

The anti-austerity party Unidas Podemos also lost ground, falling from 42 seats to 35. There are now 17 different political parties in Congress and Sánchez must work out how to form a majority that will allow him to get sworn back in as Prime Minister.

The new panorama will make forming a government in Spain even more complicated....

## **RECORD SCRATCH**

**Simon:** So, podcast fans, today's Wednesday 13 November 2019.

This is future Simon interrupting past Melissa because we literally finished our podcast recording yesterday having complained about how we were going to be stuck with lots of stalemate and blah blah blah.

I went off to eat my little microwave lunch and by the time I came back we had a coalition deal!

So, Melissa, future Melissa, interrupting past Melissa, give us the updated version of what happened \*laughter\*

**Melissa:** Yes, well past Melissa and now current/future Simon, we heard the surprise announcement that Unidos Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias and Sánchez had struck a preliminary deal to form a coalition government.

**[Sound bite Pedro Sánchez: “Ustedes saben que el acuerdo que hoy estamos presentando no fue posible tras las anteriores elecciones aunque estuvimos muy cercado de poder lograrlo. Somos conscientes de la decepción que ellos supuso entre los votantes progresistas...”]**

What they had been unable to do in six months, they achieved in just one hour.

The agreement is very similar to the one that had failed after the April election and prompted Sánchez to call a repeat election.

Unidas Podemos will have three ministries, but this time Iglesias will be a deputy prime minister. After months of failed negotiations, Sánchez and Iglesias signed the deal in front of the press and embraced.

But the story does not end here. Sánchez will still need to reach a majority that would allow him to be sworn into office as prime minister at an investiture vote.

Both Ciudadanos and the Popular Party have refused to support the coalition deal. Ciudadanos has called the agreement “disastrous” for Spain, while PP leader Pablo Casado called for Sánchez’s resignation.

**[Sound bite Pablo Casado: “Es importante que Sánchez se vaya porque es el tapón a cualquier lógica de pactos que desbloqueen la situación en un entorno constitucionalista pero también es urgente que el partido socialista sensato vuelva.”]**

This means Sánchez will need a Catalan separatist party to vote in favor or abstain from an investiture vote. But it is not clear what the Catalan parties may demand in exchange for their support.

## Music interlude

**Simon:** So, nothing like having 52 fascists in Congress to get the ball rolling.

The question that everyone's been asking is, "If it couldn't be done in five or six months, depending on how you count the time between the last elections and this new one, how on earth could it happen in just 48 hours?"

And we've got Spain's new favorite bromance with Pedro and Pablo hugging it out yesterday after their little joint press conference, which they didn't take any questions I should point out.

So we've just been through this absolutely absurd process. We had a completely unnecessary election. It was a massive gamble by Pedro Sánchez, I mean he must be looking for new advisors because the thinking in the Moncloa, in the Socialist party was that this was going to be a fantastic move, that this was gonna bolster their support, that they were gonna walk away with more seats - as it is they lost three seats and, as I mentioned, we've got Vox has gone from 24 seats to 52, and all of this was completely predictable.

We knew that we were gonna get the sentence from the Supreme Court trial of the pro-independence leaders from Catalonia, we knew that they were probably going to jail, and we knew that there were going to be a load of disturbances as a result of it.

The situation that we've got now is that Vox is going to have a new weight in congress, it'll have a role on the speaker's committee, a more prominent place in the chamber. Do you remember the stunt they pulled on their debut? When they went and sat on the Socialist...they sat right behind the prime minister, kind of squatting in those chairs.

They're going to be able to field more questions towards Sánchez if this deal eventually does go through and Sánchez is voted back in as prime minister. And it was just this massive mistake at this televised debate for the candidates not to go after Abascal more, Santiago Abascal, the leader of Vox and to question him more.

It's just fiendishly complicated now, as you were explaining Melissa, the mathematics in terms of how this is going to work. And if this is going to unblock the situation then it's great that the Socialists and Podemos have come to this deal, but we're by no means out of the woods yet.

If they couldn't do it when they had the numbers that they had after April then it's going to be even more difficult now because they are going to have to secure abstentions, they've got to rustle up the support of lots of little parties.

I mean, parties like Más País, the offshoot of Podemos, have already said that they're happy about this. The Canaries coalition is a bit on the fence at the moment, saying that maybe they

will, maybe they won't depending on what the agenda is of the governing deal, if it includes issues covering the Canary Islands.

So, first of all Sánchez and Iglesias have to rustle up the support of these little parties to even get near...in fact, they still won't get near a majority, they'll still be short of a majority. So then in the second round, this famous second round of the investiture vote - where you only need more yes votes than no - that's where they're going to have to count on abstentions.

