



Interview ▶ Assures that he has already carried out 90% of the electoral program

## Josep Àngel Mortés

Consul General of Ordino

«We can't stop investing in CEO and falling apart»



The Ordinary Consul General, Josep Àngel Mortés, in his office in the Municipality of Ordino.

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The Consul General of Ordino, Josep Àngel Mortés, is facing the second half of what will be his second term in the Ordinance Corporation with satisfaction. Mortés points out that his government has already fulfilled 90% of its electoral program.

**–What is your assessment of this first half of the term?**

–The assessment is very positive. The most important thing in any term is the electoral program, and from that point of view, we have fulfilled almost 90% of the program in the last two years. Therefore, the assessment is positive, and even more so given the complicated situation in which we find ourselves.

**–90% is a very important part.**

–Yes. We will have to look for other things to do and we are studying projects to move forward, which will depend on the budget we have.

But it is true that we are very advanced. Certainly, there is a very important point in the program that has to do with the Casamanya hotel which is pending, but today I can already say that there are several projects on the table and some of which we are being worked on a serious form. And we are working on it together with the quarter of Ordino, how can it be otherwise, because they have the ownership of this building and also the final decision. But I am convinced that we will be able to close this and give the news during the first half of 2022.

**–In the last Municipal Council you referred to two projects. Could they both live together?**

–I insist on what I said before: there are some projects on the table and the final decision will be made by the fourth of Ordino as the owner. So we worked with them and passed on the proposals. From there, we will help you with whatever you need and support you with everything you need.

**–Do you see it possible that the fourth will communicate a decision in the first half of 2022?**

–This is the idea, and if possible, that in the spring or later they may have a decision taken to move it forward, because important works have to be done that I estimate will take at least a couple of years.



«We are doing growth studies of the parish to find the economic balance with the protection of the natural heritage»

**–It's been a few months since the pandemic. Are there any election promises that they will not be able to fulfill as a result of the covid?**

–No. With the covid situation, all we have to do is redirect budget items because there have been exceptional expenses that weren't there, but no project has had to be parked. As I said before, we have completed almost the entire program, and in addition, we made an extraordinary contribution to the Government for the Covid Fund worth 800,000 euros, which for the Municipality of Ordino is a significant figure, given the budget we have.

**–Minority councilors shared in an interview a few days ago that they were concerned about boosting construction in the parish. What would you tell them about it?**

–First of all, I would say that it is not impossible, as the councilors said, not by a long shot. Construction is driven by supply and demand, and right now we are in a cycle where a

lot is being built. But not only in the parish of Ordino, it is something in the country. The sector is at an optimal time and that is why there is this growth, and even before we were recognized as a Biosphere Reserve, our desire was to be able to find the balance between heritage conservation and economic development. In this sense, the municipality is conducting growth studies of the parish, especially looking at the aspect of water resources and in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. And once we have the results of these studies, we can modulate that growth based on the needs of the parish and the resources available. And beyond that, the construction that allows the Urban Plan and the regulations that we have in force is also being promoted, taking into account that we did a review of urbanism at the end of 2019 and it was already restricted, for to put it another way, the type of construction in order to make it more integrated into the parish. I insist that the

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formulas for providing legal security must be found, and at the same time, the economic balance must be found with the protection of the natural heritage.

**–Last week they approved the 2022 budgets, and Councilor Coma defended that her government’s policy is to make investments «for the good of the people». Can you tell me about this?**

–This statement arose as a result of the debate over the investments we have made in the Ordino Sports Center (CEO). From this point of view, everyone is taking care of their health and we are going to do sports, and the investments we make from Ordino are trying to go in that direction. We have more and more partners in the CEO and I think we have to contribute, in addition to the CEO being an element of revitalization of the parish.

**–What value does your government give to this infrastructure?**

–The value we give it is obviously high, because otherwise we would not have made these financial investments or this bet that we have made in favor of the Sports Center. The CEO is many years old and needs to be reformed and updated. All we can do is stop investing and fall apart. In addition, if we link this to the tourists and other residents of the country that we want to attract to the parish, who are fans of the mountains, snow, sports and ot-

hers, we must have the elements to do so. In fact, we also have the Ordino Technology Center, which in this case is managed by the Government, but which is another element that, in this context, provides added value.

**–Returning to the budget debate, the allocation for staff has been increased. Has the corporation increased the volume of workers?**

–There are workers who are hired on a temporary basis. Of course, when it comes to investing or creating new services, the staff should be there. I think that’s part of the rules of the game: if you want to give more service to the people in charge, there have to be people who run these services or manage them, so it’s not a concern at all.

**–They also introduced the sanction in the salaries of the councilors for not attending the commissions. How do you defend this element?**

–When you come up with something out of the ordinary, then they have to re–think their position. I think we’re here to enforce it, and the way we’ve come up with the most appropriate way to do that is to regulate pay based on attendance. And if a person doesn’t attend, they can’t be paid the same as their job.

**–The candidacy of the Biosphere Reserve was approved a year ago. What are the next steps in this framework in the parish?**

–In fact, the Biosphere Reserve was approved a year and a half ago and consists of a management plan that was part of the candidacy that was presented to Unesco. And in this text were the action plans that we are currently working on. From this point of view, plans are now being made to inform all the economic actors of the parish and the citizens about it. For example, we are doing exhibitions in schools and all the heads of departments of the municipality are being trained so that they are very clear about what a Biosphere Reserve is so that they can explain it to those in charge.

