



Interview ▶ Balance at the equator of the municipal mandate

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«We can borrow more and not We can borrow more and not leave the municipality in a complicated situation»

LAURA MAS Consul General of Encamp

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Balance at the equator of the municipal mandate, the Consul General of Encamp, Laura Mas, takes stock of the projects executed and those that remain in the portfolio and reiterates that the corporation has of the economic muscle needed to meet all the planned investments over the next two years, according to the ANA.

–What is your assessment of the first two years of your term?

–On the one hand, in relation to the pandemic, it has been a year and a half hard, it is not what anyone would have expected. On the other hand, in the political and action field, we are satisfied because we have been able to execute large projects of the legislature that we had in the program when we presented ourselves.

–What have they accomplished during this period?

–We have emphasized the strategy of economic dynamization and reactivation. On the one hand, we continue to work on the strategy of positioning and tourist destination in the family and sports events, with heritage routes, competitions and events related to sports, to which we always have a part for children, and also we are working on important projects such as the Engolasters ideas competition, with the aim of revitalizing the parish. We are transforming Encamp into a quality parish.

–What do you have left in your wallet?

–There are still many things we would like to do, but in relation to the key projects, to know what happens at the end of the month with the Engolasters ideas competition and the Prada de Moles project. In addition, all the investments planned in the 2022 budget, including the new Ossa park, the expansion of the new gym, the completion of the separation of wastewater and rainwater or the improvement of the public road and the furniture and the second phase of Sant Jordi street of the Pas. In addition, in February we will take the bus on demand and work on a project to upgrade the machinery and improve the technology of the car parks, an important initiative because we want it to be a service adapted to today's requirements.

–What do you ask for in 2022?

–First of all, the end of the pandemic is a wish that everyone has made to be able to return to normal and also because we learn that in our life, anything can shake us and we are quite vulnerable, even though we

have known adapt to the situation responsibly. On the other hand, I would like to end my term by constantly adapting my daily decisions to the health crisis and moving forward with my normal projects.

–How has the common people faced the pandemic during this year and a half?

–With absolute priority at the beginning and when we were returning to normal, adapting day by day. We were close to our citizens and the commercial fabric, and we also made a contribution to the Government of 1.5 million euros to help with the ERTOS, given that in the parish we have many shops and we believe that we should be supportive. On the other hand, we provided grants and subsidies amounting to three million.

–You have approved a very ambitious budget with large investments.

–We have approved a total budget of 35 million euros, of which the percentage that we dedicate to investments is quite high, 11 million, but that does not mean that they put in a complicated situation to the municipality because we have financial muscle to be able to go ahead thanks to the work carried out the last two mandates, those of Jordi Mas and Jordi Torres. Ours is the one that must begin to execute the master plan that was designed and mark the way to follow the next legislatures, regardless of who is governing, since, in the end, the parish project must be defined, not strategies can be changed every four years. For this reason, there is a commitment on the part of all political forces to carry out the established master plan.

–Will debt skyrocket?

–It was planned to start, it is not new that we increase the debt ratio, but I want to insist that we are among the municipalities with one of the lowest debt ratios and one of the highest budgets. We started with 40 million in debt in 2011 and now we are over 19 million, although we will increase it by 11 million until the end of our term, we will be in a situation that has nothing to do with the previous one. In addition, we are able to repay important loans, such as the Funicamp. In this way, we have the ability to borrow and not leave the municipality in a complicated situation.

–What relationship do they have with the groups that are part of the minority?

–We have a good and fluid relationship, as we provide all the information to the minority councilors and they are grateful. In fact, they are involved in all the decisions and pro-



ANA / L. G.

▶▶ The Consul General of Encamp, Laura Mas, during the interview in her municipal house office.



«We are transforming Encamp into a quality parish, although there are still many things we would like to do»

jects we make through the committees and are always open to making any contributions. Even if they are in the minority, they are councilors who have voted for our citizens and for this reason they have all our respect.

–The cost of some investments has been criticized by the PS + I minority.

–I was sorry for the new park project. Yes, there were cheaper projects, but the municipality is carrying out the initiative decided by the people and the jury. The market price is set by the construction companies. We were aware that there would be an extra cost because today we are around 30% more, but we also know that there are not 50,000 solutions, the only thing was not to make a part of the park, and so we did the contest in three phases. It is a project that must be started and completed so that the citizens can enjoy this urban transformation as soon as possible.

–Will all projects be completed before the end of the term?

–Yes. The Ossa Park has an execution period of 21 months, although it has been requested that priority be given to phase 1 of the work in order to deliver to the population a part of the space before the deadline, the extension of the complex also means a period of approximately a year and a half, and the only thing that will remain pending is Prada de Moles, which we do not yet know the term because we have not opened the folds.

–Entering the world of sports, they work together to make the parish a sporting reference.

–This is the strategy that was set out in the master plan. It is a sector that allows us to stand out as a parish within Andorra and has been shown to be bearing fruit with the 4,000 overnight stays recorded in 2021 in relation to sporting events and competitions. We must continue in this line and that is why we must continue to improve and update the facilities, in Encamp and El Pas, so that they are first class. We want to bet on sports.

–The partial internal opening of the stations last season was a strong economic shock.

–Very large, with a turnover of between 30 and 40 million euros, last season it did not reach five million, the shock was significant. Andorra has always had the snow sector as a tourist attraction and revitalization of the whole country and the

fact of not being able to open normally was reflected, not only in the world of skiing, but also in the seasonal shops of winter, hotels, tourist apartments; everything had a strong economic impact.

