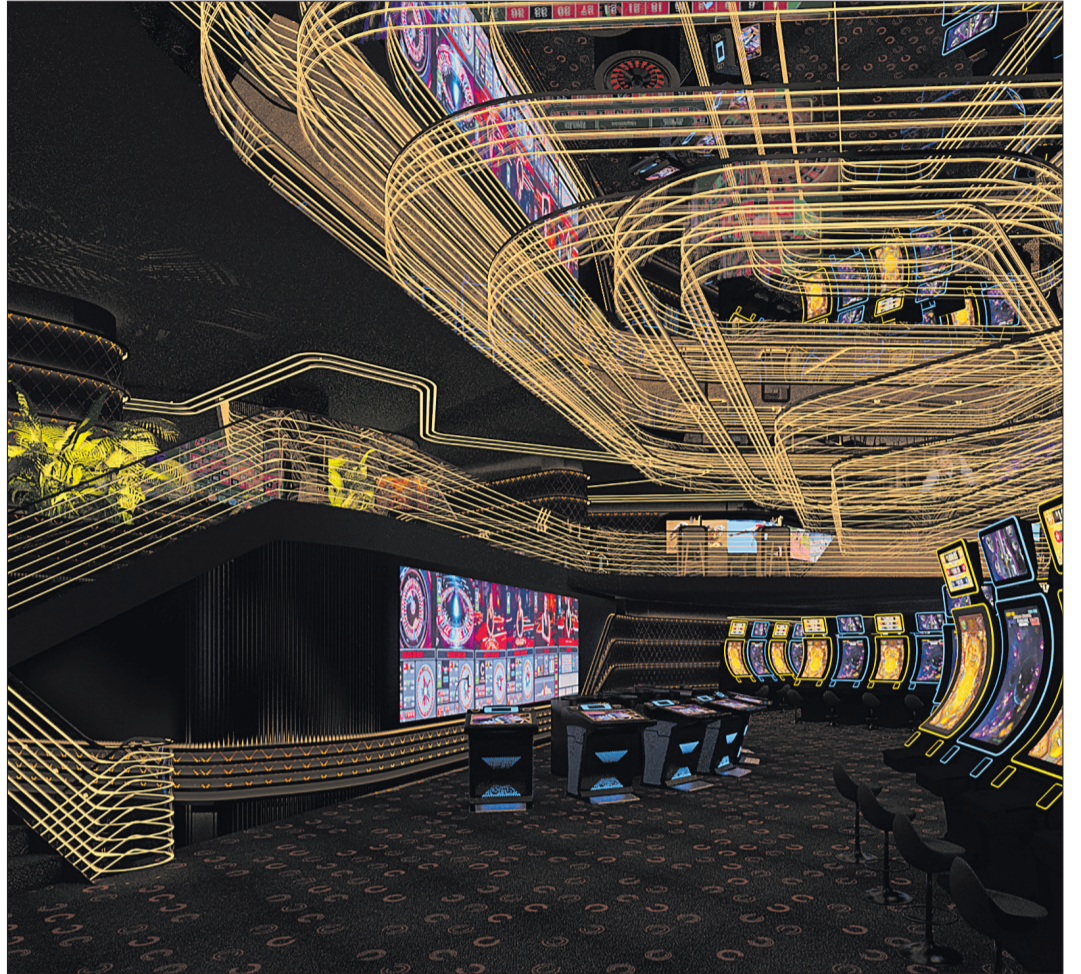
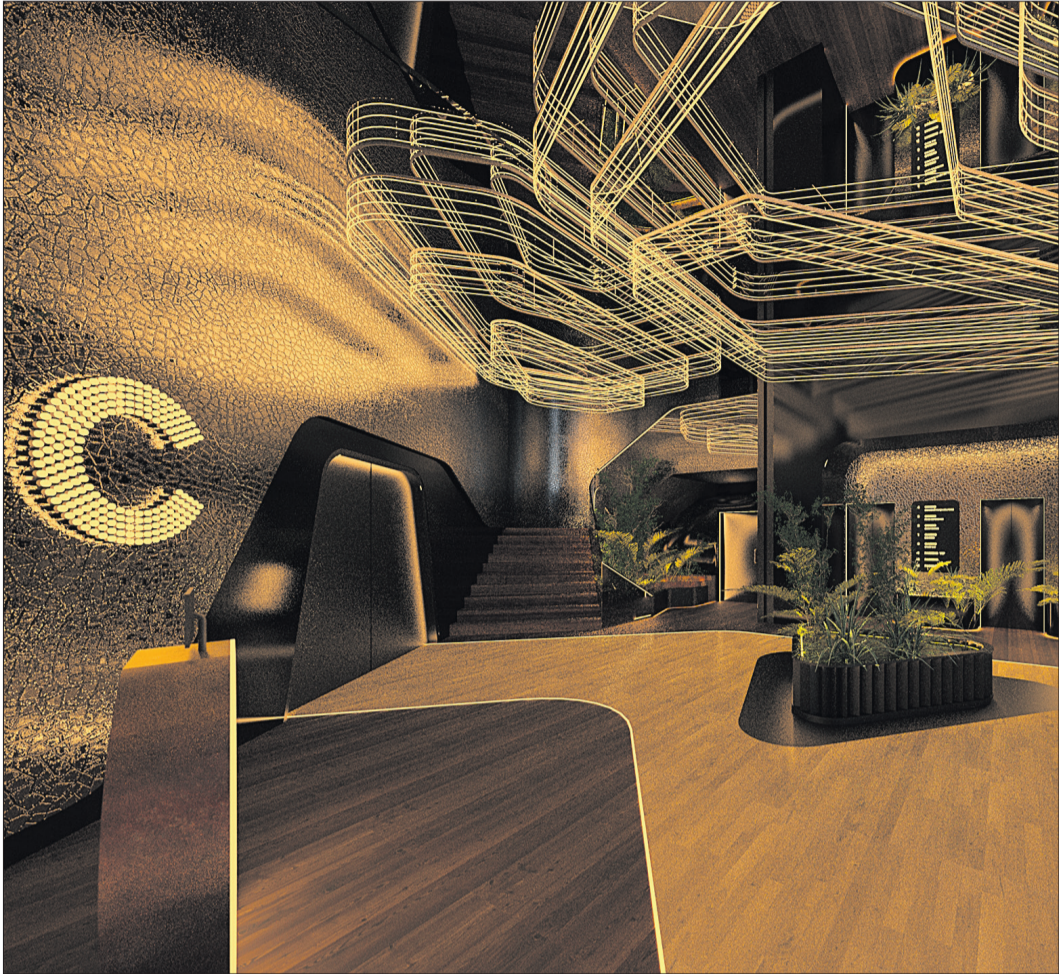




