



Interview ▶ The Liberal leader analyzes

## «The pre-electoral pact with DA has killed us»

**JOSEP MARIA CABANES**  
Leader of the Liberal Party

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The leader of the Liberal party, Josep Maria Cabanes, has granted us an interview in which he reflects on the electoral results and how he faces the next congress on May 22nd. Showcasing his patriotism and hardworking spirit, while acknowledging mistakes and self-criticism with an optimistic yet hopeful vision, he talks about his desire for Andorra to do well. He affirms that he will always be at the service of the country, because that is how he feels, without any desire for prominence or chair. He defends that life goes on, that stages go by in which sometimes you win and others you lose; however, his fighting nature does not allow him to throw in the towel, so he is convinced that the formation he currently leads will be able to rebuild and renew itself for the next municipal elections with the aim of obtaining the significant and relevant political space that it deserves.

**–Do you want to continue at the head of Liberals after the bad electoral results?**

–Personally I have always been at the party's disposal, I have no ambition for an armchair or a position. On May 22nd we will celebrate the congress in which I think that a new executive should be given way; it is a time of a lot of work, the grouping must be strengthened, opposition must be made, and it will take people pre-

pared with talent, with a lot of drive and predisposition. I am not a person looking for a chair, not now or before or the day before yesterday, I am simply at the service of the nation and the party; for me it is very important to respond to the citizen, as I usually do, whether he is on the front, second or third line. I think it has been proven, and more with the decision we have taken, that the Liberals are not obsessed with either the seat or a civil servant's salary, and my case is an example.

**–Do you think the party will trust you again?**

–If that were the case, I would have to think about it. In fact, the formation every time there have been elections in the last seven or eight years they have counted on me, what happens is that there are periods in which I have had availability and I have been able to dedicate myself to it, and others no. I move for my professional and personal activity, so on each occasion I have to assess my position and degree of involvement towards what is proposed to me. Specifically, when I was asked to go to the primaries elections, I weighed it up and considered it a good opportunity; four years earlier I was offered to go on the charts and I said no. Another example that I don't make my decisions for a salary or a chair was when in 2001 Marc Forné proposed to me to be a minister in his government and I also refused; the bank had given me a position of responsibili-

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ty conditional on not combining it with politics, two years later the minister who was there resigned and they proposed it to me again, then my answer was yes, because he had already arranged what had to be organized at the bank and had time to be able to take on other responsibilities. Currently, I observe that there is an enormous desire for remuneration and seat, that's why there are so many messes and so many slaps.

**-At what point are the relations with DA and, specifically, with Xavier Es-pot?**

-There is a normal relationship. He and I have done a lot of meetings on our own, and sometimes with the respective teams as well. There has always been great respect, regardless of the decision, connotation or circumstances. We have always acted with consideration towards each other, as it should continue to be.

**-Why have you decided that Víctor Pintos is a non-affiliated director?**

-Because DA has not respected the pact, it has breached it. There was an agreement that was signed by Xavier Es-pot and myself, and in this document it was said verbatim that in the parishes of Ordino and Andorra la Vella we put the number three, and that if it won, I would be promoted to councilor, and has not taken effect. In addition, in the event that one of the two parishes was not won, Democrats would leave councilors to form the parliamentary group for the four years. This last assumption did not occur, because the victory was obtained in the two territories, but the first conjecture happened and what was signed was not respected, therefore we must stay in the opposition, and Víctor Pintos will not be part of the 17 Councilors of the Government.

**-And nothing happens? is everything forgiven to DA?**

-It is not a matter of forgiveness, they allege through some of their lawyers that the written pacts are made to be fulfilled, but that this could not be maintained due to the bad results of our training; then, what we did was to pass it through the executive, through the National Council, and the grassroots decided. The resolution was that by not respecting the agreement we remained in the opposition, and therefore Víctor Pintos, by logic, as a non-affiliated councilor.

**-What do you think is necessary to re-launch the formation of Liberals?**

-Liberals is the oldest party in Andorra. It was born in the early nineties, and is the formation that has governed for the most years with an absolute majority, 14 to be exact, and four with a coalition, a total of 18 years. From 2007 to 2019, he has also been in the opposition, both of the PS and of the DA, so he has an undeniable track record and position. Now, obviously when you don't win the grouping weakens, there are people who resign with all the bar in the world, affiliates who changed the night before the elections, in other words, in po-

litics everything is worth, but in the end there are good people in life, the people who when you shake hands you know that the commitment is firm, and not like when you sign a document, which later turns out to be fake words. Having said that, what must be done is to appoint a working executive; that he holds a weekly press conference from the opposition, with the desire to push the party forward; to reconstitute the parish committees with the ambition of presenting lists to the municipal councils, because what has become clear is that when you do not show up for a parish, the population does not vote for you, which is what has happened to us. We put our trust in DA and have been the biggest sacrifices.

**-Do you regret the pre-electoral pact**



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**you signed with the Democrats? Has it harmed you?**

-It has killed us, for three reasons: 1) when you don't show up at the parishes, people don't vote for you; 2) those who didn't want to vote DA, but didn't like the other alternatives either, ended up voting DA for voting discipline, and 3) those who hated DA already told us that they wouldn't trust us because we were in a coalition and, for this reason they would opt for Concòrdia or Andorra Endavant. We, in the first instance, had agreed to contest the election alone, but then DA begged that we should go together, arguing that they had done very well in the last four years, which is true, so in the end we reconsidered it again at the executive, and we agreed to go together, but it has been seen that it has not worked in any case, we have been in the shadow of everyone. It was a positive election at the country level, but at the party level it has really been a massacre.

