



Interview with the Minister of Culture and Sports ▶ Reflection of the work in the portfolio and



Sílvia Riva, in an event with the media.

SFGA

## Sílvia Riva

Minister of Culture and Sports

«We firmly believe that digitization is a tool at the service of culture and heritage»

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Sílvia Riva is the head of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. In an interview with EL PERIÒDIC, she recalled the impact of the pandemic on the cultural sector and shared the main actions carried out in the current mandate.

**–What is your assessment of the actions undertaken by the Ministry of Culture in the current legislature?**

–On arrival at the Executive and from the hand of the Head of Government, a clear commitment was made to make a diagnosis of our cultural fabric. This was one of the challenges and strategic projects that we set ourselves from Culture, and it started through the White Book project, which precisely wanted to find out the state of the Andorran cultural fabric. That's why it was deemed appropriate to do it through citizen participation mechanisms, so that everyone felt questioned. Once this book was available, we believed that one of the priority actions, and which derived directly from the book and the massive demand from the sectors, was to make a Strategic Plan in the cultural field, which would tidy up and prioritize actions from each of the disciplines, and

that in due course it will be structured as a road map. Thus, immersed in this strategy, we have been working hard to reach the milestone of the White Paper, and soon we will have the result of the Strategic Plan to be able to share it.

On the other hand, the impact of the pandemic in an area as sensitive as that of culture has also been followed. I think that it has worked very well from the point of view that we have taken advantage of the opportunities that covid has given us to strengthen support for the cultural fabric of the country, creating programs such as La Cultura No s'Atura and taking a step forward in the coordination of municipal activities. I think that it was a very good tool to be able to coordinate the administrations to give a response, and that in turn, it also advances along the lines we set out to agree on the proposals, so that the cultural action has a coherence and greater visibility in Andorra.

**–In the same way, from their portfolio they are also in charge of the management of cultural heritage and language policies. What have been the main achievements?**

–In terms of heritage, we took stock of its enhancement, not only with the improvements made to the va-

rious monuments, but also with the visibility of the museums and the Unesco strategy, which what it is doing is working on a candidacy that gives importance to the construction of Andorra as a co-principality, based on the Romanesque heritage.

And if we refer to language, I think that a very good job has also been done in coordinating actions and projects to be able to improve language usage and knowledge. And linked to the diagnosis of the White Paper, work has begun that will strengthen everything necessary to have improvement tools in the progress towards the organization and use of the Catalan language.

**–Have there been any projects that have had to be postponed due to the context you have encountered?**

–Yes. The pandemic made us give up on the architectural projects linked to the Automobile Museum and the National Museum. Even so, it has not stopped, and in the second case, we have worked on the basis to endow the National Museum with an identity that explains the country, in other words, the national story. It is a tool that will include a historical description of all the chapters of Andorra, from its creation to contemporary times, and that will facilita-

te the common thread that we want the National Museum of Andorra to have. But with regard to the execution of the infrastructure, we already realized that at a time of pandemic, and after approving our Horizon 23, it had no place.

**–You referred to the covid experience. Do you think that the strengthening of the cultural sector has been the best thing you have left?**

–We could say yes. However, this motivation was there from the beginning, and this was confirmed by the lines of the White Book. It should be remembered that at the end of 2019



«The pandemic made us abandon the architectural project of the National Museum, but we have worked to give it an identity»

a proposal for an agreement was already approved in the parliamentary chamber for the elaboration of the Artist Statute. This fits in perfectly with this action of the ministry to promote the creation and cultural activities of the national sector, but also to give it a normative fund that understands the specificities of cultural work, and I think it will be one of the milestones reached this legislature for progress of our cultural industry.

**–Moving on to specific actions: at what point is the digitization of the National Archives?**

–The digitization of the Archive is a question that I appreciate very much because this huge task is becoming anonymous and at the same time a precursor to what is being a line of action of the Government itself, such as digitization. In this case, for conservation reasons, it was believed years ago that it was important to allocate some resources to digitizing the documentary heritage, but it is true that this has now also extended to the National Library, with the bibliographic heritage. For this reason, every year we have been calling for a joint digitization for some time. And this year, we will have the opportunity to talk about it more extensively, there is also a pro-

gram planned for the digitization of monuments that will help their conservation and study. In other words, we firmly believe that digitization is a tool at the service of culture and heritage, so we are promoting progress in the provision of resources in this regard.