ENTERTAINMENT

JOCS, SA

JOCS, SA



► The lobby and game room of the new leisure center, Unnic.

## The casino, which will be called Unnic, will offer 20% gambling and 80% leisure

About 700 jobs will be created and the annual number of visitors could reach 250,000

With an investment of 25 million euros, it is expected to open next autumn

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With the works visibly underway on Prat de la Creu Street in Andorra la Vella, the company Jocs presented the new casino yesterday in a very busy event in the auditorium of the Congress Center of the capital. The facility, which will open next fall under the name Unnic, will be a leisure center designed with the 80-20 formula in mind. That is, 80% for entertainment and 20% for gaming. «It is a powerful, innovative project, generating opportunities and unique in the geographical environment, so it will be a new tourist attraction for neighboring countries and also for those destinations that have not yet chosen Andorra, such as the Asian market.» stated the CEO of Games, Marc Martos.

The forecast for the winning

company is that the first year will reach 250,000 visitors. With an investment of 25 million euros, 200 direct and 500 indirect jobs will be created, and four months before the opening, the croupier school will be launched. Jocs will collaborate with Novomatic, a leading technology company in the sector, and will include the Orenes group as a partner, a benchmark in the creation of comprehensive leisure centers.

Regarding the risks that such an installation may entail, the Minister of Finance, Eric Jover, assured just before the start of the presentation that «we are very concerned about associated problems such as gambling addiction», a circumstance that will have present from the Andorran Gaming Regulatory Council, announced Jover, and specific training will be held, such as that of the croupiers and others. On the relationship with money laundering, «the police are already working to be

as present as possible.» Thus, he added, «it is necessary to do all the prevention work and have the necessary structures in place to minimize the risks associated with gambling.»

Unnic will bet on going beyond a casino, with a «more ambitious idea that involves a comprehensive leisure experience, with music, art, gastronomy, shows, events or poker

**There will be outdoor shows on the roof and there will be a connection with Meritxell Avenue and del**

tournaments with the aim of living new experiences, with VIP and business area», explained Martos.

Yesterday's presentation in Andorra la Vella also had the participation of the architects who designed the project: Pere Espuga and Manuel Clavel. Espuga explained that he had also taken care of the new General Council, the Headquarters of Justice, the Encamp variant or the southern exit of the Envalira tunnel.