**-The name of Toni Puig, current president of Joves Liberals, sounds like a possible replacement, is it true?**

-Whatever the party decides will be welcome. To this day, he hasn't asked

me for anything, and I don't know if he has asked anyone else. What I know is that he aspired to top the list at national elections and he was very upset or angry that the line-up ended up locking down a national setup that wasn't what he wanted or would have liked, but that happens to all of us.

**-It would seem that if it wasn't for the relay, he could go to Concòrdia. Have you talked to him about this?**

-We haven't talked and I don't know anything about it. In any case, everyone is very free to go where they want or where they think it can be more useful, my temperament is to respect the determinations made by others.

**-Once the party is rebuilt, what kind of opposition do you plan to do?**

-Very easy, to defend the program

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that has been presented; provide solutions to everything that we believe is not being done or is not being effective, and when we detect that there may be situations that go against the interests of the people, try to stop them by proposing ideas that protect the general good and the community. Making opposition is very simple, what happens is that you have to be there throwing stones and checking what the Government is doing; you have to work, the problem is that in the exercise of these functions, and once the high chair is achieved, many relax.

**-What do you think should be the most immediate lines of action for liberals to regain their political space?**

-The first thing is to get together and talk to all the affiliates again, attract new ones, grow the party, let the people know that the formation exists and cares about their needs, have a clear positioning of ideas and know how to communicate it with enthusiasm and energy. It is not that it is something very complicated, what happens is that it requires a lot of dedication and a lot of service vocation. That is why it is essential that the executive that comes

out of the next congress is ready to try everything and work hard. I'm sure it will be.

**-Why were the brothers Higiní and Ramon Cierco denied their membership?**

-I don't know because there was another meeting, but I think it's an issue that is being litigated. It is not clear what will be the fate of the sentences that have been on the table for years, and therefore I think it was a matter of prudence. A lot of lies have been told, but my opinion is that since there are still matters that are in the courts, they chose a position of caution.

**-Have you thought about resuming the relationship with Judith Pallarés to re-integrate Acció to Liberals?**

-As everyone knows, there were some primaries elections that I won, and that same night they left the room, without saying goodbye, they didn't announce that they were folding, and we found out from the press that they were leaving the party. Most were stunned to use a kind word, and we haven't spoken since. But I haven't stopped to meditate on it or to think about it too much, because otherwise you don't move forward; people who want to leave are free to do so and nothing happens. She comes from an area that is not ours, it is not the liberal one, she comes from a Cumbayan world, from this neoliberal from I don't know where, but it is not the free economy, it is not the national interest, and therefore decided to make his way.

**-Will they present themselves at the municipal councils and in which parishes?**

-Yes, yes, we continue to work and therefore we will present ourselves in all those where we have possibilities, that is to say, if we get the num-



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ber of people sufficient to satisfy the lists, there will be a Liberal candidacy. On the other hand, it is still premature to specify which parishes will be; by now the reality is that they have not entered the Council, nor the Government, the morale of the troops is pessimistic, so the first thing we have to do is name the new executive and from there develop a strategy to be able to have a presence throughout the territory. Making lists is not easy, there are many people who are panicked by this permanent exposure in the media and digital channels, they don't like it at all, and I'm talking about people who would be valid and should go, but the 'public display slows them down when it comes to actively participating in politics. Another aspect that influences is doing it for the first time, which always costs and is a little scary, but yes, once you try it, the staff are generally encouraged and if you're lucky enough to get in, on many occasions the chair is heated. We used to get paid less and work harder.

**-Josep Maria Cabanes is not motivated by money. What moves him?**

-Well, the country, the idealism, the citizens. It gives me great pleasure to help the parishes and their inhabitants. I have a great vocation for service, and I feel enormous satisfaction in being able to help improve the lives of Andorrans. For me it is an honor.

**-It doesn't seem that the defeat has affected you too much. Is it a cuirass or does the procession go inside?**

-Not at all, on Sunday night I slept six hours. If this had happened to me in the nineties, I would have had insomnia for 15 days, but the perspective of age makes you understand that life goes on; they are stages, sometimes you win, and sometimes you lose. Personally, I have had setbacks throughout my career, but I have learned that the page has turned, the next day is another day, the sun rises again, and a new illusion must be undertaken. I leave the house happy, because if I left angry, I wouldn't make it to the evening. Therefore, it has not affected me, I am aware that many people value and appreciate me, what happened is that there was a strategic error of not going to the plebiscite alone. It is clear that it is very easy to talk about what has been said and therefore we will no longer know what would have happened, but I am convinced that the results would have been different.

**-What are your future plans? Continue in banking and play an active role in politics or disengage for good?**

-In 2007, I left active politics, but I have always been behind helping and cooperating. I don't mind working for the country, I have been acting on the go, and I will continue to do so.

**-Being an optimistic person, has this experience left you with a bitter taste? What have you learned from it all?**

-Well, I would say that in life the years go by, and every day you gain more experience, but you never know enough. ≡