



Interview with the Director of the INH. ▶ We start with the Strategic Plan and the diagnosis as

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

@PeriodicAND

Josep Maria Pla leads the Steering Committee that oversees the first term of the National Housing Institute (INH). This institution is intended to promote the line of action of housing policies in the country in order to curb one of the great problems of Andorra and the main concern of the citizens.

–How was your first contact in office?

–First of all, I would like to thank the people who have trusted me to take on this task, which I understand will have a significant impact on the population and the future of the welfare state of Andorra, and I feel great pleasure to be associated with it. It also gives me respect, because we are talking about a very basic need of people, and enthusiasm to be able to participate in building and providing solutions. Secondly, the people with whom I share this task, Marta Alberch and Àlex González, got along very well and I think we are very complementary. I'm more from the world of management and economics, Marta from the social services environment, and Alex is an architect. And then I also noticed a big political push behind this issue, and that always makes it easier, in the sense that it's easier to go with the wind in your favor than the other way around. These three points make the arrival positive.

–Have you had any meetings yet?

–Yes, and when I started talking to the people and organizations involved in housing, I saw that there was a lot of desire to move forward on everyone's part. I didn't find anyone blocked or completely defensive, on the contrary. I haven't been able to see everyone yet, but I've covered several areas and I've seen them all eager to participate, to help, to move forward, to find solutions... Maybe the paths aren't the same, but that's part of the difficulty or grace of the matter, which is to discover why and what can be done about it.

–Of course, you also took on the task of creating the service, right?

–Yes and no, because the municipalities, which are very close to the population, have always had some kind of action in this regard, even if it was not on a national scale or not in a structured way. The government also has a technical housing cabinet, which under the impetus of Minister Filloy, has been working on this issue for some time and looking for ways to act on it, coming from the social sphere and now more related to the planning of the territory. I think it makes a lot of sense that solutions can come more from the side of land use planning than from the social side, in the sense that land use planning decisions can simplify the problem and help alleviate the issue, and so social assistance needs may be different or otherwise approached. And finally, considering that 40% of people live



▶▶ The director of the National Housing Institute, Josep Maria Pla.

Josep Maria Pla

Director of the National Housing Institute

«The challenge is to make the Institute seen as the benchmark in housing»

in a rental home, it means that they are in regular contact with the owners and there is a bond, especially when it is long-term. I think this has been especially true of the pandemic, where landlords have also been on the side of tenants in difficult times. Thus, it is true that there was no centralizing and coordinating body, but there were actions in this area.

–What are the first tasks you have carried out?

–First of all, it has been working with the Steering Committee, getting to know us, establishing work guidelines and initiating the Strategic Plan we are working on. Then see me with the actors involved, from the political, administrative, associations, owners, etc. I'm about half there, I haven't made all the

visits I have planned due to agenda issues. But my goal is to talk to everyone who, near or far, has an interest or involvement in this topic. And the other thing we've done is start looking at projects that are being carried out by the government and are likely to move to the Institute.

–And what diagnosis do you make of



«I can listen to each other, without having to take a situation, and then make a drawing of ourselves inside the Institute»

«Spatial planning decisions can simplify the issue and alleviate it»

the issue?

–This is the last task we have taken, which is to start a diagnosis, because we understand that without it we cannot provide solutions that make sense or consistency. It is a job that is not finished, because part of the diagnosis comes from talking to people. In fact, I don't come from the housing industry, and there are pros and cons. The downside is that I don't know directly about the issue and I have to take the data and opinions, and get a picture. And the advantage is that I do not come up with any preconceived notions and I can listen to each other, without having to take a situation, analyzing the arguments and figures, and then make a drawing of the situation within the Institute that we will share later. We believe that sharing analysis and diagnosis will help us all to find solutions.

– Will this diagnosis be the first document made public by the Institute?

–Yes, we would like to. This and the Strategic Plan are the first two impacts we have planned.

– How will the Institute relate to other government housing resources?

