



## Obituary ▶ Antoni Martí i Petit

EL PERIÒDIC



▶▶ Xavier Espot signing the book of condolences in honor of Antoni Martí.

# Mourning for Toni Martí

The institutional authorities sign the book of condolences in honor of the former head of government

Xavier Espot regrets the loss of his mentor and thanks his work during his term

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Last Tuesday morning, at 11:00 a.m., the book of condolences dedicated to the former head of government, Antoni Martí Petit, who passed away on Monday afternoon, was opened. The current Head of Government and former Secretary of State and Minister to Martí's Executives, Xavier Espot, released the document by writing a final farewell to his predecessor, with whom he had been in close contact in recent months for the incorporation of the former representative as an active observer in the negotiating delegation for the association agreement with the European Union (EU). After the president, all the ministers of the current Executive signed and dedicated a few words to Martí in the book of condolences, as well as other authorities such as the trustee Carles Ensenyat, the leader of the opposition, Cerni Escalé, and the consuls

of Sant Julià de Lòria, Josep Majoral and Mireia Codina.

Espot described Toni Martí as an «inevitable figure and person in the contemporary history of Andorra, beyond the personal connection I had with him, because he was my mentor and, until last Tuesday, he was also my advisor in this big project we have started (of rapprochement with the EU). He has made a noteworthy and absolutely remarkable contribution in the last 30 years of the country's political history from the position of general counsel and president of the parliamentary group, then consul of Escaldes-Engordany and, finally, as head of government. Architect of the transformation of the parish of Escaldes, he put it at the head of the rest through a rigorous, avant-garde and pioneering management».

The head of government also recalled the most outstanding actions that Martí took while occupying the position of head of government, explaining that «we owe him the cul-

mination of the process of transformation, approval and international transparency of Andorra. The first thing he did as head of government was to sign the monetary agreement, knowing the implications this would have in terms of implementing the community flow. Despite this, he had the courage to do it, because he knew that he was part of this process of rapprochement with the EU that was unavoidable if we wanted Andorra to leave the list of tax havens and to be recognized internationally as a cooperating, advanced and modern state». In this line, the current president made an

**All the ministers of the Executive, the trustees general and the leader of the opposition offered their condolences**

amendment that, under the direction of Antoni Martí, Andorra completed the fiscal framework, the implementation of a deep reform of the public administration and the lifting of bank secrecy, actions that the current president has pointed out as of great significance for the current negotiations with the European Union. In addition, Espot added that «we will miss him in the final phase of the negotiations with the EU, because as an active observer we spoke almost every day and took stock of progress. I will try to anticipate or imagine what he would have advised me, because, in 95% of cases, this advice was good».

At the same time, focusing more on the national level, Espot endorsed the reformist nature that he attributes to his predecessor, knowing how to balance progressivism and conservatism as the circumstances required. The leader of the current Executive explained that «he always knew how to place himself in this political centrality. He knew how

to deal with and lead the country at times such as the BPA crisis, which put the country's financial crisis in jeopardy.» Also, Espot has declared that «as a mentor and following in his wake, I want to continue to be inspired by him, following his advice and way of seeing things».

The current president has explained that the two days of mourning declared in memory of Toni Martí will change his schedule, since «on Wednesday he had to leave for Paris to participate in the Unesco conference of heads of state and government. We will have to change the flight, but my schedule in Paris will be able to be held normally except for an event with the young students». It should be mentioned that, as part of the negotiations of the association agreement with the European Union, Martí should have traveled last Tuesday with the negotiating delegation to Brussels to continue with the negotiations of the international treaty with European body. ≡

