



SAVING PLAN

The Government is «forced» to raise the price of the electricity bill again

Spain has already cut the electricity supply on two occasions for a few hours this October

The price increase for regular customers will be 8% and for professional customers 17%

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«We're sorry. We would have liked not to do it, but we are forced to make a second increase in energy consumption rates this year.» This is how the Head of Government, Xavier Espot, started yesterday, before announcing a new rise in electricity which will mean, on average, an increase in the price of 8% and which basically responds to two parameters: on the one hand, Espot will explain that on October 4th and 10th, Spain cut off the supply for a few hours, which forced FEDA to activate its contingency plan by producing as much energy as possible at the Engolasters hydroelectric plant - with its consequent cost - and to increase the import from France. «I want to send a message of relative tranquility in the sense that this does not obey a punishment in Andorra, but is the cause of maintenance maneuvers at different power stations that made it impossible for Spain to offer us energy [they also applied to Portugal and Morocco]. These are cuts that we already anticipated, but we didn't expect them to be before winter», acknowledged the head of government, adding that thanks to FEDA's quick action «no one noticed». The other reason that justifies the new price increase is that the electricity company currently presents an income statement of negative 16.4 million, which at the end of the year could turn into a deficit of between 25 and 30 million.

In addition, «we must regret that despite the fact that during the month of September we made many recommendations with forceful messages calling for a saving of 15%, not only we manage to reduce consumption, but we increased it by 2%», said Espot. This, therefore, has a direct impact on individual bills but also on the economic viability of FEDA, so that the Executive has decided to «accelerate the implementation» of a plan that will come into force on December 1st (the original idea was from next year). With regard to domestic consumption, a «moderate increase»

FEDA's losses exceed 16 million and could close the year with a deficit of between 25 and 30 million

is proposed without compromising the purchasing power of citizens», which for the most common bills, corresponding to 80% of customers, will be less than 8%, equivalent to between 3 and 5 monthly euros. For professional customers, the average increase will be 17% of the bill, while the subsidized rate for vulnerable families remains unchanged. In this sense, the Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, Sílvia Calvó, announced a grant of 150 euros for a thousand households with inco-

mes lower than 1.3% of the LECS.

As for the private sector, it is suggested to turn off interior lights and air conditioning during non-working hours and non-weekdays, exterior lighting and shop windows may only be on during business opening hours and it is prohibited night lighting of signs and advertisements. The municipalities, for their part, must apply the same measures as the General Administration with the particularity that, for example, the Christmas lights can only be maintained for a maximum of 6.5 weeks and until 00.00 hours and they will also pay for public lighting, a cost that since the 1980s FEDA assumed 100% and that this spring, anticipating the crisis following the war in Ukraine, was reduced to 50%.

On the other hand, and as an accompanying measure, the Govern-

ment is increasing the partial refund of the special tax on hydrocarbons from 3,000 liters to 8,000 liters, from which around 1,000 vehicles will benefit. In a similar vein, the green rate planned for 2023 until 2024 for heating oil is also postponed.

In the medium term, Calvó highlighted the inauguration of the Grau Roig solar park, which should produce 1,400 MW/year (1.3% of national production), the construction of the Maià wind farm and the boost to solar parks in different modalities. In parallel, the Executive will invest 15 million euros to capitalize FEDA and guarantee investments in renewable infrastructure that make the country less dependent on the outside world.

Finally, it should be noted that the president of the Social Democratic Party, Pere López, expressed

his indignation, considering that «only 10 days ago the budget was presented» and the director of FEDA, Albert Moles, announced a possible increase in 15%, but for January 1st. «We don't understand what has changed and how an increase in electricity is applied as is the rest of the cost of living», he pointed out. In addition, he assured that the measures will serve to increase the rates for citizens, but not to reduce general consumption because their part «is insignificant». «What should people do? Be in the dark? Don't watch TV? It is the big companies and the municipalities that can represent real savings», he affirmed while denouncing that everything seems to be «pressure from outside [Spain and France] and demonstrates, once again, unacceptable mismanagement». ≡

SOURCE GOVERN D'ANDORRA

ENERGY SAVING RECOMENDATIOS FOR THE CITIZENS IN DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION TO REDUCE EXPENDITURE

TEMPERATURE



Keep the air conditioning off whenever possible



Close doors and windows if you have the air conditioning running



The temperature of the air conditioning must be at least 26° c in the hot months



The temperature of the air conditioning must be at least 20° c in the hot months

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY



Use the stairs instead of the elevator



Try to go on foot, by bike or by public transport, whenever possible

LIGHTED UP



Keep artificial lighting off whenever possible



Turn off the lights before leaving each room or premises

ELECTRONIC AND COMPUTER DEVICES



Keep electronic appliances turned off when not in use



Unplug appliances that do not have a power switch when not in use

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HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The lack of professionals in the SAAS will be «one of the most serious problems»

