



ALMOST A YEAR OF REGULAR FLIGHTS

## Viaplana considers the operation of the route in Madrid a «success»

The mayor positively values the expansion of destinations, as long as they are sustainable

The municipality points out that the equipment is «one more link» in the good relationship with Andorra

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When it has been almost a year since the air route between Madrid and Andorra-la Seu d'Urgell Airport was inaugurated, the council of the capital of Alt Urgell makes a «very positive» assessment of its development. This is what the mayor, Francesc Viaplana, explained to EL PERIÒDIC, who shared that «this flight to Madrid is working very well, with high employment levels», and for this reason, «we believe it is a success». It should be remembered that, as explained by the Minister of the Presidency, Economy and Business, Jordi Gallardo, a week ago, the line has reached 69% occupancy in these first 11 months of operation, reaching 80% during the season of winter. Thus, and as Viaplana remarked, «La Seu airport has a lot of activity with other types of flights, helicopters, airplanes, air taxis... But we were missing the piece of having regular flights», therefore, «The opinion is favorable, and we are looking forward to have more destinations».

In fact, the company that has been covering the route for the first year and that has repeated in the new award of the service, Air Nostrum, together with the Government, are estimating the possibility of opening horizons with the establishment of new routes. In this sense, from the Municipality of La Seu d'Urgell they point out that «it is the companies that must decide the destinations, taking into account their viability», since despite recognizing that «we would like to have links everywhere, the most important thing is that they are viable». For this reason, Viaplana reaffirmed that «the success with the route to Madrid is that it has had high occupancy», and for this reason it is essential that «in the new destinations the relevant studies are carried out so that they are also



► The aircraft that covers the route between Madrid and La Seu d'Urgell, on the day of the inaugural flight.

**The council believes that the «success» in the journey to the Spanish capital is that it has had a high level of employment**

economically sustainable».

In the same vein, and given the possibility of establishing a third weekly connection with the Spanish capital that has also been put on the table, the mayor indicated that it is an idea that the council also sees favorably. In short, the approach of the local government of La Seu is that «in the infrastructures where there have been significant investments, it is essential a high-level use and that they are used as much as possible» and, therefore, «we have an airport, so what we want is for it to function to the

maximum of its capabilities».

On the other hand, with regard to the economic return of the activity of this equipment on the commercial fabric of the Alturgellenca population, from the town hall they detailed that it has not been quantified or analyzed. However, Viaplana assessed that «there is certainly a positive economic impact», referring to possible jobs created or the increase in stays in accommodation in La Seu and the surrounding area. Likewise, the mayor also pointed out that the capital of Alt Urgell is promoted through this infras-



**Francesc Viaplana**  
SEU D'URGELL MAYOR

«In the infrastructures where there have been significant investments, it is essential that they are then used as much as possible»

tructure, since «when you are on a map, in this case through an airport, this gives you more knowledge of the territory».

In any case, from the council they do not think that the establishment of regular commercial routes have had an influence on investments in other communication routes adjacent to the installation, such as the upcoming actions announced by the Spanish government on the roads N-260 and N-245. In these two specific cases, Viaplana emphasized that «the reason why it is necessary to act is because of the volume of traffic they support, which is very high», and therefore, «I would not dare to say that they have to do with the location of this infrastructure».

Finally, the mayor assessed that «the airport is another link that unites us in Andorra», referring to the «social, economic and historical synergies we have with the Principality», and declaring that «everything that is good for the neighbors it is good for us, and vice versa». For this reason, Viaplana ruled that «relations between Andorra and La Seu are very good and have always been, and we must try to keep it that way». ≡

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HOUSING

# Argentines in Andorra wants to prioritize the search for temporary accommodation

The group estimates that in the coming weeks between 2,000 and 2,500 more Argentines will arrive in the country

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The director of the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), Jordi Pujol, already warned last week that some temporary workers could be left without a place to sleep. For this reason, the Argentines group in Andorra wants to prioritize the response to the problem of housing for seasonal workers. However, finding a job is also another matter that the temporary workers must deal with, but the issue of «accommodation is more important than work», pointed out the promoter of the association, Marcelo Ponce.

The arrival of temporary workers has been very noticeable during the last few days. So much so that very often you can see people walking along the main streets of the country leaving resumes in establishments. In this sense, the migration of Argentines to Andorra has been caused by two different aspects. On the one hand, because of the distressing situation caused by the econo-

**The promoter of the group** proposed to the Government to create an office to help solve the problems of temporary workers



► CVs of temporary workers at the entrance to a hotel in La Massana.

mic crisis that the South American country is experiencing. On the other hand, for seasonal workers who contact companies and have information about Andorra, but who nevertheless arrive in the country without a job. Ponce emphasized that «between 1,000 and 1,200 Argentines arrived last week», and that «about 2,000 or 2,500 more» are expected in the coming weeks. Related to this fact, the promoter of Argentines in Andorra explained that this year the temporary workers «arrived much earlier thinking that they would find work or the companies would hire them earlier». The reality, however, is very different, and people have been left with no money and no rent. This is why many seasonal workers, despite having a job, have been forced to leave the country.

From Argentines in Andorra, in a meeting with the Head of Government, Xavier Espot, the creation of a specific office for temporary workers was proposed. The main function of this would be «dealing with the issue of housing, making a register of seasonal workers and controlling the records of each one». In addition, it would serve to help wor-

kers with their papers, lend a helping hand to the Immigration Service and ask employers for solutions. Still without an exact answer from the Executive, this office «sooner or later will become a reality, not because of our success, but because it is needed».

On the other hand, and specifically to solve the lack of accommodation, the group promoted by Ponce proposed to reopen the hotels that are closed. An idea that «may not solve the housing problem, but it would at least help alleviate it». The methodology they project is that of Grandvalira, «where they provide a hotel with breakfast and dinner». However, not all workers have a place, only 50 or 60% of them.

Recently, due to these difficulties in finding an apartment and a job, an appeal was launched on social networks warning that coming to Andorra might not be the best idea for those who want to stay temporarily. In this sense, the promoter of Argentines in Andorra played down the importance of these facts claiming that these are private people and that «networks are networks». Also, he does not understand that it



**Marcelo Ponce**

PROMOTER OF ARGENTINES IN ANDORRA

«To any resident who does something stupid, let the force of the law be applied to him. But pointing at all Argentines is a mistake»

should be done now because «there are 4,900 jobs and the recruitments have just started, they are being done right now», and he added that «if we were close to December, these calls could be done». Related to the social conflicts that have recently been associated with temporary workers, such as the graffiti in public places in Soldeu and Ransol, Ponce emphasized that any resident «who does something silly, whether Andorran, Argentinian, Portuguese or Spanish, must apply the force of law. However, pointing at all Argentines is a mistake».

Finally, the promoter of the group explained that next week they will meet again with the head of government and the director of Grandvalira to try to resolve all these issues. In addition, they will also discuss issues such as the promotion of Workers' Day, «which has now been secondary», and the proposed tools for temporary workers to learn Catalan. Nevertheless, Ponce clarified that «we do not want to do politics, but to be listened to and promote, for example, the cultural or sports integration» of the newcomers. ≡