## The last goodbye to Antoni Martí Petit

The Escaldes funeral home welcomed many citizens to say goodbye

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Last Tuesday at 4:00 p.m., dozens of citizens came to the funeral home in Escaldes-Engordany to be able to say their last goodbyes to someone who was a key figure in Andorra's history

in recent decades. Next to the entrance to the funeral home, the multiple wreaths were placed that paid tribute to Antoni Martí. Several public institutions, parliamentary groups, families close to Martí, the co-principal business groups, sports organizations, media, the municipalities, work colleagues and friends of the former head of government wanted to pay tribute to the figure of the former head of government, offering wreaths

at his ceremony. The Mass to say goodbye to Antoni Martí will be today at 4:00 p.m. at the Church of Sant Pere Màrtir. In the statements made last Tuesday morning by the Head of Government, Xavier Espot, he said that the mass will be a state funeral that will have the official presence of the Episcopal Prince and Bishop of Urgell, Joan-Enric Vives, accompanied by the country authorities, family and friends during the ceremony. ≡



▶▶ Wreaths of flowers in honor of Martí.

J.J.



# «I have been lucky and honored to have been chosen seven times by the Andorran people»

**TONI MARTÍ** We remember the last interview with the former head of government

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The last interview that was given to Toni Martí from this medium was before the national elections last April. At that time, the former head of government had re-established his architecture firm. With him, we reviewed the current affairs of the country and dealt with the most delicate and controversial issues of the previous legislature.

**-What are you doing at the moment?**  
-I am an architect by profession and therefore I had to redo my architecture office, and this is my main occupation at the moment.

**-Would you like to return to active politics?**

-No, because I think that a leader must know when it is no longer his time, I will soon be 60 years old. I have been lucky and honored to have been elected seven times, three times as general counsel, twice as consul and two more as head of government, and with my successes and failures there comes a point that you have to let somebody else pass. It's not so much a personal choice of what you believe, but common sense; when one has become head of government in two legislatures to try again would seem to me to be beyond any reasonable logic. In addition, I have already commented on repeated occasions, there is life beyond politics, and it is the life I want to live. I do not aspire to hold any public office, I follow what happens politically with interest, but my decision is unequivocal.

**-What do you think of the current political landscape?**

-The situation is changing. In my time, I had initially been a member of the Liberal party, which I left to present myself as consul with an independent group, and subsequently I founded Democrats for Andorra (DA) with other people. Therefore, I look at the current atmosphere with a certain paradox from the point of view that our party was lucky enough to obtain two absolute majorities. The proliferation of forces makes it difficult to give broad consensus once again around a single formation, which is why alliances will be essential.

**-You were not in favor of the pact with the liberals. How do you rate this legislature with the coalition government?**

-It's true, I personally wasn't in favor of it, but it's another position in front of many that are diverse and plural. It is true that Mr. Espot thinks that coalition governments work, and the reality is that from the perspective of institutional stability it has worked. Regarding the evaluation, I think that this legislature has been divided into two parts: the first two years, the government -like all states -has made almost the same policies and focused all efforts on solving the health crisis of the pandemic, which has not been a local problem, but an international one and, therefore, the measures that were adopted were global and practically identical everywhere. I think that in this sense the executive managed well, but also a lot of money has been spent, all Western countries have gone into a lot of debt, and sooner or later it will have to be implemented a containment policy that prioritizes the correct management of public money, because the administration, faced with an emergency situation, has had to incur a debt that will have to be repaid and the resources are what they are. The second part of the legislature is a consequence of the first, and what has been done has been to allocate a lot of public capital to reactivate the economic fabric, and this has been a mimetic procedure carried out in general by all the territories, whether whatever color they are. If you do not want to increase the fiscal pressure in the Principality, you will have to be very careful when choosing investment preferences, because there will be no policies to say yes to everything.

