



The head of the Liberal list, Josep Maria Cabanes, in the center of Escaldes.

Josep Maria Cabanes

Liberal candidate

«My dream is to live again as before, when there were good salaries and housing for everyone»

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On May 29th, Josep Maria Cabanes defeated Judith Pallarés by 50 votes to 49 in the Liberal elections to elect his list leader in the next general election. A single vote of difference that must mean the start of a new political project that not only faces Democrats, but also recovers the best years in the history of Andorra, in which there were salaries according to the level of life and housing was within the reach of the entire population.

–What had your candidacy that Judith Pallarés did not have?

–I think the two were very different, especially in terms of support. She, the minister, had the four general councilors and other former members of the party, as her time as a permanent member has, of course, allowed her to have her own core. I, on the other hand, may be a better-known person across the country; I found a many people in different spheres along my life, I have always been next to

the citizens, and I helped everyone who has need it, I never have a no for anyone. And that is highly valued. As soon as my name was elected, I received an avalanche of calls and messages promising me their vote.

–What did the affiliates tell you when they asked you to introduce yourself?

–Most of them thought that I was a serious person to talk to, because people know me, whether it's from the bank, from Facip, from being Minister of the Interior or from any other financial or personal issue. I think the perception of my person is very high because I always listen to everyone. In fact, I showed up because they called me, otherwise I wouldn't have done it.

–But you were practically retired from politics ...

–Well, secondly, because whenever something is missing, I do what is necessary for my friends.

–What happened to Jordi Gallardo?

–I don't know, because he didn't

want to explain it. What emerges from the party's most internal organs is that he has been president for 11 years, in which he has promoted a number of people, including Pallarés, and therefore understood his candidacy as a betrayal. He was very disappointed, both with her and with the counselors. Let's remember that Pallarés is a minister thanks to Gallardo ... But these are just rumors.

–Is the party fractured?

–For my part, no. I told right away that I was not going to take anyone's chair, but because they had asked me to, and if I lost, nothing would happen. I have a lot of affection for the party, because I am its founder, and in no case I want it to be fractured, but to maintain its liberal and progressive tendency.

–You have said that you want Gallardo to remain the party's president, at least until the elections. Do you already have an answer?

–I have a friendship with Gallardo, but a political party is like a com-

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«With me in the lead, it is possible that in the next Liberal elections Democrats will outnumber supporters»

pany: the right person must be put in the right place. And Gallardo is the perfect person to remain president of the party until the election, because he has led the party for the past 11 years, negotiated with Democrats, trusted current Liberal ministers and unraveled major country issues, such as airport or heliport, public transport or the Procedures Service. He is the one who has relations with the head of government; I am new. Also, I think the party should have a broad base and there should be a lot of charges. I don't want to monopolize everything, first because I can't and second because I want options to promote other people.

–A few days ago you said that your desire is to get more members. How do you plan to do that?

–First of all, I have to say that in the last 15 days, a lot of people have called me and told me about their desire to join the party and bring in new ones. I am convinced that we will not only be able to be a significant number of members, but also to be present in all the paris-

hes, including Canillo and Sant Julià, where we currently have no representatives. With me in the lead, it is possible that in the next Liberal election Democrats will outnumber supporters.

-What do you think has been the influence of Liberals in the Government?

-The Liberal Party ruled for 14 years with an absolute majority and has now been in charge of ensuring government stability and untangling key issues that have been entrenched for a long time, as I mentioned. After the covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, stability and cohesion are crucial. This is key in a country as small as Andorra. And don't let people break you every five minutes. At least that's what the people are waiting for.

-What must your electoral program have to be a winner?

-When I introduce myself to anything, it is to win, not to participate. My program must be a continuation of everything the government has done in recent times, housing must be consistently strengthened; the promotion of young people is vital for them to lead the big companies in the country; the whole issue of the environment and the fight against climate change must continue to be worked on in an extraordinary way, because it is the will of the entire population; public safety is non-negotiable and must be maintained 100%; taxation, for the time being, should not be touched; gender-based violence must be eradicated; air infrastructure must be strengthened, we cannot give up the national heliport and we must extend flights from the Headquarters; our specificities must be reflected in the association agreement with the European Union (EU) ...

-Housing is probably the most pressing issue. What does Cabanes propose?