**–And about the country’s architectural heritage, in what state of conservation do you think it is?**

–The conservation plan is always cyclical and has been followed by the Department of Heritage as one of the main tasks of technicians, restorers, archaeologists, and architects. But it is true that this legislature we had another event which was the collapse of the bell tower of Sant Vicenç d’Enclar, and then this project took center stage in the area because there was a conviction that it needed to be rebuilt. You have been able to follow the progress of this intervention and we are now in the second phase.

However, even though this is one of those works on which we have concentrated our efforts, we have not stopped doing actions that also deserve importance, for example, revising the bell towers of Sant Miquel d’Engolasters, Santa Coloma and Sant Joan de Caselles, in the latter case, accompanied by an improvement of the environment. We ha-

ve also been to Sant Roc de Sornàs and will soon review Santa Bàrbara d’Ordino, at the same time that we are working on the blackboards of all the churches. In addition, I would like to point out that the team does a very good job keeping in mind the agenda, that is, making these improvements and that the heritage shines especially before the summer, which is when it is used to open these monuments to the public.

**–The third thing that has been mentioned is that of the language. What actions have they started recently?**

–Right at the beginning of the legislature, the latest study of the uses and knowledge of Catalan was published, and from there the themes of the campaigns we promoted were derived: firstly, in different professional areas where it was necessary to strengthen the use of Catalan; then, a very casual and fun one to promote the social use of Catalan among young people; the last one was to focus on the beauty of our language; and the next one that we have already awarded is to strengthen the rights and obligations regarding the language in our country.

**–And how do you think the Andorran variant can be highlighted when it has fewer speakers than others?**

–We were pleasantly surprised by the meeting we had with the president of the Institute of Catalan Studies, because we think that this new board is taking into account and listening to all the territories. The fact that they now want to work with a dictionary that starts from this in-



«There was a conviction that the bell tower of Sant Vicenç d’Enclar needed to be rebuilt and we have focused our efforts on it»

clusion motivated us, because it is no longer just the Andorran territory, but there are also other areas with variants of few speakers, but all of them enrich. That is why we are studying how to support this new project. We are also starting new work with the Ramon Llull Foundation, which since 2008 has been promoting the recognition of Catalan-speaking authors and creators, and we think it is important to create flows and knowledge between them all. Thus, the new board of trustees is studying a new project that unites and shares these existing variants, which we think will end up enriching, not only the external promotion of the language, but will also contribute to linking the different territories.

**– We are in the summer break of political activity. Once you continue, as Executive, what will be your objectives until the end of your mandate?**

–From the Executive we celebrate the legislative work that has been done this year, not only for the bills that were pending, but also for the legislative proposals that have been imposed by the general councilors, which have helped to advance an ambitious political agenda. Many legal reforms have been achieved despite the pandemic, and some more may yet see the light of

day. But beyond the legislative task, what will remain for us to face are topical and important issues, such as the actions to deal with the housing problem. We have the Borda Nova project, Casa Armor, and credits to obtain properties from the Government and make them available. I think that this is one of the concerns shared by all members of the Executive, beyond our own portfolios, and we work together to respond to this need. And in relation to this, and since it is an aspect that has a lot to do with it, we are also working to improve mobility, opting for public transport and rationalizing the use of our own vehicle, without neglecting the forecasts to expand our road network because we need to communicate well. And finally, we have on the table the reflections that we must make on the limitation that we will have to define, together with the municipalities, of the country’s growth ceiling. What the Government is looking for in this matter is for there to be a consistency and a balance between the quality of life enjoyed by the people who live in Andorra, and the opportunities we are generating when it comes to continuing to be a tourist country, and then of busy months managing the pandemic, we will now be able to focus our efforts more intensively. ≡

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