



Interview ▶ AGIA wants to materialize the project of the title of real estate agent by the Unive



AGIA  
The president of the AGIA, Gerard Caselles.

## Gerard Caselles

President of the AGIA

# «Freezing rental prices should not take longer»

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The new president of the Professional Association of Real Estate Agents and Managers of Andorra (AGIA), Gerard Caselles, took office on March 30th after being elected by the ordinary general assembly of the institution. With more than 20 years of experience in the real estate sector and business accounting, Caselles is at the helm of a board that aims to carry out a continuous mandate to the previous one.

### -What should the AGIA look after?

-The association ensures and must ensure that the Code of Ethics is maintained in the practice of real estate operations and management. We are also responsible for the ongoing training of professionals.

### -What will be the new board of directors and guidance of the board after its incorporation as chairman?

-The aim is to carry out a continuous mandate of the previous two years. We will try to put into practice the projects that started a long time ago.

### -Like which ones?

-As an example, we would like to carry out the materialization of the academic title of real estate agent by the University of Andorra (UdA). On the other hand, we are pursuing an ambitious project with the Official Association of Real Estate Agents of Barcelona and the Province in order to attract productive businesses to the real estate sector of the Principality.

### -You also do training in the field of data protection, right?

-It's like this. In fact, we need to constantly update our training in accordance with current laws. Since the first days of April, we have been conducting data protection training for members and, in fact, the first group has already successfully passed the course. We also incorporate sustainability and climate change materials to carry out these trainings.

### -Do you think that the measures to freeze rents that began to be implemented during the pandemic have been sufficient to alleviate the economic impact of families?

-I think it was one of the necessary measures so that citizens could have decent living conditions at such a difficult time, but it is not the definitive solution to the structural problem of the sector.

### -How long do you think this measu-

### re should remain active?

-The freeze on rental prices should not take longer. Intervention measures should be withdrawn. I don't think it's good for the future, because then everything comes back. The problem of prices can be solved if there is enough housing, but in no case with a measure from one day to the next. This will take time.

### -Have you had any contact with any landlord who complains about the current situation?

-I have two clients of my real estate company who refuse to put their properties up for rent while the government continues with the interventionism of the market, which means that the Principality is losing supply. In some cases, there are landlords who need to sell some of their property for financial reasons and cannot because of measures such as automatic extensi-

on. Property is being damaged in this regard, and the rise in the CPI is not helping much.

### -A few days ago, the Escaldes-Engordany municipality met with the owners of Clot d'Emprivat. Do you think that these meetings have the possibility of materializing real changes?

-In this case, the main concern of the corporation is the reduction of the green spaces of the parish, and for this reason they want to negotiate with the owners the distribution of the spaces. However, the owners have the urban guarantee. I think they are useful if the interests of each party are respected, but if no agreement is reached, this initiative will have been in vain.

### -What do you think about the Data Protection Act?

-More and more data are being as-

ked everywhere. In order to prevent large money laundering operations, we are required to comply with the requirements of personal information, but do not obey our will. In fact, we have been working in the offices for some time to train staff and strengthen the implementation of this measure.

**-Do you think it is very demanding?**

-I won't change it at all. You need to search for information and a customer risk sheet to carry out some specific transactions, in the same way that they ask you for an income tax return when applying for a loan from a bank. We need to get used to the fact that more and more people are asking us for more security.

**-And if you compare it with neighboring countries?**

-We are surprised by what we are asked here. While it is true that the demand for data is gradually increasing, we must keep in mind that in countries such as France it is necessary to submit a complete dossier with salary, payroll and even the electricity bill, between other things. In Andorra, all this is not so dramatic.

**-In terms of the availability of affordable rental flats, do you think this is working well?**

-Projects and initiatives that are contributing to the creation of housing are being carried out, but they will be insufficient. It's a long process. The creation of social apartment blocks involves a minimum of two years of construction, so in the short term it will not have much impact. In addition, it will influence an insufficient number of people according to sociological studies and the country's problems.

**-What solution would you propose?**

-Public-private partnerships can be an unlocking of the situation and, in fact, both sides are already starting to move. However, it remains to be seen whether these projects will incentivize the private sector in terms of profitability and profit. Everything must be analyzed beforehand.

**-A few weeks ago, a sociological study by the ARI with the collaboration of FEDA was published to determine empty flats across the country. What could be done to increase the supply of flats in all pa-**



«El Clot d'Emprivat is an example of the growing investment of foreign capital and the attraction of people with purchasing power»

«The National Housing Institute should be at full capacity to do a full country-wide x-ray»

**ishes?**

-First of all, it would be necessary to find out the reason for all these empty flats: to know well the circumstances of the owners to see which way can be followed with these buildings. Then I think the National Housing Institute should take the initiative and be in full swing to do a full country-wide x-ray. If we do not have a thorough knowledge of the housing stock, it is very difficult to carry out any project for the home.

**-What is the situation of foreign capital investment in the Principality?**

-It is a dynamic that has been increasing over the last few years. I believe that the Andorra brand is greatly improving its image internationally, and consequently, foreign investment. It is worth noting its impact on the real estate market.

**-Is it true that more and more people with high purchasing power are looking to Andorra when it comes to buying luxury homes?**

-The Clot d'Emprivat towers are some examples of infrastructures that are proving this. Since Andorra ceased to be a tax haven a few years ago, investors have given the

country more security and credibility. On the other hand, I think there is a very good quality of life here in relation to education and low taxation, and that is an added value that holds many visitors. It is clear that, with each passing day, Andorra is becoming a more attractive destination.

**-What does AGIA expect from the association agreement with the European Union?**

-In relation to the agreement, we asked for advice from a Barcelona law firm specializing in European law and comparative law. In this sense, we have determined that the only requirement we ask is that the compulsory registration in the official college continue in order to practice professionally in the Principality. In this way, we will be able to give more prestige to the profession and establish minimum requirements. We hope that our position will be respected as well as the rest of the Andorran professional associations with their requests, but all this is in the hands of the Government and we do not know when it will materialize if we take into account the current context. ≡

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