-Before there was housing for everyone, but with the foreign investment law many companies came to the country and I don't know if they are all real. What I mean is that many companies are occupying homes that should be for workers, which in the past was not the case, because there were several neigh-

borhoods where everything was rented apartments at reasonable prices, without speculation. That is why I believe that an analysis is needed as to whether all foreign investment is real, as I think there is a very significant blockage of flats. My dream is to live again as before, like when everyone had a decent job, a good salary, the children studied, had a good holiday and there was housing for everyone. Between the covid and the speculative boom, all this has been distorted. We have been creating fronts that have collapsed workers' housing, such as tourist accommodation, which, as in any market where the law of supply and demand rules, has made flats that should cost 350 euros a month, cost at least 700. I've seen rents of 5,000 or 10,000 euros a month! We've been told this for 20 years and no one believes it. It was unviable. We have opted for foreign investment and passive residences, and we must ensure that this is only in real cases.

-And what do you think of the association agreement with the EU? The next legislature must be closed.

-We have several open fronts, as we have suffered a lot since the fall of BPA; bank approval is very important. The whole issue of immigration is crucial, because if we need 1,000 workers we can't let 3,000 in, if we don't want to run into problems like those in the countries around us. The fact that companies here can enter a market of 500 million people is very important, as well as the quality of life and sustainability, which are sacred points for the country's 80,000 inhabitants.

-The EU does not allow monopolies. What do you think should happen to Andorra Telecom and FEDA?

-We have to keep in mind that we are very small. What would four electric companies do in Andorra? What would they live on? These are issues that we have always wanted to control because they also help the state budget, it is a sure benefit, but for me it is not a lethal issue. If the monopoly is to be broken, it will not be as important a matter as border control or public safety.

-The 20th EFA Forum was held last week in which air connections were a key leg for the future of the co-



«For me, maintaining the monopoly of Andorra Telecom and FEDA is not as important as citizen security»

«I'm in no hurry [for the election]. I want things to be done well and for the country to regain its quality of life»

untry. Do you agree?

-It is clear that a country without air transport is not the same. Especially when we are so fashionable and everyone wants to come to Andorra, whether it's for tourism or living there.

-And the airport of La Seu is already enough or would a national one be needed?

-We can dream a lot, but we already have the one at La Seu. I remember in the early 90's, when I ran in the municipal elections, that in the program we had to make a heliport. We are in 2022 and we do not have it yet, although it is planned. We can only imagine that in 30 years we will have an airport in our country.

-What do you think of the Grifols project?

-I don't understand enough to say that there is a risk of a virus escaping that will kill us all. But I do understand that when the government contacts it, it is because it has already made sure that the project is solid. In fact, I guess they're responsible enough to avoid an accident that will ruin them, so I think we're talking about a good foreign investment. A research lab can be lethal, as we've seen on several occasions, but if you comply with the appropriate security measures, welcome.

-And for abortion, do you have a solution in mind?

-Abortion is a topic of the Constitution, of co-princes, which has been talked about many times. Solutions have always been found, and thanks to our international conventions, no woman has ever been left unattended. In fact, any citizen can go to the best clinics to treat any disease with a subsidized method, so before changing the Constitution and dispense with the co-princes, which would be fatal for Andorra, all alternatives must be exhausted.

-Do you think that the elections should be brought forward before the end of the year?

-I don't know that, I haven't even talked to Mr. Esport, but it would be good to hold the general elections in a different year from the communal ones. I'm in no hurry. All I want is for things to go well and for the country to regain its quality of

life, burying the health, economic and social crisis.

-What do you think of the latest measures announced by the Government to improve the purchasing power of citizens?

-It is clear that the pandemic has been terrible; we all know people who died, we ran out of tourism, businesses had to shut down and a lot of help was needed. When it's all over, we can cross and scratch and start again from scratch, but we still have to push a little harder.

-If you arrive to government, will you count with Gallardo, Pallarés and Víctor Filloy?

-I am in favor of not touching what works and this Government has overcome, with the support of the Liberals, the pandemic and now we are overcoming the economic crisis. We just need to add additives to make it better. I don't want to make big changes.

-And recover old familiar faces?

-People could be recovered, yes, and also give new opportunities. The problem is that there is no such thing as a youth empowerment policy, it is very difficult to find people who want to get involved. Efforts to fill voter lists are sometimes surreal, so we need a promotion ladder. However, when we have people who have been in politics for 10 years, who have been in government for three years and who have done a good job, it is not advisable to do without them.

-Is your idea to go lone or do you come up with proposals like Acord?

-I have not decided yet. What I do know is that we need to talk to everyone, talk, talk and talk, and from this point, to consult the bases and to decide. By ideology, by affinity, I think we speak the same language as Democrats, we must not rule anything out. The country needs unity and stability.

-Will you leave your posts in the Andorran Federation of Hunting and Fishing (Facip) and in Andbank?

-It will depend on the election results and the position I hold. Being a minister is not the same as being a general councilor. I have already said that I do not want to accumulate jobs, but to prepare those who come after them to be the best substitutes. ≡

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