–The Pas de la Casa was badly affected.

–El Pas experienced difficult times, especially when there was a closure with the French border, in fact the village was deserted, and it was quite dramatic. For this reason, the municipality decided to show solidarity with the executive and grant direct aid to the settlement tax. Then, once the border was opened, we were lucky, except for a few moments, that the village became attractive again and people came, and since June the Pas has been able to work. The winter season is approaching very well and we hope that it can continue until the closing of the slopes with an important activity.

–At what stage is the economic revival of the town?

–The Economic and Social Council is working. We found a formula to join forces, work together to revitalize the village and make ourselves stronger. In the last two and a half years, almost 11 million euros have been invested in the Pas, a considerable figure that has given a tour of the town and we will continue working there. We must continue with the dynamics of beautification and change and continue to open businesses to stay as one of the economic pillars.

–They are studying to put out to tender a new concession of the tracks.

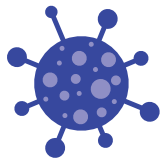
–For Saetde, a new concession would be more interesting than not extending it for a maximum of ten years, which is what the additional provision of the draft budget provides for, since now the situation for Saetde is also complicated, they have about 16 years left, until 2037, and can not repay new investments, and we do not want society to lose value. For this reason, we have been working since December to assess the rescue of these 16-17 years that remain of the concession; when we find out, we will know the value of the actions of the Encamp Municipality and, at this moment, we will begin to define the specifications so that 2022 becomes a reality. It is important to renew the concession with investment guarantees, since, on the one hand, the territorial scope must be modified because it will not be adapted to the needs and climate change, and, on the other hand, it is necessary to determine some minimum investments to ensure that whoever shows up will be able to repay them. ≡

GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Coopalsa admits to being «stuck» by the number of infections in the staff

Barilaro doesn't know if extending ERTOS to nightlife until June is «good news or bad news»

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Coopalsa may have difficulty developing the service if contagions to its workforce continue to increase.

This was stated by the UTE manager, Gabriel Dallerès, who acknowledged that he was «concerned» about the upward trend in the incidence of coronavirus in the country. «Of the number of infections in the workforce, I suppose we have the proportion that any company has,» said Dallerès, who added that «we are worried about the growth of infections that exist in Andorra right now.» Thus, the manager explained that the management is «wishing that the staff, and especially the drivers, do not become infected». As Dallerès pointed out, «we are concerned that if this goes further we may run into difficulties in doing the service». «It's not happening to us right now, but we're stuck like everyone else,» he said.

As for the current state of national public transport, the Coopalsa manager assessed that «due to the pandemic, we are a little below what we should be» in relation to the number of users who make it at the same time, he considered that having a limit on the capacity of the buses in force «harms the quality of the service a bit», especially because they are not happy. «We are one of



►► Users boarding an L5 bus in La Massana.

Gabriel Dallerès is concerned about the growing number of infections seen in the country in recent days by the omicron

the few countries that has this restriction in place,» said Dallerès on the issue.

Ultimately, regarding the talks between the companies and the Executive for the financial compensation related to the monthly payment of 30 euros, the manager stated that «we are trying to find a solution», but «for now, we have it as

it was. «We continue to talk to the government to see how there can be an agreement,» he said. In any case, Dallerès once again pointed out that «the figures proposed by the Government and those calculated by the concessionaire are distant», so the aim of the talks is to «find out how, technically, the positions can be approached.»

Nightlife, waiting / For its part, the nightlife sector sees with some suspicion the extension of the Temporary Suspensions of the Employment Contract (STCT) and the Reductions of the Working Day (RJD) by part of the Government. This was pointed out by one of the owners of the Ibiza Experience nightclub, Krystal Barilaro, who emphasized that «I don't know if it's good news or bad news». «We were already told that we wanted to extend the application of the ERTOS,» said the businesswoman, who said that «June of this year has been established at the latest, and I hope it is to cure health». The fact is that, at this time and in view of the epidemiological balance, the sector sees far the reopening of its activity. In fact, meetings with the Executive have been suspended during the Christmas holidays and are expected to resume next week.

In any case, Barilaro emphasized that «since the closure of our case, the cases have been fired», and for this reason «it is clear that it was not our business». However, the employer is aware that, as soon as the activity can be recovered, it will most likely be resumed with the latest guidelines that have been established and that were not used at the time of the new closure. In November. In other words, Barilaro thinks that in the reopening it will be necessary to present the covid certificate and the negative result of an antigen test. ≡

The government is once again charging tourists for diagnostic tests

They will be exempt if there is a medical prescription or a health check

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The Executive has approved the recovery of the collection for a TMA or antigen test on tourists. According to the BOPA published yesterday,

the decree provides for 40 euros for TMAs and five for antigen tests, a price that was in force for all citizens –except for contacts or at the request of health authorities – before that the Government regain its gratuity at the end of November for the start of the escalation of the sixth wave of the pandemic.

Specifically, the decree states that «people who do not have a resi-

dence or work permit in Andorra» must pay the test, but it establishes two exceptions: if there is a medical prescription from a professional in the country or if the test is indicated by the Ministry of Health to check contacts. Also, with the performance of these tests, the Government will deliver the corresponding results and certificates either on paper or digital media, as before.

Tourists and visitors can access these tests on the same devices provided for residents of the country, as is the case of the Plaça de Braus and the StopLabs of Escaldes-Engordany and Pas de la Casa. At the same time, they also have resources available such as pharmacies and private laboratories, although in these the prices are set by each company. ≡



►► Archive image of a mobile StopLab.

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(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad