



CROSS-BORDER AGREEMENTS

Espot and Aragonès agree on the creation of four working groups

There will be more collaboration in infrastructure, health, waste management and energy

They also agree on the creation of a think tank to find a solution to the housing problem



GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA

The head of government, Xavier Espot, and the president of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Pere Aragonès.

Finding a solution to the housing problem

A.M. / A.C. ESCALDES-ENGORFANY

Espot and Aragonès announced the creation of a think tank on topics of border interest such as the difficulties in accessing housing at an affordable price. Espot remarked that this is a problem not only in Andorra but throughout the territory, and that the aim of the group is «to put together solutions that can reverse these difficulties». The head of government attributed the problem to the fact that «there has been a strong economic expansion during the post-pandemic and the increase in activity has brought more workers». For his part, Aragonès announced the goal of incorporating 10,000 affordable homes in the Pyrenees regions over the course of three years. ≡

Promote Catalan language in international institutions

A.M. / A.C. ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

Regarding the possibility of the Catalan language becoming official in the European Union, Espot emphasized that the fact that Andorra reaches an association agreement with the EU «can help or leverage» that there is a «greater presence near the European institutions», although not being a member country would not be considered official. When asked about the Catalan law, Espot recalled that we are not talking about «any level of insurmountable demand», but about having a «minimum to discuss», and emphasized the «extended hand» to employers and recalled that the aim is to promote the social use of the language, but without putting obstacles in the way of productive activity. ≡

XAVIER ESPOT
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

«We want to promote the social use of the language, but without hindering productive activity»

PERE ARAGONÈS
PRESIDENT OF THE GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA

«We are defining the objective of incorporating 10,000 affordable homes, also in Alt Urgell»

ANNA MENCOS / ALBA CLADELLAS
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

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Andorra and Catalonia agree to create four working groups in view of the need to strengthen collaboration between the two territories to face common challenges such as health, infrastructure, waste management or energy. In the meeting held last Tuesday at the Palau de la Generalitat de Catalunya between the head of government, Xavier Espot, and the president of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Pere Aragonès, it was agreed to create a think tank to address issues such as border relations. Regarding the working group on health, Espot emphasized that with the agreement signed with Spain on health matters and, bearing

in mind that the competences have been transferred to the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Andorran government wants to «develop it with the Generalitat to try to provide more and better services to the citizens of Andorra and Alt Urgell». In addition, the meeting discussed the issue of mental health, in relation to the new mental health space at La Seu d'Urgell.

Regarding the work in the area of infrastructures, Espot pointed out that the objective is to «improve land and rail connections».

The head of government expressed the will to «find practical and pragmatic solutions to cross-border issues and propose concrete answers to the problems of citizens». In this sense, Aragonès explained that these meetings will allow

«work in areas of common interest and strengthen cultural, linguistic and historical ties» between Catalonia and the Principality.

In terms of energy, the president of the Generalitat referred to the collaboration that can exist between the two energy companies and Espot emphasized that «know-how» can be shared and that this reverts to a greater energy sovereignty» of Andorra «in the key of green energy».

The two representatives also highlighted the work so that professional training qualifications can be recognized soon or that there are other agreements being drawn up, such as, for example, in the field of fire prevention and extinguishing. Regarding economic relations, the president of the Generalitat recalled

the agreement between Acció and Andorra Business for mutual support for companies that want to establish themselves in Andorra and vice versa, so that Andorrans can have support in the network of offices that has the Agency for the Competitiveness of the Company (Acció).

This is the third bilateral meeting between the two presidents, after the resumption in June 2021 of the meetings at the highest level and during which Espot and Aragonès have held annual meetings to address issues of common interest, the after which it took place in Andorra in February 2022. Espot and Aragonès have agreed to a new meeting, which is expected to be held in Andorra between June and July next year. ≡

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POLITICS

Concòrdia believes in the European Union, but not at any cost

The party states that it sees negative points for the country in the association agreement that the Government is negotiating

SÒNIA LECHA
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As the president of the party, Cerni Cairat, advanced on Monday evening, Concòrdia will not enter the State Pact for negotiations with the European Union. Cerni Escalé and Pol Bartolomé held a press conference at the General Council last Tuesday to explain to the media the main reasons and what are the negative aspects why the party has decided not to enter into this pact. Both Escalé and Bartolomé wanted to emphasize that this decision was unanimous in the extraordinary assembly that took place on Monday.