–With the members of the Housing Board, which will soon be transformed into the National Housing Commission as provided by law, I have met with two-thirds and they have been the pre-established interlocutors to talk about. But they are not the only ones, because not all estates are represented, and I understand that it is interesting to talk to everyone who is, near or far, involved in the subject. And in relation to the Office of Housing, the Ministry of Housing, and the Technical Cabinet of Housing, we have an ongoing relationship, because in a way they are passing on their knowledge to us and we are working together. In particular, we have a very close collaboration with the Cabinet, because work has already begun and in order to transfer these projects.

We also work hand in hand with the Government's Informati-

on Systems Department. The law mandates the creation of a database of leases, and the edict will soon be issued to make this computer tool that will be overseen by this department, because the idea is to link to the data that already exists. Finally, we have a strong relationship with the Department of Statistics, because it has all the data available and we will compare it with the data that we can obtain, together with those of the CRES. I think this is a very basic and necessary cooperation, because what we are clear about is that we do not want to repeat the things that are already being done.

- What will be the role of the Institute in terms of citizenship?

- I consider that there is a role of information and pedagogy, in the sense of explaining our conclusions and proposals in the most understandable way possible so that everyone can contribute and enrich the diagnosis. However, it is true that different relationships are established with the public, from those that receive the effects of regulations of a more general nature, therefore, are not directly visible to situations such as those of the area of social housing, where there is a very direct link with the person involved. It's a

very wide range, and the action will probably not be the same.

- Will measures such as the freezing of leases be borne by you?

- The Institute makes proposals and the decisions are made by the Government. We can take an initiative and make suggestions, but the decision will not be ours. As I understand the law of creation of the Institute and as it is configured, it must have a role, but preponderant at least very present in making proposals, analysis and support for this decision, even if it does not belong to it. So we understand that from the Institute we must be able, from the available data, to give an image at every moment of the situation that the house is experiencing and of the actions that may be relevant. But this does not mean that the administrations want to take action, and our aim is that we can help them to come up with solutions to the problems they pose. I do not think that it is in any case a question of the Institute having an exclusive right to the question of housing. Rather, it should have a coordinating role, support, contribute expertise, have a global vision at the country level, collect proposals that have been made elsewhere... The goal

is to be able to be a benchmark in terms of to the analysis and application of solutions. This seems to me to be a very important element, because the Institute, without the participation of all the actors involved in housing, does not have and will



«We need to be able to give a picture at all times of the situation the home is experiencing and the relevant actions»

not have the capacity to solve the problem. I think it is very clear that it is the collaboration between all of us that will enable us to provide solutions and improve the situation.

- Do you currently manage any real estate?

- Currently, the Institute does not have any assets in real estate. According to the law, this can only happen due to the transfer of ownership or management, or due to the promotion of a project generated by the Institute itself, such as the one we will have in Andorra la Vella. But so far no one was able to send in the perfect solution, which is not strange.

- What are the goals of the Institute for 2022?

- What the Institute intends to do in 2022 is, on the one hand, a social housing project for people with social difficulties. Apartments will be made available to people who are now users of Social Services and this is a project that is being developed by the Government and the private sector, but the idea is that this is managed by the Institute and is up and running in end of the first quarter. The law requires the creation of the Housing Fund, which is already un-

derway and is being led by the Ministry of Finance.

Then there is a first project in which the Fund will participate, which is the construction of affordable rental housing in Andorra la Vella, in collaboration with the corporation of the capital and Andorra Telecom. And from there, there are the different elements I mentioned earlier, such as the creation of the lease database, which we anticipate will be between the end of the year and the beginning of next; the Strategic Plan, which will include everything we plan to do during our four-year term; and the diagnosis of the state of the house and its problems. It can be said that this is our very short term roadmap.

- And taking all this into account, when will you consider that the National Housing Institute will be consolidated?

- I believe that the challenge of this mandate is to make the Institute seen as the benchmark, with expertise and support capacity, in the field of housing in Andorra. And all this with the intention of helping to make the right to decent housing, which is basic and recognized by the United Nations, a reality in our country. ≡

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



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

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad

Don't miss any special editions of **El Periòdic!**