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«I think we should all be old enough and think that the government will not do anything to harm the country»

**–And knowing your experience, do you think that Andorra is well positioned to achieve recognition in the country’s candidacy?**

–I’d say yes. Andorra is very well positioned to become a Biosphere Reserve, although, in quotes, it will not be so easy to achieve. And not from the point of view of whether or not Unesco can give it to us because of the conditions, because I think we meet them perfectly, but I think it will be more difficult to get this label for the work to be done and the fact of agreeing all parishes. It’s going to be a lot harder work, but that doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be done. In fact, I think it’s something that’s going to be achieved and it’s going to be very good because we’re going to be the first country in the world to do that.

**–The project for an immunological research center in Ordino by Grifols has been the element that has generated the most debate lately around the parish. Can you tell us where you are?**

–This project is being piloted by the Government and I understand that they are advancing in the different processes that must be carried out until it is completed. The initial idea was that it could be up and running in a couple of years. The Municipality of Ordino gave its approval by making a report in favor of the project of national interest because we think that it is an important dynamizing element of the parish

and also of the country. It is a project that will allow us to diversify the economy to stop being so focused on tourism and to be able to look for other activities to be implemented in our country. I think that the Grifols project is a very good thing for the country and the fact that it is a well–known company will allow it to act as an engine for other entities to be interested in coming.

**–Are you satisfied that Ordino has been chosen as the location of the center?**

–Completely. And the fact is that, as I said, we approved the binding report so that it could go ahead.

**–What would be the main argument you would give to a person who detracts from the project?**

–I think we have to trust what the technicians tell us, and I do it because it is not my field of knowledge. With the information I have, which is not from the street but from the Government itself, I am very calm and there is no doubt or any risk. From here, things get trickier, and this is where the true meaning of life lies. I think we should all be old enough to think that the government is not going to do anything to the detriment of the country, and that the people who govern us should be trusted. In fact, Andorra is currently negotiating an association agreement with the European Union to make this immunological research center a reality. ≡

## ENERGY

# The price of fuel will rise between 2.5 and 3.3% for the green rate

The sector expects a 20% drop in sales during 2021 compared to 2019

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The new green fuel tax came into force today as the first working day of 2022, although it officially did so last Saturday as the first day of the year. According to the president of the Association of Importers and Distributors of Fuels of Andorra (Asidca), David Porqueres, this new tax will mean an increase in sales prices, between today and mid-month, according to the station of service, which can range from 2.5% in the case of gasoline to 3.3% in the case of diesel.

«As a concept, we are in favor of the rate, because putting a tax on the dirtiest energy to do new technology projects, as someone has to finance it, we understand, but something else is the time and how you do» said Porqueres. Asidca recalls that in Spain and France, fuel taxes have been frozen and energy checks have even been announced. In addition, other countries have

withdrawn money from state accounts to fund projects such as the free bus. «We said a long time ago that it would not be the best time, and unfortunately time has proved us right, as we have the health crisis over», he recalled. Asidca defended the date of January 1, 2023 for the start of the application of the tax.

The consumer will not notice the new price from the first day at all service stations, as it will be passed on as stocks run out of fuel pri-

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**DAVID PORQUERES**  
ASIDCA PRESIDENT

«If you’re charging a star product, all you have to do is take it out and charge it»

«We can be hurt by the psychological effect on the Spanish consumer if he thinks that the price is equal to or lower than the Andorran»

or to the beginning of the year and are replaced by fuel purchased at starting today, with the price increased by the new tax. The entity estimates that on January 15th all stations will already charge the increased price with the added tax.

Porqueres also announced the association’s forecast for sales in 2021, which will have fallen between 19 and 20% compared to 2019, the pre–pandemic year, after ending November with a –21, 5% accumulated. «A year that ends with sales at –20% and a very high cost of energy, a new tax being imposed on you, is not the best of times», said the president of fuel importers.

The sector explained that the situation in Andorra is different than in Spain or France, as «we live from and for tourism, so 80% of what we sell here goes abroad, and so what you do is to attract the product, because if you put taxes on a star product, you end up charging it». In these countries, on the other hand, «if you put a tax of this nature on it, all citizens bear the cost and it has no effect on the market». But, according to the Asidca, «the most important thing is not the figures, but the psychological effect on the price,



►► A petrol station in the parish of Sant Julià de Lòria, near the Spanish-Andorran border.

especially on the part of the Spanish consumer, since if they make the comparison with the low cost stations, where the price is equal or even inferior to the Andorran, this can hurt us, as a sector and also the Government, because if we do not sell they do not collect». So, «with the economic context we have, I don’t know if Andorra can afford the luxury that in the subconscious of the Spanish consumer is spreading the word, be it true or fal-

se, that the price of fuel is so uncompetitive», he said. As for the 2022 forecast, Porqueres does not dare to specify, mainly due to the uncertainty of the pandemic, but «if the economy slows down again, we will probably continue with numbers below 2019.» However, «if we are lucky enough to have the omicron variant under control in two months, we will end a brilliant year because everyone is waiting for this to end up being consumed», he said. ≡