The new casino building will have 8,300 square meters, 10 floors and different spaces for parking, the play area, the event area and the gastronomy. The façade «bends inwards like a gesture, as we play the other way around, we move backwards», explained Espuga. «It is a unique but integrated project, abstract, elegant and timeless, a vertical leisure center,» added the architect.

At the same time, the roof will be a large public square where outdoor

shows will be held, which will connect with Meritxell Avenue and del Poble Square through the Roc dels Escolls, a connection that will require the construction of some stairs, as the two points to be connected are not at the same level. In this regard, the Consul General of Andorra la Vella, Conxita Marsol, recalled that «it was a condition», as we believe in it because we get more public space, and what we like even more is the connection with the Meritxell Avenue, because it gives us an entrance in this sector that was missing»

Manuel Clavel, the second architect to take part in the project, said during his speech, full of enthusiasm, that the new leisure center aims to «return to the elegance of old casinos and regain glamor», as «we are looking for images of global impact on social media,» because, in short, it is a project «designed to compete globally and attract international audiences.»

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## TOURISM

# Hotel occupancy is similar to the pre-pandemic

The average for the weekend was 88% and 66% on weekdays, noticing the presence of groups

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The hotel industry is maintaining the good start of this year and is getting an occupation similar to the one before the coronavirus pandemic. This was assessed by the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), which yesterday presented its weekly balance sheet which showed that the average for the last weekend had been 88.13%, the highest in 2022. «This is a figure that we could describe as normal before in pre-pandemic years», remarked the director of the UHA, Jordi Pujol, who was hopeful of «maintaining this dynamic in the coming weeks». On the other hand, the average number of overnight stays during the week was also higher compared to the previous week, marking 66.55%, which according to us is «a good figure». «We were a little surprised by the result of the week, given the trend of recent months», said Pujol, who pointed out that this increase is due to the arrival of some groups from neighboring and international countries, specifically English. «We do not have all the tour operations we would like, but it is true that not all has been lost and you can see group buses around the country», said the director, who said that «we are happy with the result.»

It should be noted that, according to Pujol, «February is usually the busiest month during the week, especially during the holidays weeks around», although «since January 15 the British usually fall». A tourist who has long wondered if he could finally reach the Principality, given the restrictions on mobility in force on the continent. «At the beginning of the season we did not expect it, then it recovered, later it seemed to go down to the point that a month ago we were not sure if they could come, but in the end we were able to maintain a certain quota», said the director of The UHA, which highlighted the effort made since the tour operation «to divert flights from Toulouse to Barcelona, Reus or Alguaire airports».

In any case, the easing of restric-



► Archive image of some tourists taking pictures on Carlemany Avenue.

tions that may exist in the European environment, and after the recommendation made yesterday by the Council of Europe to take into account the status of the particular

**The easing of restrictions on travelers may not motivate a large influx of tourists**

traveler - with respect to the covid - instead of the risk maps and their place of origin, will not motivate a significant arrival of tourists from other countries. «Yes, we can find a client on time, but when we talk about percentages that can represent in the middle of the winter season, it's more complicated», said Pujol, who added that «perhaps we could have noticed more if the changes were 'they would have done a month ago'. In fact, the director of the UHA pointed out that «our market for Belgians, Dutch, Russians, Germans and Israelis are things that come in October», because they are «long stays», and often involve nights in Andorra and also in Spain. «We do not rule out the possi-

bility that we may see a bus coming from these places, but it will be a timely matter», he said, adding that «what is now being sold to these customers is for the summer.»

**IMPACT OF THE MOUNTAIN** // On the other hand, the sector is celebrating the programming of the Andorra Mountain Music Winter Edition, although it acknowledges that it has been taken with less enthusiasm than last summer. «The festival has given us that, on the days of the concerts, we can charge a little more for the room or make the package with the ticket», said Pujol, who stressed that «in terms of spirits, I find that the hoteliers took it better in the summer. This different fe-

eling is very marked by the fact that «these are weeks when we traditionally have good occupations», in the middle of the snow season, at the same time that the mountain factor had a distinctive feature. Also, in the summer edition, «two more commercial artists than the current ones were scheduled and they sold everything in a few weeks», although he points out that the current concerts also have renowned DJs.

In any case, the UHA welcomed the proposal and concluded that «any initiative that could attract tourists to the country is very welcome», with the confidence that in the coming weeks it will be able to attract more people. ≡

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