

ACTION FOR PURCHASING POWER

Bus companies want planning to start free

|| The awardees of the national service request that the outstanding accounts be cleared beforehand

|| The government says it wants to pay season tickets to companies «on the spot»



►► An L6 bus passing through La Massana.

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The bus companies awarded the national service, Autocars Nadal and Coopalsa, have joined forces to demand clear and detailed planning from the government for the implementation of free public transport. The measure was announced more than a week ago by the Executive, but has not yet been officially communicated to the concessionaires, who point out that this situation worries them because there are many elements that need to be agreed. And most importantly, remember that there is still financial compensation to be resolved. «A decision has

been taken that is not communicated to us and when the balance of the second year of concession is still open and the compensation of the monthly subscription of 30 euros», explained the general manager of Autocars Nadal, Bartumeu Gabriel, who insisted that «we do not say that free will not be implemented, but we want to know basic elements such as how it will be done, how the validations will be carried out, who will charge these amounts, if the frequencies will be reorganized, how the difference will be returned». In a similar vein, the manager of Coopalsa, Gabriel Dallerès, remarked on the measure that «it is a decision taken by the Government, which is the one that has the competence, and



GABRIEL DALLERÈS
COOPALSA MANAGER

«It is appropriate that we be able to participate in defining the most appropriate operation to make it easy for operators and users»

BARTUMEU GABRIEL
GENERAL MANAGER OF AUTOCARS NADAL

«A decision has been made when the balance of the second year and the compensation of the monthly subscription are still open»

in principle, we agree with any measure that supposes an increase of users», but pointed out that «we think that no more complexity can be added to the situation we have now».

Above all, the most troubling element for dealers is the economy. «It's a matter of common sense: if we stop collecting money, it will have an effect on the treasury, and that will have an impact on the payment of salaries, when we go to fill the deposits, and in so many other situations», he said. Gabriel put on the table, while Dallerès remarked that «previous actions have already meant a drop in the collection of operators and the situation is unsustainable». For this reason, Nadal and Coopalsa urge the Executive to resolve the compensations for the second year of the concession and the monthly subscription before the free application is implemented, claiming around the second that it has been eight months it exists without solution».

In addition, in a press release sent jointly last Wednesday, both companies expressed their willingness to participate in the implementation of free «in order to ensure that there are no dysfunctions that put concessionaires in a situation of greater difficulty», at the same time as ensuring that «the level of service quality is preserved». «We believe it is appropriate that we be able to participate in defining the most appropriate operation, and that each party can provide ideas to make the measure as easy as possible for both operators and users», said Gabriel.

For his part, the spokesman for the Minister, Eric Jover, said that the Executive has the will to hold «the necessary meetings» with the companies, and said that «we want to pay the amount of the payments at the time do not be harmed by our initiative. However, he encouraged companies to accept the government's share of the compensation, which he described as «unclosed issues».

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RENT

The ACU denounces the «mess» of the price of rooms at 700 euros

The INH plans to conduct surveys with owners of vacant homes to bring them back to market

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The president of the Association of Consumers and Users (ACU), Lluís Ferreira, has denounced in recent hours on the networks the exorbitant rental price of some rooms located in the center of Andorra la Vella of up to 700 and 750 euros monthly. The offers are published on a well-known platform where it is announced that the tenants «have the right to the communal areas of the house».

In this context, Ferreira commented that «this is an abuse», adding that «the worst thing is that we do not know if we have hit rock bottom or if the situation can get even worse».

In this sense, the ACU considers that temporary workers are the most affected by the low availability of homes. Specifically, Ferreira stated that «the renewal of tempo-

Renewal of temporary contracts can be counterproductive

rary contracts was done with good intentions, but it can be a counterproductive measure». As he explained, the problem is that the extension of the permits has been a novelty that was not expected and, therefore, most contracts have already been terminated, so those who want to stay must look for a flat again, and «given that there is no supply, this only makes the situation worse».

On the other hand, the association is working together with the National Housing Institute (INH) to find the best solutions in this area. Currently, Ferreira reported, there are approximately 6,000 empty flats located in the Principality, and the intention is to get 10% or 20% of these homes back to the rental market. In this line, he added that «if we succeed, it will give us a breath of fresh air».

At the same time, the INH intends to collaborate with FEDA and the electricity distributors - who detected that these homes were empty because they showed very low electricity consumption - to take action and re-incorporate part of the homes into the market.

The director of the INH, Josep Maria Pla, assured that «now an anonymous survey will be carried out with the owners to find out more about the situation of the homes» and added that «next week we have a meeting with the Andorran Agency of Data Protection



► Archive image of the aerial view of the central valley of Andorra.



