



## INCREASING COMPETITION

# Taxi driver protest



↑ Taxi drivers, especially in the south of Tenerife and Gran Canaria, are joining together to defend themselves against the illegal competition of private 'hobby drivers'

**Illegal competition has been making life difficult for taxi drivers in the Canary Islands for a while.**

The borough of Adeje has decided to tackle the problem head on, with members of the community starting a campaign to inform users that they can only travel safely and, above all, in compliance with the law, in legally run taxis. One of the main problems is the number of 'hobby drivers' who, for example, offer to take people to the airport, often at half the cost of a taxi or less. Some drivers have even been spotted trying to solicit custom from people waiting at bus stops.

One licensed taxi driver recently confirmed that he had seen two drivers in particular, using a Dacia and a Peugeot, pick up passengers several times illegally. Many

of the drivers are from the Islands or the Peninsula or are migrants from North Africa and South America. However, often in more upscale cars such as Mercedes or Infiniti, for example, it is mainly Russians, Germans and the English who offer cheap airport transfers. President of the taxi drivers of Arona, Pedro Luis Hernández, recently declared. "It is not a question of racism that we take action against these drivers, but of legality. These drivers are generating income that is not taxed, in vehicles that are illegal as they do not have the correct insurance cover either." Hernández went on to give the example of a normal taxi ride from Las Galletas to Los Cristianos, which costs €12.60 during the day and €14.10 at night. "If someone is offered the same ride for €2, of course there is no

question that he will accept it," he added.

The people who are losing out from this situation are the public transport companies and taxi drivers, as well as the tax office as the income is not declared. It has now become so out of control that taxi drivers in the south of Tenerife are demanding more targeted police controls. However, these difficulties are not confined to Tenerife. In Gran Canaria, Raimundo Vega, president of the taxi cooperative in Playa del Inglés, has released various warnings about the spread of illegal 'taxi' rides and has partly blamed the lack of public transport for their spread.

Taxi professionals also see another danger in the so-called 'VTCs' (Transport Vehicles with Driver). This description allows the taxi license to

be legally circumvented, with companies such as Uber and Cabify already operating on the Spanish Peninsula, offering the service via an app. Using a smartphone you can simply order a driver, usually located nearby, to take you to your desired destination. Payment is also usually made via the smartphone. The introduction of this company in the Canary Islands in the near future is feared by many.

At the moment, there are 251 licensed taxis in Arona that take care of the transport of around 100,000 inhabitants and holidaymakers, and they, and their colleagues, are genuinely worried about the possibility of VTC companies settling here. With regard to this, the island's taxi drivers demanded equal opportunities on the free market at a recent working meeting in Santa Cruz. For Hernández, this means that incoming drivers must adhere to the same rules as those who are already working here legally. For example, only being allowed to pick up passengers from official points. They would also like to see limits imposed, such as one VTC car per 30 conventional taxis, making competition more manageable. In Arona, for example, only eight or nine of these vehicles would be allowed to offer their services. Generally speaking, professional drivers have been demanding greater protection for their activities and more controls from politicians and the police for a while, but there is an increasing note of desperation creeping in, as the threat to their traditional livelihoods increases. ■

## FEIGNED RAPE

## Woman lies to hide fling

**A Norwegian holidaymaker, named only as I.B., may live to regret her actions during a holiday with her partner in the south of Gran Canaria at the end of March.**

The woman was found to have been flirting with a young British man in a bar in Puerto Rico, including kissing and touching every time her partner was not around, to the point that, when her other half visited the toilet, she left the bar with the Brit. Travelling in a luxury car that the young Briton had rented, the two apparently indulged in sexual activities. Unfortunately, worried about her whereabouts, the boyfriend had contacted the Guardia Civil and was waiting with officers when the woman returned from being with her lover. Seemingly in search of a way to get out of the tricky situation, she said the Englishman had raped her. She explained that at first she said 'no', but because she was alone with him in the car and locked in, she gave in due to fear. However, her story did not add up. Police officers checked the video footage from the bar and shopping centre in which it was located. On it, the two could be seen flirting, leaving the bar together, and walking through the Puerto Rico shopping centre to the car whilst kissing and touching each other intimately. On the way back to the bar, they continued kissing and walked hand in hand through the shopping centre. A few metres before the entrance to the nightclub they said goodbye to each other. There were apparently no signs of violence or coercion at all.

Therefore, the Guardia Civil filed a complaint in absentia against the Norwegian, who had already returned home, at the court of San Bartolomé de Tirajana for the offence of false reporting. This is punishable by between six months and two years imprisonment or a fine of three to 24 months' imprisonment. The penalty depends on the seriousness of the offence and the type of false accusations made against third parties. ■



↑ A sex adventure on holiday, or any at all, must never end in the false accusation of a third party

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