



Carles Enseñat

President of the Democratic GP

«Populism is not meant to govern. Trump has already shown that you can't go head-to-head»

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The President of the Democratic Parliamentary Group, Carles Enseñat, welcomes the shock plan promoted by the Government to improve the purchasing power of the citizens and reviews the most relevant laws approved by the General Council in this legislature. As for the next elections, he says he doesn't know the date, but he is betting on an orange victory with a continuous project that will keep Xavier Espot at the helm.

-What is your assessment of the Government's measures to improve the purchasing power of the citizens and when will they go through the General Council?

-The assessment is very positive, because from the Democratic Parliamentary Group, together with Liberals and Committed Citizens, we have worked on the measures and studied the details. Some of them are even born from our ideas and contributions. They are currently being analyzed, as most points require an

explanatory report on the economic impact of the Government, which will obviously be quite high. We hope that the calculations will be submitted soon so that they can be approved on May 26th and be immediately applicable from June 1st, except for the minimum wage, which is already in force.

-Of all the measures, which do you think is the most important?

-I think that the most relevant, even a revolutionary measure, is free public transport. On the one hand, it has a clear positive impact on all Andorran domestic economies. On the other hand, it is good for mobility, both for people and vehicles; we all know the problem and we queue everywhere and almost all the time, so taking the free bus can mean that many families leave their cars at home. And it is also good for the environment: making the country less and less dependent on oil is a huge benefit because it makes us more independent and strengthens our fight against climate change.

The second most notable measu-

re, which may not be so cross-cutting, but it is historical, is the raising of the minimum wage. That it stands at 1,200 euros, when at the beginning of the legislature it did not exceed 1,000, is an economic and psychological advance that at the same time is a good omen for a future arrival at 60% of the average salary. Most importantly, however, I believe that we are increasing the purchasing power of people with lower wages at a very delicate time when all prices are skyrocketing.

-The reasoner of the citizen warns that if nothing is done about the housing problem, the situation this winter will be dramatic.

-I agree. That is why the National Housing Institute has been created and there will be a law on urgent measures, which will include for the first time the initiatives that come from the national table. We are now beginning to see that there are awards and tenders that articulate a real answer to this problem, both on the public side, with social housing and low-cost housing, and on the

private side. We all know that there is a problem and we know it well, but unlike others, such as raising the minimum wage, it is not so quick to solve and requires time, legislation and construction.

-Another of the most discussed points in recent years is pensions. Should younger people resign to work longer? Should they suffer from retirement?

-We don't have to resign ourselves to anything, we just have to recalculate the system. When it was calculated in the 1960s, it was decided that if you entered the labor market at the age of 25, at the age of 65, 40 years would have been quoted and, as life expectancy was 72, it was returned in seven years what had been contributed throughout his working life. Today, entry into the labor market has been delayed because it is being studied for longer, and fortunately life expectancy has increased. In addition, there is a third factor, which has nothing to do with retirement, but with the CASS, and that is that the aging population leads to more

expensive health care. Therefore, the younger generations need to understand that the retirement age must be recalculated with common sense in accordance with life expectancy and that we must raise the contribution, because what we cannot do either is to work until the age of 78 no matter how long the life expectancy is 85.

A third part of this reform that guarantees pensions is personal savings, so the promotion of individual deductions, as well as business plans for its staff, should encourage retirement plans and get a supplement that improves the pension financially.

-What is your assessment of the portfolio of services? There has been a lot of controversy with professional associations.

-Since I have been on the General Council, I feel that the portfolio of services is about to be approved. In 2009, when the head of government was Jaume Bartumeu, who was in the opposition, it was already being talked about, so it was clear that at some point it had to be approved and Minis-

ter Benazet worked hard on it. It is probably true that there are issues that need to be negotiated more with the groups, but the government has to look after the Municipality good and this sometimes contradicts the legitimate interests of some professions. In addition, we must keep in mind that this portfolio of services is in a trial period; when the Government approved it by decree, it was stipulated that the appropriate changes could be made for six months. I understand that the outgoing minister wanted to leave a legacy, even though he knows that changes should be made, and I am convinced that there are aspirations that need to be incorporated. However, I would like to point out that for the first time, dietetics, psychology –especially necessary post-pandemic sensitivity –, speech therapy for children and podiatry for the elderly are included, so we are giving every time better services to our citizens. Obviously, other ways of doing things are also limited to prevent abuses that, while minimal, existed and wasted everyone's money.

–Could the debate about religious symbols in school have been avoided? Did you really need a specific law?

–When there are no problems, no laws are needed, but now we have a problem and it has to be solved. Any law serves to fix a system that can lead to a mistake: for example, if no one wanted to divorce, there would be no divorce law. And until now, we have never had problems with religious symbols in the Andorran school, although there has been a Muslim community. The Andorran system states that at the age of growth and within a school, all students, boys and girls, must be equal and, therefore, a person, due to being a girl, must not have a different obligation to that of a boy, who may also be a Muslim, but, of course, is a boy. Furthermore, given that we have an Equality Act in which the state recognizes that a man and a woman are completely equal, we could not allow the school to recognize that there can be such an obvious difference as wearing a veil.

On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the problem does not arise from the Andorran school, but is much more complex. We are talking about a rule that has a beastly historical course, which is the secularity of the French education system and that the parents of

a student decide that their daughter wears an Islamic veil, despite being aware that it has always been strictly forbidden. From there, a process of mediation is generated between the family and the Ministry of Education and they are offered to enroll the girl in the Andorran system, on the condition that she does not wear a veil there either. The mother accepts this condition, but then does not fulfill it. And it causes the need to create a specific law.

–Is the new Equality Law enough? The PS believes that there are no obligations.