Lluís Ferreira
PRESIDENT OF THE ACU



«If we could get empty homes back into the rental market, it would give us a big breath of fresh air»

(APDA) with the intention of conducting a second non-anonymous survey and gaining access to the contracts of the holders to take direct action and have more detailed information.

Another measure on the table is to carry out a first opening that allows an agreement between landlords and tenants by creating a new contract limited to a maximum price increase of 10%, as also detailed Plan, who argued that «this is an under-exploited possibility that could give security to both parties in five years' time». However, he added that «some landlords consider it too low a price increase, and some tenants think it is too big».

This year, the government has granted 1,471 rent subsidies for an amount of 3.093 million euros, which represents an increase of 7.16% compared to the year 2021. The president of the ACU, said in this meaning that «yes it helps the population to get out of the way, but nowadays it is no longer a pri-



Josep Maria Pla
DIRECTOR OF THE INH



«If economic growth demands more people working, it will be necessary to create more homes»

ce problem, it is that directly many no longer find even a place to live». Therefore, Ferreira stated that he shares the vision of the director of the INH, as «we are providing palliatives in a situation of serious crisis».

Ferreira also indicated that, in conjunction with the Housing Institute, situations are being studied such as those of some godparents in the country who live alone in a home of more than 300 square meters and need company, in order to offer them to share a home with someone who can take care of them and, therefore, at the same time as preventing them from being harmed or having an accident, being able to transfer the property to a family that can take advantage of it.

Finally, Pla concluded that the housing situation is linked to economic growth. For this reason, «if economic growth demands more people working, it will be necessary to create more housing, and consequently more solutions». ≡

MARICEL BLANCH

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The House will have a dispute resolution center

The new regulations include conciliation, mediation and extrajudicial expertise

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The Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services (CCIS) will have the Center for the Resolution of Business Conflicts (CRCE), thanks to the regulations approved last Wednesday by the Council of Ministers. The task of this new service will be to advise on the different procedures for the alternative resolution of existing conflicts, to manage and process the procedures requested, to appoint an impartial person among the registered professionals, to propose a suitable space for meetings and to carry out the appropriate notifications, among others. «The aim is to empower the House and give it effective tools for resolving disputes and reduce the causes that come to the judiciary, so that it does not collapse», said spokesman Eric Jover. The regulations stipulate the ways to initiate the procedure, such as the choice of the impartial third party, the guaranteed system or the disciplinary regime.



► The outside of the Chamber of Commerce.

This general regulation also includes three more, which refer to three types of dispute resolution: conciliation, mediation, and extrajudicial expertise. With regard to mediation, two or more parties voluntarily try to reach an agreement with the intervention of a third party, while conciliation is similar, but the impartial person can make proposals. In the out-of-court exa-

mination, the parties agree to submit to the qualified opinion of an expert. On the other hand, the Government has signed an agreement with the Chamber to promote its consultative nature, so that the Executive and the body will collaborate in both directions in the elaboration of legislative or governmental initiatives from joint lines of work. ≡

The number of refugees has reached 250 and will not increase

The government amends the decree on international sanctions

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The number of refugees has already reached the limit set by the government: 250, to be added to the 324 people registered in the consular register. According to Government spokesman Eric Jover, the Executive does not rule out expanding the quota in the future, but for the time being it will not. «We have to welcome them in good condition, because we cannot cause a new crisis, especially in the area of housing», he said. In addition, «in relation to neighboring countries, our capacity for reception is higher», he said.

Of those 250 applications, 242 already have a favorable resolution and as for the rest, one person is still awaiting a medical check-up and seven to be vaccinated against covid-19, one of the requirements to be eligible for this protection. There are currently a total of 66 school children. In addition, 89 grants to cover basic needs have already been developed and 69 prepaid cards for shopping centers, 81 prepaid cards for transport and 62 prepaid cards from Andorra Telecom have been given to families. Finally, thanks to the cooperation network, 41 families have be-



► Ukrainian refugees.

en referred to the Red Cross and 51 to Caritas. Meanwhile, the government approved last Wednesday the third amendment to international sanctions for the war in Ukraine. With the aim of continuing to align the sanctions adopted with those applied by the European Union (EU), the Executive has added two natural persons, so that legal coverage is given to the application of sanctions to both individuals and companies to their accounts may be blocked or to prevent operations with financial institutions, but this has not yet been implemented. ≡

Six companies went bankrupt in 2021

A total of six companies that applied for soft loans went bankrupt in 2021, as they have not been able to meet their debts, amounting to 424,000 euros. According to Jover, this figure is expected to increase this year. For this reason, the Council of Ministers decided to extend the deadline for applying for the conversion of soft loans granted under the pandemic into a loan. «We want to be more flexible in the management of the process and, if the deadline has passed, we will open a new window to access the loan», he said.

