



Interview ▶ Cerni Escalé talks about the problem of housing

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The president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group, Cerni Escalé, talks about the issue of housing and its impact on the population, last week's demonstration and the proposals proposed by the parliamentary group.

– Andorran citizens mobilized on Tuesday in a historic demonstration in the country. How do you rate it?

–The mass demonstration on Tuesday is an extraordinary response, because it shows hope in a time of suffering. It shows that we are a united and supportive country, and that we will not give up. Andorra is our home. The housing crisis has many effects: it pushes low-income families into insecurity or to live outside our borders, it prevents the return of young people who live outside Andorra, it increases the personnel costs of companies and the cost of services, and changes the type of immigration our country receives. It is a crisis that is deeply damaging the social soul of the country. The time is dire and much more determined actions are needed from the Government and the municipalities.

–Where does all this trouble come from? What is clear is that it did not happen overnight.

–The root of the housing problem is greed and speculation. We are experiencing a cultural change in Andorra, where for many years families avoided getting rid of their properties and kept rental prices reasonable. Added to this is a very high demand from outside, either from investors who find Andorran taxation attractive or from new residents with high purchasing power. Faced with this situation, the Executive has not intervened enough. It has been considered that the crisis was a conjunctural, temporary problem, when in reality it is structural. Creating a public housing stock is a good measure, but it is insufficient, because it does not attack the causes of the problem.

–What do you propose from Concòrdia to deal with the housing problem?

–The first thing we have to do is stop foreign investment in real estate. From Concòrdia we have presented a law proposal for this purpose, on which Pol Bartolomé, from our parliamentary group, has been working in particular. It is inconceivable that a person who does not live in Andorra is allowed to buy 10 flats there, when many of the residents of the country can barely pay rent. Purchases by foreigners and residents who have been in Andorra for a short time must be limited to a single home. For Andorran people, we have to increase taxes very significantly when the buyer already owns several homes. We are also betting on forcing apartment owners who have



CONCÒRDIA
The president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group, Cerni Escalé.

Cerni Escalé

President of the Concòrdia parliamentary group

«Tuesday's demonstration shows that we are a united and supportive country, and that we will not give up»

had zero consumption for the last four years to rent them out. This last measure would allow the immediate entry of several hundred flats into the market. It is a practical, agile and fair solution. It only requires the courage and political will to make it possible.

–The new housing law promoted by the Government seems insufficient.

–The Government's housing law allows a significant increase in rental prices. It is incomprehensible that at the worst moment of the housing crisis the freezes are relaxed and price increases are allowed that can reach 15% of the contract value, with subsequent increases in the annual CPI. This is so without any guarantee that labor contracts will also increase proportionally to the CPI.

–Some opposition parties have presented amendments to the law. What do you think?

–On December 31st of this year, all the contracts extended since 2019 expire. We are talking about thousands of contracts that end in less than two months. Many real estate

companies and owners are taking advantage of the fact that there is currently no extension from January 1st, playing on the lack of information of tenants, to force them to increase the price of their contracts. We are baffled that the Government has not presented its bill sooner. Making amendments, as a matter of parliamentary practice, slows down the approval of measures. Making amendments meant prolonging the uncertainty and uneasiness of many families to possibly reach the same result.

–Precisely Andorra Endavant criticized its formation last week for not amending the rental law.

–From Concòrdia we have always been very clear about the rental contracts: we defend an extension very similar to the one made in 2022. We respect that the other parties make amendments to the law of the Executive. It seemed more responsible to us not to do so and, as an alternative, to present legislative proposals. The legislative proposals give much more freedom and allow us to reflect the most accurate vision of our formation. It is more work to present al-

ternative laws, but we are in the Council to devote all our energy to it and the problem of housing deserves this extra effort.

–Do you think it is necessary to establish a maximum threshold for rental prices?

–It seems reasonable to us to establish reference criteria, taking into account the location of the property, the year of construction and

the number of square meters. Once this analysis is done, a system of maximum thresholds can be studied. It can be a good complementary measure, but it is essential that the average rental price decreases. It is important to bear in mind that a system of thresholds can lead to the opposite effect: that the owners take the maximum price as a reference and, therefore, the average house price increases, instead of decreasing.

–The Executive said that he would convene all the parliamentary groups, and you announced that you are convening a State debate on the housing crisis. Why have you taken this step?

–Concòrdia and the Government have different views on how to address the housing crisis. It is healthy for there to be a broad and honest dialogue about each other's proposals. We reach out to the other parties to find solutions and we will participate in whatever meetings are needed to bring positions together, but it is healthy, even necessary, for the parties represented in the General Council to debate housing with lights and



«The housing crisis is damaging the social soul of the country [...] much more determined actions are needed from the Government and the municipalities»

stenographers. We have convened the second State debate since the approval of the Constitution, and it has a format that will allow each party to extend as long as it deems appropriate in its interventions. We will take advantage of the State debate to present a plan of shock measures, based on the proposals that Concòrdia has made public so far.

– Do you consider that having a public debate will mean that all the parties will have to take a risk and be honest?
– Exactly!

– Would you be willing to create a State pact for housing?

– State pacts, working tables and expert groups have too often served as an excuse for the Government not to act, or to share responsibility for politically risky bets. Limiting speculation is a political decision. We will not stop contributing ideas and proposals, regardless of the name of the forum in which these are exchanged.