–Is the law enough? No, the conquest of rights is never enough. However, society needs to move in a direction that makes it successful, obsolete, and we need a stronger, more secure, and effective one. But this first text is a giant step and it will take years to see all the goals exceeded. However, from my point of view, it is true that there are obligations that are very difficult to enforce or control.

–Can you give an example?

–The law says that care will be taken to ensure that publications keep the precept of gender equality, but if there is one that does not comply, what should we do? Prohibit posting? Fine it? Take her to the Mayor's Office? Or if an advertisement, for example, for perfume, made by an international brand, seems sexist, should Andorra ban its dissemination? It's complicated. Watching may seem vague, but pointing out more sometimes also means moving toward a sanctioning regime that escapes the public administration and could be a method of censorship that may go against freedom of expression. And this is what we are trying to explain to the PS councilors.

–But there are more controllable ones.

–Yes, because the boards of directors must have at least 40% women, with a tendency towards 50%. Or that voter lists should be zipped. Or that in sports there should be women's leagues with public financial support. Anyway, at least I didn't go down without explaining myself first.

–Speaking of equality, do you think that as long as abortion is not approved, women's rights will be fully guaranteed? At the end of last year, there was talk of a report to find the formula, but so far nothing has changed.

–I agree that abortion is an inherent

right of women, but at the same time we have an institutional and constitutional rule in our country that prevents the legalization of an abortion center in Andorra. Therefore, we cannot fit this into our institutional model or our Constitution, and we must look for methods that are, on the one hand, legal and, on the other, gain ground in women's rights. How? I don't know, honestly. In the working group we have with the PS –and in which we have also invited Terceiravia, but did not want to participate –we are looking for this answer.

–What should the final tax reform contemplate?

–The last fiscal reform is the previous one to a bigger one, which will surely be done in the next legislature, and which, in broad strokes, seeks to introduce the patronage of sports, culture and innovation, both of strict donations –to a solidarity entity without asking for anything in return, for example –such as pure and simple patronage –an economic participation that means savings for the Administration. The reform also modifies the deduction system so that no company that has profits can deduct 100% of what it would have to pay hypothetically to the Government.

–Most of the contracts were requested between the Government and Inlingua with the aim of dispelling the doubts of alleged favors towards Ferran Costa's company. Are they dissipated?

–They have dissipated for all those people who have wanted to look at it and analyze it with critical eyes and goals. Obviously, for those who want to invent what doesn't

exist, they won't be dissipated. But studying the awards can be seen as a company, which is the largest in the country in terms of languages and has worked all his life with the Administration because the contracts come from decades ago, has fulfilled public tenders and no one has never challenged any. With regard to direct awards, the government must have the capacity to contract services that are carried out as quickly as possible, and in this particular case, we are talking about very small figures. That being said, the debate is not over and it is interesting to decide what the limits of a general counsel are. In the end, most directors have their own companies, but none are self-employed, because that depends on the government, and no law is broken. Or should a businessman who has a business with the public administration, and there are thousands of them in Andorra, never be able to be a general councilor? Let's talk about it, but it's not my model.

–Has the hotel sector been betrayed with the application of the tourist tax from July 1st?

–No, on the contrary. With the tourist tax, most of it has been very clear from the beginning: we always wanted to apply it on July 1st. It is true that there was a time when we said that we could delay it until September 1st, but the industry told us that it wanted it to be December 1st. This is not possible because the government needs revenue, and from that rate six million euros have been budgeted for this 2022. It was the sector that did not want September 1st. In any case, we are talking about a rate that, first of all, is finalist and reverts to the same sector and, secondly, that five-star hotels will cost three euros per room. It's not that it's a very high tourist tax.

–And as for the green rate, could we have expected a little more?

–In politics, and in life in general, no one has a glass ball with which to guess the future. When the winter season closed in 2019 as one of the best in history and then the measures for 2020 were implemented, no one could have imagined that a global pandemic would come. When we implemented the measures to deal with the pandemic, which I think were good enough to prevent the closure of companies, the productive fabric was very grateful, because without the hundreds of millions from

the government the picture would have been disastrous. But now these aids have to be returned, and it has to be done through taxes. The tax on hydrocarbons has two purposes: the fight against climate change through the promotion of renewable energy, electric cars and public transport and, on the other hand, that the Government has more resilience to be able to pay, among other things, the debt that we assumed with the aids to face the covid-19. Also, we are at a time when if we removed the tax, gasoline would still be expensive and we would not solve the problem. Andorra continues to maintain the differential with respect to Spain and France, with or without tax, and when the price of oil falls, which will fall, we will regain the usual competitiveness.

–Of all the laws passed this legislature, which one do you consider to be the most relevant and which one could be left in the drawer?

–The most relevant is difficult, although I think that the Equality, the Family Code and the Justice Code are very important. When the Government made its Horizon 23 (H23) plan, the projects that could be expected were postponed and then we put them in the drawer, but surely the Building Ordinance –which is in this H23 –will be the only priority law that we will not have time to work this legislature.

–Are you concerned about the rise of populism in general, and in Andorra in particular?

–Everyone is worried, including populism itself, because populism is not meant to govern, that is precisely its grace. The rise we are experiencing in recent years puts us on the ropes of all those who believe in democracy and its values, but also this system that has already shown, in Trump-style governments, that you can not govern at once headline or inspirations of a day little calculated. I think it's an issue that we're digesting in Europe and it's starting to lose strength.

–Will we be taught to choose a list leader for the next general election?

–We do not have, like other parties, primary elections, but our leadership system is based on the consensus of an internal choice, which opts for the best candidate. Enseñat sure it won't be. I don't know who will be chosen, but I guess there will be continuity. A second term. ≡



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