About 400 new cases in one week

The government has announced the coronavirus health update. In the last week, 368 new cases have been detected, while the number of active people has reached 543 (+35). Deaths remain at 153 and discharges at 332. At Nostra Senyora de Meritxell Hospital there are two patients on the floor and two in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). On the other hand, the Ministry of Health agreed to make the screening of social housing, day centers and manors more flexible due to the stabilization of the pandemic.

Espot and Suñe, in Paris on the weekend

The head of government, Xavier Espot, and the general trustee, Roser Suñe, will visit Paris this weekend. The two leaders will attend Emmanuel Macron's inauguration ceremony at the Elysee Palace as President of the Republic next Saturday, after the French co-prince won the second round of the presidential election ahead of Marine Le Pen. A day later, next Sunday, Espot and Suñe will attend the celebrations of World War II Victory Day at the Triumphal arc in the French capital.

La Borda Nova, of National Interest

The Executive approved the declaration of Project of National Interest for the construction of the future building of affordable rental housing in the Borda Nova area, in the parish of Andorra la Vella. Tendering is still pending, but work is expected to begin soon and work can begin before the end of the year, the government said yesterday. It is planned to build 44 affordable homes on a plot of 2,822 square meters between Terra Vella street and Borda Nova passage.

Private universities will do research

The new regulation authorizing the establishment of private universities in the country, which was approved by the Government during the Council of Ministers, provides that private higher education centers to be established in Andorra must present a strategic research plan, so that they must have a teaching offer but also a research offer. The regulations include the criteria for the establishment of these universities, as well as the economic viability, the teaching to be given, and the requirements of a personal nature regarding the teaching and research staff.

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GENERAL BOARD

The PS asks to implement the third payer in two months

The party says there are people without medical care because they cannot advance the money

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The Social Democratic Parliamentary Group (PS) instructs the Government to implement the figure of the third payer within two months. This is a proposal that has been dragging on since 2014 and from Cristina Rodríguez to Joan Martínez Benazet, to Carles Álvarez Marfany, all the ministers of Health of the last three legislatures have promised. However, neither has been able to implement it, although Benazet acknowledged that it would be directly related to the portfolio of services and, therefore, both projects would be a simultaneous reality. «We understand that if the portfolio of services has been approved, despite the shortcomings presented, the third payer must have worked in parallel and there is no difficulty in moving it forward», said last Wednesday the General Counsel Susanna Vela. In addition, the president of the group, Pere López, recalled that computer complexity had always been «used as an excuse», but that this was an already «resolved» issue - because it

was already done with visits to the referring doctor and in the Emergency Department where the patient pays only 25% of the bill - and «it only means an immediate political decision». «Technically it's very easy to have the third payer; It is a matter of sensitivity, of wanting to facilitate access to health care for everyone, «Lopez insisted, adding that if the Executive» does not see it that way «it is because» they are not aware of the reality of the country. «

And it is that the third payer is also directly related to the purchasing power of the citizenry. In this sense, the Social Democrats believe that the government should have included it in its shock plan to alleviate the current economic crisis, as «there are people who do not undergo medical treatment because they do not have the money to advance them». «It is true that social security returns 75% the next day, but that also means paying 200, 300, 400 euros at a time and, given the current state of pensions, it can be the difference between paying it or not», said the Social Democrat leader, who clarified that «we are not asking for free trials, but to pay only the appropriate



SERGI PÉREZ

► Admission to the Andorran Social Security Fund (CASS).



PERE LÓPEZ

PRESIDENT OF THE PS

«Technically it's very easy to have; it is a matter of sensitivity, of wanting to facilitate access to health care for everyone»

SUSANNA VELA

GEN. COUNCILOR OF THE PS

«If the portfolio of services has been approved, the third-party payer must have worked in parallel»

te part». He also pointed out that the third payer would also represent a public health expense because «if treatment is postponed for economic reasons, the pathology may be more serious and more expensive after a while».

In this way, and passing on the message sent to them especially by the Federation of the Elderly and the Association of People with Functional Diversity of Andorra (FADD), the PS proposes to apply the third payer in diagnostics, biologics and prescriptions tests as soon as possible. «We act on behalf of the groups that have asked us the most; it's a good time to move forward [...] We want it to be debated and approved and not postponed», López said. ≡



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