– Don't you think it's crazy to buy buildings for more than four million euros to transform them into social flats, considering that the reform also costs at least three million?

– We think it is good that the Government acquires and renovates properties that are not being used and that it converts them into social flats. In this sense, we also thank Minister Marsol for keeping us up to date on the actions of her ministry. It must be admitted, however, that the Government has so far bought buildings whose price was above their market value. There was also a lot of improvisation when making the competition and awarding it, in order to make the offers to the owners before the general elections. From Concòrdia, we believe that a significant part of the Government budget should be dedicated to the purchase of public housing each year. We can learn from the mistakes of the first call to improve in subsequent ones.

– Wouldn't it be better to build on



«It is incomprehensible that at the worst moment of the housing crisis the freezes are relaxed and price increases are allowed»

«From Concòrdia, we are committed to forcing owners who have had zero consumption for the last four years to rent them»



►► Cerni Escalé during a speech at the General Council.

public cession land and it would be much faster and cheaper?

– The transfer in kind will be one of Concordia's main bets for the next municipal elections. It consists in making the new promotions, instead of giving land or paying the municipality, the owners have to

transfer some of the properties built so that it can be used as public housing. It is a way to increase the housing stock, to do it progressively and without public expenditure, and to avoid the concentration of municipally owned properties in the same place, with the social problems that this can cause. ≡

MOTOR ► MOTORCYCLING

Cardelús is crowned runner-up

The Andorran rider ends the European Moto2 season in second place after a TOP 6 in Valencia.

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

Xavi Cardelús, Andorran pilot of the Promo Racing team, was consecrated last Sunday as runner-up of the Moto2 European Championships after finishing the 23-24 campaign with a more than meritorious TOP 6 at the Ricardo Tormo circuit in the Valencian Community.

Cardelús started from the third row of the grid and, throughout the first third of the test, he climbed up to the line of the group that was competing for the podium. A few laps later he started having problems with his bike's clutch and was battling with Yeray Ruiz for fifth to sixth place and in the end he ended up collecting the 10 points for sixth place that served him well to definitively secure the European sub-championship with 11 points ahead of Alberto Surra, third in the category, and

67 points behind the new champion of the category, the Australian Senna Agius.

After getting off the bike at the end of the race and the season, Cardelús declared that «The suspension of free practice due to the storm caused us not to be able to try some things for today's race and this has happened take its toll on us. Despite everything, in the first part of the test I was close to the podium po-

sitions, but from the fifth lap the Kalex clutch started slipping and I kept losing ground until I finished sixth. He intended to finish the season on the podium, but in the end it was not possible. Despite this, the balance of the race is not negative although not entirely positive. We made a small step forward from yesterday despite the mechanical problem. I stay with that.»

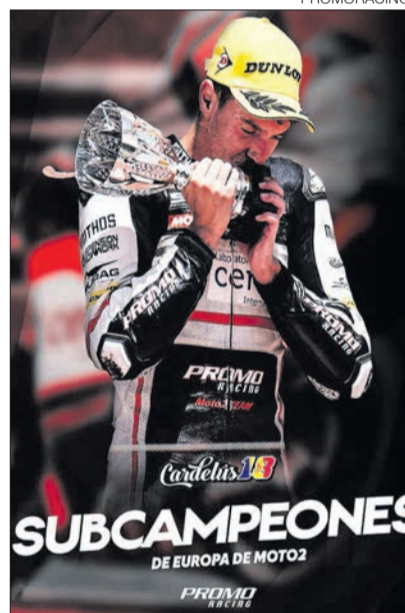
In addition, as an overall balance of the season, the Andorran pilot and European runner-up commented that «At the beginning of the year I already said that the objective was to fight for the title of Moto2 European Champion and we have been doing throughout most of the season and pretty much until the end. Second place is also a very good result and the balance is positive because we did a great job in all aspects. I think that both the team and myself have taken a



XAVI CARDELÚS
PILOT

«Second place is a very good result and the balance is positive. The team and I could not be more satisfied»

PROMORACING



►► Commemorative poster of Xavi Cardelús' runner-up.

solid step forward throughout the season and that should be valued. For this reason, we can only be satisfied».

One of the highlights of Cardelús' season has been his great regularity, as he has managed to score and not drop out in all the races of the year. ≡

classification

1. Senna Agius	216 punts
2. Xavi Cardelús	149 punts
3. Alberto Surra	138 punts
4. Mattia Rato	113 punts
5. Roberto García	107 punts
6. Unai Orradre	98 punts
7. Yeray Ruiz	96 punts
8. Alex Toledo	70 punts
9. Carlos Tatay Vila	61 punts
10. Marco Tapia	60 punts
11. Niccolò Antonelli	50 punts
12. Francesco Mongiardo	50 punts
13. Sam Wilford	50 punts
14. Mattia Volpi	43 punts
15. Piotr Biesiekirski	37 punts
16. Gerard Riu	33 punts
17. Borja Gómez	32 punts
18. Harrison Voight	32 punts
19. Alberto Ferrández	31 punts
20. Juan Rodríguez	23 punts
21. Kyle Paz	20 punts
22. Jacopo Hoscicuc	7 punts
23. Ivo Lopes	5 punts
24. Martin Vugrinec	4 punts
25. Filip Rehacek	4 punts
26. Maxwell Bertalan Toth	4 punts
27. Chanon Inta	3 punts
28. Charles Aubrie	2 punts
29. Eduardo Montero	1 punt

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