The institution approves its first collective agreement to improve the working conditions of its workers

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The Andorran Health Care Service (SAAS) is aware of the difficulties it is having and will have in the short term in attracting health professionals. This was acknowledged last Tuesday by its general manager, Josep Maria Piqué, in the framework of the presentation of the institution's first collective agreement, where he pointed out that «we must work on the aspect of attracting and retaining talents», detailing that «the recruitment conditions have changed», and recognizing that «it is one of the most serious problems we have in the coming years». Specifically, and looking at Catalonia - one of the most frequent points of origin for health professionals who arrive in Andorra -, Piqué pointed out that «there is a massive retirement forecast in five years, which directly affects us». In this way, the general director stressed that it is necessary to implement «many measures» to improve this recruitment, although he referred to issues such as facilitating the procedures for the approval of newly arrived professionals, or the promotion of research projects that favor professional development.

But, on the part of the workers, and more specifically, as pointed out by the president of the SAAS Company Committee, Manolo Medina, one of the main elements that make the offer less competitive is precisely one of those that has not been achieved in the collective agreement: the hourly reduction of the full-time working day. And it is that, as he explained, this is a measure that has been applied to neighboring countries, and for this reason, he assessed that «it will be difficult to attract quality labor». In the same vein, Medina also pointed out that other aspects that have remained pending in the agreement are the definition of jobs according to the required training - something that would allow defining a salary scale - or a guard regulation, a text that is «pending for many years and it is an important milestone». In short, elements that «will be a source of ideas for the negotiation



► Josep Maria Piqué, Luís Buendía and Manolo Medina, during last Tuesday's appearance.

of the next agreement».

THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT // The reason for the appearance was the presentation of the first SAAS collective agreement, which, as Piqué considered, «is a very important act for

the institution». The general manager asserted that the agreement results in «a starting point» and is part of a «common objective: to improve the working conditions in this house». In short, he remarked that «it gives a very encouraging future

perspective». The head of the Personnel Management area of the SAAS, Daniel Bonafé, recalled that the process began in March 2019, when the management was notified about the desire to start the negotiation of this text. The coronavirus pandemic has directly affected the development of the work, but nevertheless, a text has been reached in which, of the 50 points to be worked on, there has been a favorable understanding on 39.

The person in charge of detailing the main agreements was the manager representing the company in the Negotiating Committee, Luís Buendía, who highlighted three areas as the main ones in the improvements achieved: professional development, recognition of the value of workers, and family reconciliation.

Regarding professional development, Buendía highlighted the expansion of the allocation for the

training of workers, which in the 2023 budget has been calculated at 360,000 euros. But the most relevant point of this group corresponds to the recovery of the Career Plan, which has been on stand-by for a decade. This program provides that every five years, workers can achieve a salary improvement of 5% of the base salary if they prove their worth. In this way, between 2022 and 2023, around 700 SAAS professionals will be able to take advantage of this increase, which is a significant number considering that it represents almost 80% of full-time hired workers (around 900). Thus, the institution will have to deal with an increase in salary ex-

An agreement that has not been reached and that makes SAAS less competitive is the reduction in working hours

penditure to the value of two million euros, 3% of the total allocated (about 50 million). Regarding the recognition of the value of workers, the manager detailed that it includes an improvement in the purchasing power of the workforce, with salary increases corresponding to the CPI - of 3.3% this year and estimated at 4.5% the next one-. «It's important to protect the purchasing power of workers, and more so at a time like the current one,» emphasized Buendía. And finally, with regard to labor conciliation, he explained that it includes a «reinforcement» of conciliation aspects and the improvement of permits in different cases.

In short, all the parties agreed to celebrate this dynamic that started from the SAAS and the fact that the negotiation has been very constructive and equal, at the same time that they found it a «historical milestone». In fact, among the attendees were the Minister of Health, Albert Font, and the Secretary of State for Health, Helena Mas, pointing out once again the importance of this agreement, which is effective from today. ■

main improvements

- 1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
The Career Plan is being restored, which between 2022 and 2023 will benefit almost 80% of the SAAS workforce working full-time and has been calculated at around two million euros. It also includes an expansion of the endowment for the training of professionals.
- 2 RECOGNITION OF THE VALUE OF WORKERS**
The annual increase in wages is formalized based on the CPI. In this way, a 3.3% increase has already been applied this year, while in the SAAS budgets for 2023, an increase of 4.5% has been estimated. The will is to protect the purchasing power of workers.
- 3 FAMILY CONCILIATION**
Different conditions affecting workers' family reconciliation are reinforced and formalized. Permits have been revised or added in different cases, such as for moving home, for the death of a family member, for the birth of a child, for serious illness or for surgical intervention, among others.

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

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad