



Interview with the director of the PS + Independents of Encamp, David Rios ▶ Alert of the inc

MARICEL BLANCH

The councilor of Encamp,  
David Rios.



## David Rios

Councilor of the Municipality of Encamp

«It's great to have a playground that may be the envy of Andorra, but it's unnecessary»

EL PERIÒDIC  
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

@PeriodicAND

David Rios is an opposition councilor in the Encamp municipality, and topped the Social Democratic + Independent Party's lists in the last municipal elections. Rios points out that the current term has many projects on the table to deliver on all election promises. However, he warns that these cannot be realized at any cost, because this can condemn the economic future of the corporation and the investments in the parish.

### -What is your assessment of the current term in the Encamp municipality?

-I think we have to distinguish two parts. The first was with the pandemic, of which we have a positive assessment because there was coordination between the majority and the minority, and we faced together the difficulties that the covid brought us. So, bottom line is that we're really looking forward to it. And then we had a second part of the mandate, corresponding

mainly to the year 2021 and the current one, during which, unfortunately, we did not agree on many of the decisions that have been taken and so we have stated in different sessions of the Common Council. Mostly, these decisions that we voted against were not because we didn't find the projects themselves appropriate, as many of them were in our election program, but because of the way they were done.

This second year of office has seen an impressive budget outburst. As an example, I can refer to the Pas de la Casa park, which was budgeted at 100,000 euros and ended up costing 450,000; the Bany de l'Ossa park, which had a budget of 4.5 million and was awarded 8.5; or the refurbishment of the Encamp sports center, which should have cost a million and has risen to 2.2. What good is a web site if it simply «blends in» with everything else out there?

On the other hand, the lack of budget control has led to a significant increase in debt. We had 13.5 million in debt at the beginning of the term, and last year we applied



«It simply came to our notice then. It could end up being 30 million or more»

for a loan of eight million. In addition, it is necessary to take into account all that remains to be awarded and paid, which will make this debt may end up being 30 million or even more. We do not agree to increase the debt with this joy that the majority do, because in the long run this will mean that taxes on the citizenry will be increased.

### -Are you worried that excessive debt could hold back the investment of a future term?

-Exactly. The problem with raising long-term debt in this way is that it jeopardizes the actions of future consulates. But well, in the end the population has to value and I think that the politicians who will come later will have to do less. I insist, the final step will not be so much this, but in the face of the situation of increasing the debt, the public will have to end up paying it with the increase of taxes, and public prices. That is why from our training we are warning that it is very good to make a playground that will possibly be the envy of Andorra, but it is unnecessary. It is not mandatory

to have a park that costs eight million.

### -In any case, is the relationship between the opposition and the majority good?

-Traditionally, the Encamp municipality convenes commissions every month in all areas, in which the minority has access. Therefore, we share the information without problems and we are up to date with the main actions that exist from the corporation, so from our position as a minority we have nothing to say. Quite the opposite, because when we asked for information, it was provided to us, so we can say that most of them act with a lot of transparency. Another thing is that we share the decisions they make, because in many cases this is not the case and we express it publicly. But it can be said that in terms of personal and work relationship, it is good.

### -Work has officially begun on the new Encamp Park this week. How do you rate this project? Are you convinced by the justification for

**the extra cost?**

–They have just laid the first stone, and I think we would have started to make it a reality in the first year of the mandate, with a slightly less ambitious project, but no less useful. On the value of the investment, most take the easy way out, and say that as construction costs have risen, the item earmarked for this park has increased. I think a politician sometimes has to make decisions that have consequences. What has happened is that the project has remained unchanged, as originally planned, at all costs. And the hard part is, we don't have that much money, or we don't want this park to go overboard, so we'll do more with less. It was necessary to give up certain things in order to the project to be carried out, and even if it had not been the original, it would have had a cost that would be affordable for the citizens and the parish.

**–Do you think that the majority will be able to comply with the electoral program?**

–Programmatically, we see that now the works of the park begin, and we are already in the second part of the mandate, so we will see if this ends in time. Work has also begun on the sports center, which we do not know if it will go according to schedule, and there are other projects on the table yet to be finalized, such as the Prada de Moles, on which we have our reservations, or the beautification of the Pardines. That is, there are many open fronts that we do not know if they will be completed or not.

**–You say that they have reservations about the reform of the Prada de Moles. How do you see the progress of this project?**

–We have not opposed the Prada de Moles project, and we are waiting to see what offer will be presented, if there is any, and then we will be able to evaluate it. In fact, it was such a broad set of rules that we obviously could not refuse it. Our position is to wait for the details of the bids that are submitted to take a po-

sition, but we are concerned that a public facility may be leased for 60 years without the people having any significant benefits.

**–Are you worried that it might be stopped because there are no offers?**

–The most ideal would be that there was concurrence, because that way the common one can choose between different proposals. If there is only one, it seems like it all starts a little bad. In any case, it is expected that the municipality will be able to participate financially, and it has already been mentioned a figure of 10 million euros, which should also be added to the budget outrage I have mentioned, because they are not covered in this year's budget.

**– One of the main concerns of Andorrans is housing. How do you rate the situation in Encamp?**

–I think that the measure taken in Encamp to solve the housing problem does not provide what is expected. Reducing the percentage of economic transfer to zero only benefits people who have plans to build rental flats, because the municipality also does not ensure that the prices of these homes are affordable. And in fact, at the beginning of the term, the transfer was at 10%, it was reduced to five, and finally to zero, which is a totally erratic attitude. We have no guarantee that this measure will reach people so that they can enjoy decent, affordable housing.

**–Do you think that the corporation could be more proactive in improving the situation of the rental market in the parish?**

–Encamp has the capacity to build a block of social flats like the one planned in Escaldes-Engordany, so this is a possibility. Another option that we like and that can provide a quick fix would be to lower rates for homeowners who rent their homes at affordable prices. This is already being done in many European cities such as Paris and Barcelona, and I feel it would be interesting to make an estimate of the pri-



«We are concerned that a public facility could be leased for 60 years without the people benefiting from it»

«We believe that the Pas de la Casa is the cornerstone of the economy of the parish of Encamp, and part of the country»

ces and landlords who voluntarily lower their rents to align with the established figures, can take advantage of these tax benefits. I think that would make many flats that are for rent today have lower prices.

**–The consul assured that the town of Encamp was leaving behind the image of a dormitory city and gaining a quality of life. Do you agree?**

–Well, I don't think the consul walks around Encamp much, because apart from Sant Miquel square, the rest of the population is abandoned. Today there are still areas that cannot be walked on the street because the tiles are broken or there is equipment that does not work to the point that it is even dangerous. There are also places in Encamp with meters and meters of façade without any trade because the premises are closed. So if Mrs. Consul only makes a living around the municipality, she will probably notice that there is a lot of activity, but the reality is that the kids don't have a park to go to and there are streets you can't walk around. One thing is their vision and another is reality.

**–The residents of Pas de la Casa have expressed their displeasure at the neglect of their population. What can be done to improve your well-being?**

–At the last Municipal Council we insisted that it be committed to promoting a gradual change in the type of tourism in the Pas de la Casa, so that we move from the tourist we have been receiving this winter to a more familiar one. We understand that this is done through dialogue tables in which, without any obligation, the employers of the Pas can increase the prices of the stays to select a little the type of tourist who visits us. On the other hand, the corporation also has to deal with the fact that the neighbors complain that, at certain hours, the cleaning service has not yet passed and they see the dirty street. These are two issues that need to be resolved and elements that make the residents think that the Municipality of En-

camp often forgets about the Pas de la Casa.

**–The tourism sector said it lacks some appeal. Do you see fit to invest in this regard?**

–If this is to provide the village with some element for the tourist who is coming now, there is nothing to do, because it is a visitor profile that is not looking for anything. But if we want to attract the family tourist, who wants peace of mind, or who wants to do sports or enjoy nature, it is obvious that investments should be made in Pas de la Casa.

**–As a result of all this, the neighbors have stated that they feel left out. Do you think there is a lack of interaction from the municipality?**

–We just have to make sure that when the election is approaching, all the politicians of the Democrats are walking down the Pas de la Casa, but they will not return once they have passed. That is, when the general election is called in a few weeks' time, it will be possible to see how many Democrat politicians are going to the House of Representatives to campaign, but then few measures will be implemented so that the population can improve. We believe that Pas de la Casa is the cornerstone of the economy of the parish of Encamp, and even part of the country. That's why we've always had the idea that a lot of effort has to be put into the Pas, it needs to be taken care of very well, and we understand that it needs a lot of investment.

**–In terms of mobility and sustainability, the on-demand bus project is ready. What do you think?**

–We are in favor. A one-year pilot test has been set up to see how it works, if it has users, if there is satisfaction with the service, and so on. But seeing that Escaldes-Engordany is doing well and that the citizens are happy, we hope that the encamp people too. There had been a communal bus service that was removed, but we understand that it is necessary, especially for areas that are far from the center. ≡

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad

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