



PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET

Nearly 60 new seasonal contracts since December 15th

|| About 600 Argentinians have had to emigrate to countries such as Portugal and about 300 have returned to South America

|| Ponce emphasizes that even large companies have made hires, «an exceptional fact»

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Argentinian group in Andorra highlights that, despite having already started the winter season, seasonal workers have continued to be contracted. «We found nearly 60 new ones after December 15th», said the promoter of the collective, Marcelo Riccio Ponce. «Small and medium-sized companies open their quota from the 10th or 15th of the last month of the year, but we were surprised that even large companies made recruitments, an exceptional fact», he added.

«To our surprise, we found that annual contracts are also being made», emphasized Ponce. A not very common fact that Argentinians in Andorra understand is due to the lack of staff. In this sense, the promoter of the association explained that these types of contracts «have been a little more than 100» where, apart from the seasonal ones, «most people work as administrative staff, maintenance staff, drivers or in construction».

Therefore, Andorra currently has around 2,200 Argentinian seasonal workers, apart from those with annual contracts, bringing the total figure to around 2,300 seasonal workers of the South American country.

Asked for the balance sheet since November, with the massive arrival of seasonal workers, until today, Ponce pointed out that it is positive. In relation to this, however, «from the association we take two views». The first is the number of Argentinian workers hired, a «historic» number with respect to employees who repeated. On the other hand, «we have the situation of mass arrival, I don't remember precedents of another similar episode». On the other hand, the promoter of the group



► File image of the Immigration Service.

wanted to highlight what he considers the most important milestone: getting companies to provide more accommodation. In the case of large companies, «close to 98%, and in some cases up to 100%», while small and medium-sized corporations «we found that some who have never provided hosting, have done so this year». For this reason, precisely, Ponce believes that the seasonal contract will be accompanied by accommodation: «It is the way we will arrive».

Consequently, «the collective has stabilized». «At this moment all the workers have jobs, and we have a good response from them and their working environment». However, during the last two months, «nearly 600 employees emigrated to other countries such as Spain, Malta, Croatia and especially Portugal». Of these, the majority did so due to a lack of work: «They arrived without knowing the Andorran system and at a time when small and medium-sized

businesses were not open». In addition, another 300 Argentinians had to return to their country of origin and other surrounding countries such as Uruguay and Chile, since they could not find work or housing in the Principality.

It should be remembered that Argentinians in Andorra proposes the creation of a specific office for temporary workers. Its function would be, as Ponce mentioned, «to provide correct information to those who



Marcelo Ponce

PROMOTER OF ARGENTINIANS IN ANDORRA

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«To our surprise, we found that annual contracts are also being made. Specifically, there have been a little more than 100»

want to be seasonal workers and to give companies the correct information about them». Thus, its activation «is already in progress because those involved are convinced that a solution is needed», he added.

Finally, the promoter of the collective pointed out that the work of starting the day of the seasonal worker is progressing: «We are trying to make it in the middle of February or March». In this sense, «the idea is to make an exhibition of photographs of Argentinians in Andorra to inaugurate it on the same day, and to be able to make a beautiful, cultural and integrative event». ≡

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HOUSING

Real estate companies blame some owners for the high rental price

All the real estate companies know cases of people who «have nowhere to sleep» or who want to evict them from their flats

RAÚL ALEJANDRO RODRÍGUEZ



►► Archive image of Príncipe Benlloch Square.

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The rise in the price of housing throughout the country is causing the working class to be immersed in a serious problem to find affordable rent in Andorra. There are already numerous temporary workers who complain that they are living in questionable conditions and Andorran workers who are seeing an exponential increase in the price of rents, which they cannot afford due to their salaries. The manager of 7 Claus Immobiliària, Toni Capella, denounces the situation that some citizens of the country are experiencing: «People call us desperate and worried, we are having a hard time, they tell us that they can't find a flat, that we are looking for them no matter what; you feel powerless and it's complicated because you don't get to everything.» In the same vein, the owner of Immobiliària Alpina, Cristina Canal, assures that «right

now we don't have affordable apartments, we have a lot of demand for lower rents, and we have zero supply».

The problem with the price of rent has meant that affordable residences cannot be found for all applicants. Capella explains that «you need the supermarket cashier, the one who dispatches at the butcher shop and the one who works in industry, they are the ones who move the country and have the right to live there».

Currently, there is a lot of demand for work throughout the territory, but foreign employees who consider coming to live in Andorra find the main obstacle in the exorbitant housing prices, which means that many discard the idea. Most of the constructions are of new construction and are focusing on luxury apartments, which at the same time are intended for people with a higher purchasing power. On the other hand, the law on energy efficiency in buildings requires quality standards, which means that construc-

tion prices are expensive. In the case of developers or owners, they buy the square meter at a high price to later extract profitability.

The situation is leading many citizens to look for other alternatives to be able to continue living in the Principality. Canal confesses that «we have tenants who have nowhere to sleep, we even know of a case of a person who is sleeping in a car». The administrator of Immobiliària Gestim, Natàlia Donancon, recognizes from her experience that «there are no flats to rent for all the salaries, it has reached the point where five families are living in the same flat».

Most of the new constructions focus on luxury and exclude the working population

Likewise, many people are considering going to live outside the country in order to have a home they can afford. «my acquaintances have even gone to live in La Seu d'Urgell because they have found cheaper rent and a bigger flat», says Donancon.

As there is no limit on the rental price, some owners are speculating with their homes. Mamen Carrasco, owner of KSA Real Estate, explains that «an owner bought the flat with the tenants inside, they paid 1050 euros and now he wants to rent it for 1900 and wants to evict them». In the same vein, Canal assures that «there are owners who are renting their homes at prices that do not correspond to them». However, he declares that «those who want to speculate on their flat can do so, in the end you cannot tell an owner what price to put on his flat».

The sale or rental of luxury properties are often intended for foreigners who see Andorra with great tax benefits. This means that their purchasing power affects the price and, in



Toni Capella
MANAGER

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Cristina Canal
OWNER

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Natàlia Donancon
ADMINISTRATIVE

«There are no apartments to rent for all salaries. It has reached the point where five families are living in the same flat»

Mamen Carrasco
OWNER

«Yes, there is a rental offer in Andorra, but at prices that not all families can access»

this sense, Capella declares that «we have foreign investors who come to the country because they find a fiscal situation that favors them more. And this means that they can pay more expensive prices for the housing they want».

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