In this sense, the parliamentarians explained that among the main reasons why Concòrdia was not in favor of initialing the agreement was the fact that the agreement is already almost closed, approximately 80%. «It would be hypocritical to be negotiating an agreement with the European Union that we already know we don't agree with.» said Escalé. Next, the president of the parliamentary group reflected on the failure of the foreign opening strategy since 2011, which has had an impact on a large rise in house prices following excessive construction and a competition coming from outside the sectors we already had, replacing companies and competing with liberal professionals with people based outside our country. With regard to this, Escalé argued that we must see «how to make a much more measured and progressive opening, which allows us to diversify the sectors that interest us, but preserving the Andorran productive fabric».

From there, the members of Concòrdia exposed the negative aspects of the pact, reasons why they did not want to enter it. The partnership agreement implies the end of the prior authorization regime for foreign investments. Escalé explained that «it is the consolidation of the process of economic opening, despite the lack of economic diversification and the low attraction of companies and projects with high added value». The majority of investment that the country receives is in the real estate sector with more than 1,000



►► The president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group, Cerni Escalé, and the general counsel, Pol Bartolomé, at the press conference last Tuesday.

million in foreign investment in the last six, seven years. The president of the parliamentary group wanted to emphasize that «the end of the prior authorization regime also implies the non-implementation of a quota system on real estate», a very impor-

tant point for Concòrdia and which it already defended in its electoral program.

The second aspect talks about the free provision of services. Escalé explained that «as defined in the agreement, it involves unfair competi-

tion for liberal professionals in the country». The president of the parliamentary group added that «it will be very difficult for Andorra to prevent liberal professionals, especially from Catalonia, from being able to enter the labor market and, through the provision of services, be able to do the same activities that the companies of our country».

Thirdly, the association agreement implies the impossibility of maintaining, indefinitely, the system of mandatory quotas. This would cause the need to have partial agreements that would have to be extended. For Concòrdia, the relevance of this fact is given because the country's growth should be sustainable.

The fourth and last point is the condemnation of losing Andorra Telecom as a public operator. Escalé pointed out that, as it is drafted, Andorra Telecom will end up privatized, a fact that would cause a very significant loss of income (40 million euros of the company end up being reversed in investment and in transfers that compensate for the deficits of the State). The president

Concòrdia is committed to a system of quotas

►► During the event, the president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group, Cerni Escalé, was asked his position regarding the temporary suspension of foreign real estate investment. Escalé celebrated the decision and recalled that from the first moment the formation has claimed a temporary suspension of the licenses to be able to modify the foreign investment law with all the guarantees and with a vision of the future. However, he pointed out that from Concòrdia, despite valuing the 10% levy as a «good measure», they want to promote a strict system of quotas to ensure that the country is protected. «Despite the tax, if the Andorran square remains attractive, we will continue to be unprotected», said the president of Concòrdia. Escalé added that another of the proposals they will put on the table is the increase in the Property Transfer Tax for those people who already have a first residence.

of Concòrdia explained that «we do not know how this loss of income could be compensated by the Government».

EXIT FROM THE STATE AGREEMENT // According to Escalé, «Andorra must not leave the negotiation table and must continue to express its opinion and look after the different sectors of the Andorran economy». The president of Concòrdia wanted to point out that from the party they are «euro positive, we believe in the European Union, but we do not believe that an approximation is positive at any cost». The councilor believes that «negotiations must continue to be prolonged, with Andorra clearly and honestly presenting our position and the red lines until the EU is transformed and, then, finding the best fit for the country that respects the our singularities». ≡

negative aspects

- 1 FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE LAST SIX, SEVEN YEARS**
It is the consolidation of the process of economic opening, despite the lack of economic diversification and the low attraction of companies and projects with high added value. The majority of investment that the country receives is in the real estate sector with more than 1,000 million in foreign investment in the last six, seven years.
- 2 UNFAIR COMPETITION FOR LIBERAL PROFESSIONALS**
The free provision of services implies unfair competition for the country's liberal professionals. It will be very difficult for Andorra to prevent these people from entering the labor market and through the provision of services and from being able to carry out the same activities as the country's companies.
- 3 SYSTEM OF MIGRATION QUOTAS**
The association agreement implies the impossibility of maintaining, indefinitely, the system of mandatory quotas. This would cause the need to have partial agreements that would have to be extended. For Concòrdia, the relevance of this fact is given because growth should be sustainable.
- 4 LOSS OF ANDORRA TELECOM**
The condemnation of losing Andorra Telecom as a public operator. This fact would mean that the operator would end up being privatized and there would be a very significant loss of income (40 million euros from Andorra Telecom end up being reversed in investment and transfers that compensate for the deficits of the State).

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