

Around the year 2000, the Spanish PTT (*Correos*) regularly issued vending machine stamps with beautiful images of various subjects such as old cars, motorcycles, paintings, landscapes, famous Spaniards, etc. They came from machines which were operated by clerks in all Spanish post offices.



One of those designs was a stylized representation of Spain, released in June 2001, exactly 20 years ago. Millions of them have been used. I have put some of those stamps together and came to some interesting discoveries.

First of all, there were two types of vending machines in operation, the imprint of which differed. The Epelsa machine printed the value with thin stars and digits, initially with the imprint in pesetas. The abbreviation PTS was printed low and high. Four, five or six positions were available for the value (*fig.1*).



*Fig. 1*

The second vending machine was known as Mobba. It printed thick stars and digits (four positions). PTS occurs only on the bottom line (*fig.2*).



*Fig.2*

As of 1 January 2002, the print was with the €-sign. These stamps are known with three and four positions before the comma (*fig.3*).



*Fig.3*

Occasionally, the whole print has shifted to the right. Then the €-sign completely disappears (*fig.4*).



*Fig.4*

To the left below the middle is a machine number, usually with four digits. An exceptionally high number is 64511. However, there were also stamps without machine number (*fig.5*).



*Fig.5*

## Special aspects

I noticed a blue dot on some stamps, one right next to ESPAÑA and one in the second A (*fig.6*).



*Fig.6*

At first I thought this was a one-off, but after a rate increase (€0,53) I found the same blue dots on the top stamp of an unused strip of two stamps (*fig.7*).



*Fig.7*

The shifted blue lines around ESPAÑA indicate that the stamps were printed in at least two printing processes: the red letters and the blue lines are not applied at the same time (*fig.8*).



*Fig.8*



On some stamps, the image did not end up in the middle of the stamp paper. On the first stamp, the position between the upper edge and C O R R E O S is wide and on the second stamp it is narrow (*fig.9*).



*Fig.9*

Once I saw a stamp with missing parts of the CORREOS print on the top, to be followed by another one, totally mixed up (*fig.10*)



*Fig.10*

At the bottom left, the number of the machine is printed on all stamps. However, the date of issue is printed on some of the stamps as well. These stamps are only valid on the printed date. There are also stamps with town name, as well as with date and town name (*fig.11*).



*Fig.11*

Stamps with imprint CONTROL CALIDAD (literally: quality control) are regularly used in various fonts. It resembles a default setting, which must be switched off by the installer of the machine or replaced by the town name of the post office (*fig.12*).



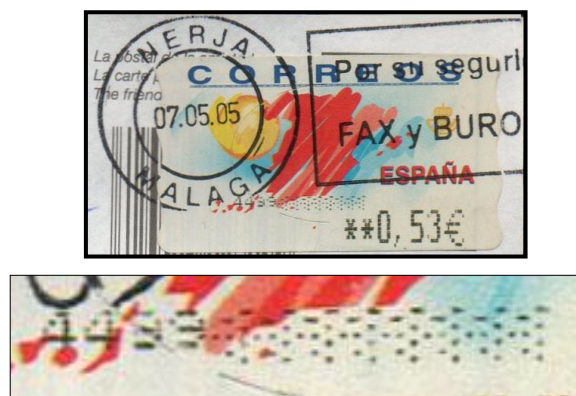
*Fig.12*

Stamps with exhibition print and date (Exfilnucol 2004 in Onda) come from a vending machine that was used on that occasion, usually only 1-3 days (*fig.13*).



*Fig. 13*

Somewhat special is the imprint of the town name in what I call: 'Braille' dots. This is probably due to a processor failure (*fig.14*).



*Fig.14*

In the program there was the possibility to print the weight on the stamps, not only of packages, but also of letters and postcards. In this case, the imprint is 'Peso: 16 g' (= weight: 16 grams) (*fig.15*).



*Fig.15*

The posthorns to the right show colour differences: yellow and orange (*fig.16*).



*Fig.16*

Colour differences also occur in the province of Catalonia, the part of Spain on the top right. These were the result of subsequent print orders of this stamp. The colours are red, pinkish red, rosa and orange (*fig.17*).



*Fig.17*



The black text was applied to the stamps by means of thermoprint (burning), but to a certain temperature. Burnt stamps occurred as a result of overheating of the printing mechanism in the machine. These stamps were nevertheless used and can occasionally be found on mail from Spain (*fig.18*).



*Fig.18*

According to the Michel catalogue, there have been three prints of the *Turismo* issue. In the first issue the design was printed in offset. The print shows dots (*fig.19*).



*Fig.19*

In the second issue the design was printed in 'raster' (*fig.20*).



*Fig.20*

In the third issue the logo of Correos (the posthorn) was printed in phosphor on the lower side of the stamps. It can be clearly identified by using UV-light (*fig.21*).



*Fig.21*

Moreover, the text CORREOS can also be found in micro print directly under C O R R E O S on the upper side of the stamps (*fig.22*).



*Fig.22*

The Epelsa machines could also print additional services like urgent mail. In that case, the letters URG for URGENTE were printed on the stamp next to the rate (*fig. 23*).



*Fig. 23*



Finally, the map of Spain not only appears on automat stamps, but the Spanish Post also issued regular stamps in 2012 and 2013 with the print TURISMO to stimulate tourism. This way not only vending machine stamp collectors, but all collectors get their money's worth (*fig. 24*).



*Fig. 24*