



Interview ► The mayor of La Seu d'Urgell, Francesc Viaplana, takes stock of the work done o

TOWN HALL OF SEU D'URGELL



## Francesc Viaplana

Mayor of La Seu d'Urgell

«The problem is that there is not enough housing in La Seu, and what is there is more expensive because of Andorra»

EL PERIÒDIC  
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY  
@PeriodicAND

The mayor of La Seu d'Urgell, Francesc Viaplana, takes stock of the year 2022, a year which began still marked by the coronavirus pandemic and the outbreak of a war on the doorstep of Europe and which has ended with the absolute recovery of normality, with the problem of housing very much alive on both sides of the border and without candidacy for the Winter Olympics in the Pyrenees. Looking to the future, in addition to the city council's own projects, it calls for improving connections throughout the region by rail and for the airport to continue to grow «with prudence» and in a proportionate manner.

–What is the balance of everything experienced in 2022 in La Seu d'Urgell?

–It has been a complex year, because we started it with a strong incidence of covid-19, which we linked in a very short time with the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine and the management that entailed of the refugees. Linking two such serious crises in a row, added to climate change that is getting hotter every day, has not been an easy task for the Administration to handle.

–You commented on the management of Ukrainian refugees. What role did the La Seu play?

–We took in about forty refugees, of which there are now just over 20 left in the city. We put them up in a hostel and helped them with all the administrative procedures and the schooling of the children. It has been a great job, but it has not meant a great upheaval for the city council compared to what they are going through.

–One of the main problems arising from Andorra at La Seu is housing. How does it affect you?

–The fact that housing market prices in Andorra are very high has a direct impact on us, because there are many people who decide to work in Andorra, but live in La Seu. The problem is that there is not enough housing here either and what little there is, as a result of the situation in Andorra, is constantly getting more expensive. From the town hall, throughout the legislature, we have promoted housing policies; we are currently managing twenty flats and by the end of the term we hope to have more than 30, so social housing is one of our priorities, although I must admit that we do not have affordable rent. In addition, another point we have come across is squatting, and not by evicted families without resources, but by people who decide to squat without



«Chaining two such serious crises in a row, added to climate change, has not been an easy task to handle»

justification and causing coexistence problems.

–So, have you noticed an increase in the number of cross-border commuters?

–Yes. From the beginning of the health crisis we started to notice an increase in the register and during all this time it has remained and we expect it to continue like this, because housing is not a quick solution.

–And does La Seu benefit from the increase in the cost of living in Andorra? Are there more and more Andorrans who decide to cross the border to, for example, go to the supermarket?

–The communication and relationship between Andorra and La Seu is very close since, at least, I have the use of reason. Traditionally, we have received many Andorrans who come to shop in the city because

they are looking for different products and, moreover, because they can benefit from tax free in many establishments, a fact that greatly favors them and we are already fine. But there are also many people from La Seu who go shopping in Andorra; the positive effects are for both sides.

**-What is your opinion of the rail connection between Andorra and La Seu with Barcelona?**

-Currently, the Generalitat de Catalunya is carrying out a feasibility study to improve the Puigcerdà railway line and bring it to the Principality. Anything to improve connections with the Pyrenees I think is very good, and more so in this case, that we are talking about sustainable transport and that I am convinced that it would help to relieve road traffic on the National C-45 and the interior of Andorra. With all due respect to the investments that Andorra considers to be priorities, this one specifically, it is the Catalan government that is considering it and from the City Council of La Seu d'Urgell we fully support the study, but until we have the definitive results, and we see whether or not it is possible, we will not be able to position ourselves.

**-What is your assessment of the operation of the airport?**

-Very good. The most important thing is that all the steps that are taken are as solid as those that have been taken so far. We have provided infrastructure that we want to use to the maximum of all its possibilities, because it places us on the world map and, with the good acceptance of regular flights and their high occupancy, it has allowed us to expand the activity, beyond of light aircraft and helicopters.

**-Should the airlines be expanded?**

-If it's done prudently, yes. Because the important thing is that every flight there is profitable and does not involve any burden on the public administrations. What does not make sense is that there are airports that are not used.

**-Do you have any studies on whether these passengers stay at La Seu or go, mostly to Andorra, or to other regions?**

-We don't have any studies, but obviously the main point of attraction is Andorra. However, there are those who stay in Alt Urgell or Cerdanya and, in one way or another, an economic impact is generated that benefits us all.



«Anything to improve connections with the Pyrenees I think is very good, especially the train, which is sustainable»

**-Covid put the cross-border relationship at the center of the debate. What projects do you currently have in hand?**

-At the moment we are studying different projects that can be presented in relation to the Poctefa, the cross-border collaboration between Spain, Andorra and France which aims to strengthen the economic and social integration of the area, and which are beneficial for the whole territory, because what is good for some is good for others.

**-After all the uproar there was with the Winter Olympics, how do you rate the fact that in the end no candidacy was presented?**

-It was a shame that the candidacy was not presented due to the political boycott by Aragon. If it hadn't been possible to present it for technical reasons or because people had voted against it in the popular consultation, I would have understood, but for a political issue... It's a lost opportunity. Although the Olympic Games are not the solution to the problems of the Pyrenees, neither are they to blame for everything that is attributed to them and I think that a well thought out candidacy would have allowed us to position ourselves in the world and pro-

mote sports of winter that we have in the region. It is not comparable, but we all know what the Barcelona 92 Games meant to the city and also to La Seu.

**-Was it a mistake not to count on Andorra?**

-I think so. If the Olympic Games are held in the Pyrenees, the entire Pyrenees must be counted on, including Andorra, which also has a lot to contribute. I think the ideal candidacy would be the Catalan one, with Andorra, a part of the French Pyrenees and some sporadic tests abroad so as not to have to build infrastructures that are not amortizable later.

**-What purpose do you set for the five months remaining in your term of office?**

-Many, but I don't know if I will have time to do them all! We have many necessary and exciting projects ahead, such as the new hospital, the construction of the residential center for the elderly, the improvement of the sports facilities or the school for adults. We have many good intentions, but we may lack time to be able to execute them. In any case, we will continue working to improve the future of La Seu d'Urgell and its citizens. ≡

**Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.**

*Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.*



**LA PORTELLA**  
IMMOBILIÀRIA  
REAL ESTATE

📞 (+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

📞 (+376) 747 747

✉️ laportella@andorra.ad

📍 Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

🌐 [www.laportella.ad](http://www.laportella.ad)



**Don't miss any special editions of El Periòdic!**