**-As an architect, how would you solve the serious housing problem facing the Principality?**

-I have said it on more than one occasion, that whoever claims to have a solution is deceiving himself, but the most serious thing is that he is deceiving people with this proposal, because there are no magic formulas. Construction is at an unbridled moment, which does not help with housing prices; on the other hand, land release policies are not the exclusive power of the Government of Andorra,



►► The former head of government, Toni Martí.

ra, they basically belong to the municipalities. Already in 2019 it was observed that after one or two years there would be many promotions underway, and bearing in mind that not all municipalities have the same financial situation, so it is a way to enter. Specifically, parishes such as Escaldes or Andorra la Vella have a good economic situation partly due to this factor. The land law allows the allocation of portions of the money collected when building. If this alternative had been applied from the beginning, by now there would be many flats that would be the property of the municipalities and that could be sold at an adjusted market price. But there must be a shared will between government and parishes. Consequently, there are no miracle recipes, but what must be ensured is that this does not go further. Surely, in these elections the parties will make proposals trying to find balance, which would be desirable.

**-What do you think of the controversial P3 laboratory in Ordino?**

-I am not a specialist on biological and other issues, what I understand is that it is an innovation investment that will be welcomed in Andorra, therefore, I will not make any statement against it. I believe that on those issues that cause tension or controversy, referendums will be held more and more, and I don't think that's a bad thing; now, from here for any circumstance a query is made there is disproportionately. It is good to ask the opinion of the people on spe-

cific matters, because unfortunately in the country we are voting less and less and we have to make the population feel much more involved in the decisions that are made, even if it is through a referendum.

**-And about the association agreement with Europe?**

-If we have to enter and we don't prepare the requirements that we are asked to do in parallel, it is of no use. The investor wants to know the rules of the game, our taxation is attractive, but if he cannot find a physical space to set up, we are not doing the proper branching of sectors for what is more important, the partnership agreement, which is to diversify the economy around internal market rules. Then there are internal aspects of security, immigration and banking that will have to be skillfully negotiated. It was not easy to get 30 years for the free movement of goods section; a great negotiation was carried out regarding a product like tobacco which is conflicting, so that Andorran manufactured tobacco is still protected without touching the price beyond what is stipulated in the agreements. If that was possible, I think many options are still feasible. As for the referendum, it has its drawbacks, because once there is a result, it is not worth saying I was wrong and going back. Therefore, if in the end the Andorran people say no, it will take time to knock on the European door again, and we will see what effects this decision has on our society. Consequently, a lot of peda-

gogy must be done so that public opinion sees the advantages, but what cannot be said is that there will be no resignation, because that would confuse the public. What must be evaluated is whether it is worth it and see the pros and cons well, because we play a lot.

**-Another of Andorra's major drawbacks is the huge staff turnover. Why do you think people end up leaving the territory?**

-There is another difficulty here for which I also do not have a solution and which is palpable in the atmosphere, which is that living in the Principality and accessing affordable rent is complicated. On the other hand, there are economies that work better in Europe; there is another element that should make us think about our growth and that is that there is not only rotation. When today we have so many Peruvians it is because there is a shortage of skilled labor in the surrounding countries, surely because everyone, legitimately, wanted their children to be doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., and trades like, for example, a good plumber, they are hard to find. This has caused people who come from countries with poorer or humbler economies to want to come. This is an effect of European deindustrialization that is more noticeable in Andorra.

**-Do you think that the BPA case will always accompany you as a black mark in your political career?**

-No, it was an episode that I wish I hadn't had to live through as head of government, nor the Andorran state as a nation.

**-What would be your wish for this 2023?**

-I wish the Government good luck, because there are many things at stake and it will not be easy at all, since the situation we are currently experiencing is very complicated. Everyone criticizes politicians, but it must be recognized that they probably all go there with great enthusiasm, despite the fact that once you are head of government you often feel very alone and want to run away. However, I am convinced that they are all people who love their country, but they will have to be careful with the decisions they make, because in general the West lives in a complex situation. There is a kind of atmosphere in which coexistence is breaking down, and in a small society like ours it would be a drama. Precisely, I have always defended that the guarantee of the Andorran State resides in that there is good internal coexistence and that the policies are extremely balanced. You can be liberal, but the Government must intervene if things get out of hand. ≡

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