



NATIONAL PLAN AGAINST DRUG ADDICTION

The organizations consider that «we are late» in the prevention of addictions

The country's associations call for more awareness campaigns and early detection

Life Project proposes the creation of an observatory to have data and provide solutions

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The entities believe that Andorra needs to catch up on addiction prevention. The president of the Association for the Defense of Youth at Risk (Adjra), Sandra Cano, assessed that «especially among teenagers, we are late». In this sense, the Executive is proposing an update of the National Plan against drug addiction for 2023, which is already 18 years old. «This is a very long time, because for example in Spain, the modifications are made every two years», remarked for her part the president of Life Project, Eva Tenorio, who also explained that a plan of this nature is essential for a country, due to the fact that «addictions cause serious social problems, dysfunction in families and, all together, it is a public health problem». At the same time, Tenorio defended that this should be a plan for addictions, not just drug addiction. Thus, she reported that according to a study from the neighboring country, 18% of the population between the ages of 14 and 18 make abusive use of new technologies.

Otherwise, the president of the Adjra indicated that the delay in updating the document has caused consequences «that are already evident», such that a large volume of young people currently have behavioral problems, with the suffering this entails for families and the economic wear and tear it generates in terms of health. Cano also regretted that for many adults it is difficult to explain that their child is suffering from an addiction and, therefore, «they keep it a secret», because it generates stigma and shame. As a way of mitigating the problem, she proposes that if the plan is modified, it includes prevention work in schools with testimonies from those affected and their relatives, focusing on external circuits, such as playgrounds, parks, buses or gas stations, as they are the main «hot spots» that can lead to the consumption of alcohol and other drugs. At the same time, the president of Life Project remarked that the modification should include the creation of an observatory



► A group of young people drinking alcohol in the street.



EVA TENORIO
PRESIDENT OF THE LIFE PROJECT
«Addictions cause social problems, dysfunction in families and, all in all, it's a health problem»

on addictions, «because right now the country does not have data on which to base ourselves and act accordingly». In addition, she noted that the text should provide for addiction prevention programs - with and without substance - and early detection, as well as the prevention of addictions in the workplace. Tenorio also considered that it is necessary to train professionals, and to carry out awareness and information campaigns for society in general. At the same time, she asked for more information to be given about drugs and addictions in a truthful way, without alarmism and with scientific data to back them up, because «the consumption of, for example, cannabis is very



SANDRA CANO
PRESIDENT OF THE ADJRA
«Andorra has the particularity of being a small country, and this fight can be carried out in a short period of time if we put the tools in place»

trivialized, and this will be a serious problem in the future». In this line, the president of Life Project expressed that all these proposals should be developed with a gender perspective, because «intervention and prevention are focused from an androcentric point of view», she maintained.

However, Tenorio and Cano explained that in recent years, consumption among young people has increased in a «worrying way», which «every time starts earlier». However, the president of Adjra opined that «Andorra has the particularity of being a small country, and this fight can be carried out within a deadline if we all put together tools and resources». ≡

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GENERAL COUNCIL

The mental health agreement is approved with the approval of all groups

The will of the agreement is to strengthen the area of human and economic resources to have a «guaranteed» service

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The agreement on mental health is approved with the support of all parliamentary groups and the inclusion of some modifications to the text from the amendments of the Social Democratic Party (PS). The aim of this measure is to strengthen the service of the mental health area of Hospital Nostra Senyora de Meritxell through human and financial resources to «alleviate the increase in care cases (+63%) that has experienced the Principality over the last two years». This was assured by the General Councilor of the PS Susanna Vela, after announcing the amendments that the social democrats made to the final text, which include new terms referring to the collectives of children and teenagers instead of youth and also the inclusion of the name of specific benefits for psychological affectations.

Going into the details of the measures contemplated by the agreement, the General Councilor of Democrats Berna Coma, announced that, after the aggravation of mental pathologies caused by the coronavirus pandemic, «reinforcement was necessary from the institutions that ensure the effective support of those affected and their relatives». This point is one of the main demands of the associations of the mentally ill, which ensure that there is a lot of focus on those affected and the families are left aside. Like-



► A photograph of the emblem of Andorra located in the box of the General Council.

wise, Coma stressed that with this agreement «we want to bet on the training of professionals to establish comprehensive care that provides guarantees».

In turn, the non-affiliated councilor, Carine Montaner, celebrated the union of the political groups to take this project forward. However,

she complained about the «long journey» that families outside the country have to make to visit those affected by mental illnesses and the savings that would mean having a specialized center in the Principality, which «would also create economic synergies and would energize the territory».

In the same way, Coma added that the understanding will also serve to strengthen the coordination between the ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Education in order to affect the maximum number of areas possible to «carry out a detection effective and early for all those situations that require speci-

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BERNA COMA
GEN. COUNCILOR OF DEMOCRATS
«Reinforcement was necessary from the institutions that would ensure the support of those affected and their families»

SUSANNA VELA
GENERAL COUNCILOR OF PS
«[The objective] is to alleviate the increase in cases that is above 60% in the last two years»

alized attention». Likewise, he spoke about the figure of the educator on the street who «through the collaboration of the municipalities» will also contribute to the detection and making of reports on mental health, together with the reinforcement of public campaigns of sensitization and awareness and the consolidation of the Individualized Monitoring Plan. Finally, Coma influenced the fact of the spaces of the current mental health area. In this sense, he announced that there will be a study of its dimensions and the adequacy of the spaces to accommodate the growing demand of users. ≡

Unanimity of the political parties in the increase in tobacco taxes

The increase will mean that the earnings go from 72 to 76 million euros

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Unanimity of the different parliamentary groups for tobacco rates to rise by 6%. And it is that the Bill amending the general rate of taxes

on consumption, which was processed by way of extreme urgency and necessity, was approved with the favorable vote of all the groups of the General Council. The different political forces agreed that this increase must be applied in order to maintain a price balance with neighboring states and also for the fight against illicit trafficking. The Minister of Finance, Eric Jover, explained

that «historically» the rates have been adapted to the international context to maintain the «fair balance between competitiveness and avoid that there is too much of a differential». He also added that although Spain has maintained a more or less stable price since 2017, in France there has been a policy aimed at increasing the price of tobacco since that year. In

this sense, we want to avoid that an «exaggerated» differential could increase illicit traffic. The head of Finance recalled that the cooperation with France is close in the fight against smuggling, but it was also necessary to increase fiscal pressure, and indicated that the neighboring country to the north applauded this measure. The «moderate» increase of 6% will mean, for example, that the kilogram of brown tobacco goes from 80.9 euros to 85.8. Opposition groups supported the measure. The president of the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group, Pere López, emphasized that they agree with the

measure, and emphasized the revenue-raising importance that this activity has for the country, recalling that with the increase, it goes from collecting 72 to 76 million, which represents 15% of the total income for the State. He defended that this increase in rates was necessary so that there is a «certain balance» between collection and the fight against smuggling. «It's a positive gesture», López concluded. Finally, Terceravia+Unió Laurediana+Independents also supported this modification and the Minister of Finance stated that it is «a good message» that «all are united» on this issue. ≡

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