

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

Getting Spanish Citizenship is an Expensive Business

Last year, I made a documentary film called 'What Are You Still Doing Here?' In it, I interviewed eleven of my colleagues and friends, all of whom have lived here in the Basque Country for a dozen or more years. I wanted to know why they hadn't returned 'home', why they were still here. It was a question I had been **pondering** for a while and I needed their help to finally answer it for myself. In the end, the answer was nuanced but simple: we are all still here because this is now our home.

After twenty-five years living, loving and working in Vitoria-Gasteiz, I feel I have come to a crossroads in my life. My passport reflects my British childhood but expresses nothing about my longer life as an adult in Spain. I'm not a citizen of the country I live in, the one I consider home, and this doesn't feel right.

Most people in Vitoria identify me as English, people in England do too. Yet they do it in different ways. Perhaps this poem by Ijeoma Umebinyuo can explain:

*"So, here you are, too foreign for home, too foreign for here.
Never enough for both."*

So how do I identify myself? Well, as 'Anglo-Alavés' (or 'Wolvo-Vitoriano' if you prefer). This might make some people laugh but it's no joke when it comes to official matters. Being 'Anglo-Alavés' means nothing to governments and institutions. Right now, I'm a British citizen who is a permanent, tax-paying resident of Spain who isn't allowed to vote in the elections of either country. (See [this WEP article](#) for more details.)

What's the solution to this conundrum? **Apply** for Spanish **citizenship**. Forge a new official identity, regain my right to participate in the democratic process and enjoy my hard-earned retirement in my adopted home when the time eventually comes. I'm not abandoning my Britishness, but, as I wish to move on to the next stage of my life, I will have to renounce it. But before I get to that dramatic moment, first I have to work through ten steps of bureaucracy. And then wait (up to a year). No problem, I'm a patient person. But there's one thing that isn't mentioned in the list of tasks they give you: the cost.

Let's go through the requisites. I need a valid resident's card for Spain and my British passport. **Check**. No charge. I need my original birth certificate (check) that has been translated and validated, a process that costs around €60 (paid to a 'traductor jurado'). Next are certificates of my criminal **records** (or lack of) in Spain and Britain, once again translated and validated (£90+translation=180€). I also need to pass the DELE Spanish language exam (€130-€205 and a three-month wait

01/10/20 / Keyword: Citizenship

After living in the Basque Country for 26 years, ECP coach Rob has decided to apply for Spanish citizenship. In this article, he explains that it's not as easy as you might think.



Useful vocabulary

citizenship: the status of being a citizen of a particular country

to ponder: to think about something carefully

to apply: to make a formal application or request

check: an exclamation of assent or agreement

record: something that contains evidence (or a recollection) of past information

to struggle: to have difficulty to do something

tax returns: a taxpayer's annual statement of income and personal circumstances

hefty: large and heavy

Let's chat about that!

1. Have you ever been interviewed for TV, radio etc?
2. Describe foreign people that you know. Why are they here?
3. If you went to live in another country, would you consider changing nationality? Why (not)?
4. Do you think that the cost of attaining Spanish citizenship is too high? Too complicated?
5. Do you think Rob should give up his British citizenship? Give your reasons.

LIVE! English Events

Come and socialise in English!

<u>Coffee Saturdays</u>	<u>Sports Dive</u>	<u>Cinema Nights</u>
1st Saturday 11:00	2nd Friday 18:30	Last Friday 19:30
3rd Oct	16th Oct	30th Oct
7th Nov	13th Nov	27th Nov
5th Dec	11th Dec	Not in Dec
9th Jan	15th Jan	29th Jan
6th Feb	12th Feb	26th Feb
6th Mar	12th Mar	26th Mar
Not in April	16th Apr	30th April
8th May	14th May	28th May
5th Jun	11th Jun	25th Jun



for the result), and the CCSE Spanish constitutional and sociocultural test (€85). Finally, there are typical documents such as my proof of address and my marriage certificate. All these have to be uploaded to an online platform with the final proof of payment of the €102 administration fee. If we add all those costs up, the total is around €600. I have savings and I'm currently employed but, that is a significant amount of money and I'm sure many will **struggle** to find those funds.

This exaggerated cost raises a question: If the Spanish state requires me to prove I speak the language and 'understand' the culture, couldn't it just look at the last twenty-six years of my **tax returns**? And how can an administration justify charging

hundreds of euros to do obligatory exams on top of the already **hefty** administration fee? Oh, well. Best not complain. Not if I want Felipe to come to my 'swearing of the constitution' ceremony to witness me renounce his distant cousin Elizabeth!

Written by ECP coach Rob Hextall

What Are You Still Doing Here?

A documentary film by Robert Kieron Hextall. Watch the interviews [here!](#)



Still Here 1 John
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 4 Angela
EnglishCoachingCoop



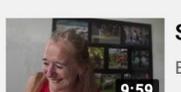
Still Here 7 Ali
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 2 Pól
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 5 The Hags
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 8 Rebecca
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 3 Darren
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 6 Yolanda
EnglishCoachingCoop



Still Here 9 Kez & the answer
EnglishCoachingCoop

Watch the interviews and answer these questions:

1. Why did they first come here?
2. Why did they stay here?
3. What do they enjoy about living here?
4. What comparisons do they make with 'home'?