And, of course, for the PP and for Citizens, any kind of deal with nationalist parties, i.e. Catalan nationalist parties or Basque nationalist parties such as EH bildu, even if it's abstention on the part of those parties is anathema for the Popular Party and Citizens.

But then if there's some agreement that needs to be secured with the nationalist parties in order for this to go through, well that's just again another stick for the opposition to beat Pedro Sánchez with. I mean, this was kind of what brought about the refusal to back the budget in the first place, which then led to the election, because Sánchez was seen as doing deals with pro-Catalan independence parties.

Citizens have actually come out and said that they would rather see a Socialist party and Popular Party and Citizens pact, which...\*laughter\* Veronica is shaking her head!

So, yeah that's off the cards and, in fact, actually I think one of the second...one of the high up deputies in the Popular Party actually came out and said the same thing as well at the meeting of the party's National Executive which apparently was a proposal that didn't really, it was just sort of met with a, "meh," I mean no one said yes or no, that's a great idea or that's a terrible idea.

But yeah, it does seem very unlikely. And what this does now, this actually takes the pressure off Pablo Casado, the leader of the Popular party, Casado can now, quite happily, vote against Sánchez's investiture in both the first and the second vote and he won't be the man who stops a government being formed. It won't be the popular parties "fault." So it kind of lets him off the hook because if it had been...if this hadn't of happened...no party's going to want to be the party stop a government being formed now and force Spain back to a fifth, A FIFTH general election in, what would it be? Well, four years and a bit basically.

So, yeah pretty extraordinary news, again going back to Vox, we've got this fantastic tweet from the EL PAÍS gender correspondent Pilar Álvarez, and she just said, "53 deputies [from Vox] to advocate that marriage is only for a man and a woman, that homosexuals should not adopt, that gender violence doesn't exist, that media outlets can be vetoed, that abortion should not be on demand, and that everything is the fault of foreign minors..." - which pretty much, nicely sums up their main campaigning points.

The reference to media outlets being vetoed is the fact that, after an editorial that we published in EL PAÍS last week, we published it in Spanish and English, criticising the political leaders for not having gone after Abascal during the debate, Vox decided to veto all media outlets from the Grupo PRISA, to which EL PAÍS belongs, from their election events, which actually the electoral commission in Spain found that they could not do that.

But they still managed to...Our poor old colleague Virginia who does a lot of the explainers for EL PAÍS video, she was literally locked out in the cold outside the Vox headquarters on Sunday night because they wouldn't let her in! \*laughter\* Sorry, I shouldn't laugh, but she did at least see the funny side when she was talking to me about it the next day.

We got a tweet from James Jones who is @Illustrious8 on twitter, he says, "Hi Simon - did anyone get to the bottom of why Rivera didn't do a deal with Sanchez in April? Seems like quite the missed opportunity." - I just went to ask our political correspondent who covers Ciudadanos, Elsa García de Blas, this question. Elsa is quite often on TVE in the morning. Elsa explained to me that basically Ciudadanos went into the April elections promising not to do a deal with the Socialist party because in Ciudadanos opinion the PSOE was just too close to the Catalan nationalist parties.

So I guess on that basis, the fact that if you go into an election promising not to do something and then if you were to turn around after the election and do it, i.e. a pact with the Socialist party, would be pretty bad. You would have lost a lot of political capital.

What else to talk about? Yeah, just a funny anecdote that we saw just now with Rosalía, the Catalan popstar as she is, but I got in trouble on twitter for calling her that recently, but I was just pointing out the fact that she was Catalan.

She probably had the most insightful summary of Sunday's elections in this tweet, which just simply reads, "Fuck Vox." - \*laughter\* Which, Vox are never shy to get into a barney on social media - they responded with a picture of her on a private jet, They said, "Only millionaires with private jets like you, can allow themselves the luxury of not having a homeland."

### **[Sound bite of a song by Rosalía]**

Yeah, so that was their response to Rosalía. But you know, good to see the youth of Spain, cos Rosalía is, what is she? 26 or something...Come on stato you should know this! Oh, she's in her mid 20's anyway. Good to see her wading into the political debate.

### **Music interlude**

**Simon:** All right, so exciting times. We were going to take a week off the podcast next week \*laughter\* but I think we might have to come back, depending on what happens in the next week because, alright they've done this pre-deal, but let's not forget that this is just a pre-deal.

We're looking at the first ever coalition government, well certainly since the return of democracy, and the first time that a party to the left of the Socialist party is going to be in government in Spain.

So, exciting times, lets see what happens next time and lets see if we can get through the rest of the day without having to come back in and re-record this podcast

**Simon:** Alright, let's wrap up it up then, hopefully, the eighth episode of season three!

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 newsroom in Madrid, 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, adios!

**Melissa:** Ciao!