

Interview

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IRINA RYBALCHENKO
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

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According to the World Health Organization, every year seven million people around the world die from the effects of air pollution. Vehicles are leaders in the negative impact on the atmosphere: from 60 to 80% of atmospheric air pollution in megacities comes from internal combustion engines.

Radical solutions are needed in the field of transport, which will reduce the number of cars with internal combustion engines and allow the transition to higher environmental standards.

The Spanish market for electric motorcycles is growing rapidly. These vehicles already account for more than 8% of all motorcycle registrations and in the last six years, the electric motorcycle market has grown by more than 800%.

Emilio Froján founded the company Velca just before the pandemic and managed to make it the leader of the Spanish market for electric motorcycles and mopeds with more than ten points of sale. We heard from Emilio about the success story of his brand and asked about his plans to expand the business outside of Spain, including Andorra.

–Electric motorcycles and electric bicycles are economical, mobile and affordable. But this is transport and for its normal use, it is necessary to create special infrastructure and conditions. What does the strategic plan for the development of e-transport in Spain in general and its capital Madrid in particular look like?

–Cars and their infrastructure, such as car parks, occupy more than 50% of public space in cities and the urban population continues to grow. Today, our cities represent only 2% of the earth's surface, yet they are home to around 54% of the world's population, account for 75% of energy consumption and are responsible for around 80% of emissions and pollution, pollution... Cities must be built for people and not for cars.

–What is your business today? Do you produce e-transport or only sell (rent) it? You have offices throughout Spain. Is it possible to buy an e-transport there or rent it as well?

–Velca is the Spanish brand of 100% electric motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles, with removable batteries that you charge like your smartphone. We generate a positive impact in cities. 0 emissions and 0 noise. We manufacture in two production centers in Asia and three production centers in Europe. We have a direct sales model as well as vehicle subscription and tenting.

–Tell us the story of your brand - is it true that you created your company just a few months before the pandemic? How did you make it through such a difficult time? What exactly helped you grow your business?



IRINA RYBALCHENKO

Emilio Froján

Co-founder and CEO of Velca, a Spanish brand of electric motorcycles

«Andorra may be a country with the best air quality in the world»

–I used to work for an electric scooter firm that is a leader in Germany. There I began to design a project related to my work. In addition, I intended to conduct this project in Spain. When I managed to get the idea a little more

formal and structured, I decided to return to Madrid and present it to my employees.

My environment showed great support for this initiative, so, without a doubt, the next day my employees

went to the bank, asked for a personal loan and stepped on the accelerator to start it and undertake it.

We started two months before the pandemic broke out, but we were resilient and became stronger.

–Andorra is a country of cycling, but because of its landscape, only trained cyclists travel here on bicycles. The development of infrastructure for e-bicycles would be very interesting and positive. Do you have plans to come to Andorra?

We are actively seeking distribution alliances in Andorra for all our vehicles. It is a country that may have the best air quality in the world.

–Any plans to develop your business in neighboring France and Portugal as well?

–We already have a sales structure in Portugal and France is the next.

–You achieved a financing level that has been a record in Spain: you raised €750,000 in 4 hours. How was it possible?

–The combination of a young team eager to change many established rules and the experience of our lead investors have been key to designing a strategy that allowed us to achieve this milestone. Building a vibrant and passionate community that has supported the brand at all times has been key. Velca is two years old and has more than 1,000 investors.

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«I believe that education and entrepreneurship are the two main tools to transform the world»

«Cars and their infrastructure, such as car parks, occupy more than 50% of public space in cities»

–Do you have a lot of competitors? How would you explain your advantages compared to theirs?

–We have more than 3 years of dealership, after-sales service with more than 200 workshops, a connectivity and geolocation system, but above all a community of users who defend and develop our brand.

–You are a founder of the Instituto Galego do Talento, a member of the Advisory Council of AIESEC, an external consultant for startups and you collaborate with various media as an innovation specialist. Tell us please about each project. What interesting startups can you mention?

–I like to participate in educational projects. I believe that education and entrepreneurship are the two main tools to transform the world. ≡

MEASURES FOR PURCHASING POWER

Distribution of free bus passes begins today

Users will be able to obtain their travel document in digital format through the app and also physically

The government will pay an estimated sales to the companies at the beginning of the month and adjust it at the end

EL PERIÒDIC
ANDORRA LA VELLA
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The government, through the concessionaire companies of the national bus lines, will start distributing the free monthly season tickets to the residents of Andorra tomorrow. Through a six-month pilot test, the Executive wants to test a hypothetical future implementation of a free public transport model for its inhabitants, while wanting to serve the public one more solution for the context crisis and widespread price increases. «The purpose of the test is the fight against climate change, included in the roadmap of Horizon 23, and to alleviate the loss of purchasing power of citizens,» said the director of Business, Commerce, Industrial Development and Transport, Josep Pujol.

Going into the details of the test, which will take effect on July 1st and will be active until December 31st this year, Pujol detailed that residents in the country between the ages of 3 and 64 will be able to benefit. This fork is explained by the fact that the youngest do not pay to use the transport, and that the older ones already have the free use of the Magna Card, as well as the exclusion of users entitled to other subsidized titles such as the Youth Bus or Blue Card. To use it, those interested can choose between digital and physical media. In the first case, it will be necessary to have the Digital Certificate, and through the web transports, ad, make the request and obtain an activation number that must be entered in the MOU_T_B application, which will provide the support to have the travel title.

On the other hand, those who opt for the classic card must go to the National Bus Station in order to activate the season ticket, presenting an identity document proving residence in the Principality. Please note that users who have credit for their titles will be able to continue using them until they expire, but if they want to switch to the free subscription, they will have to do the face-to-face management. In any case, both di-



► Eric Bartolomé and Josep Pujol, at one point in their appearance.

A possible rail link with Catalonia would be «good news» for Eric Bartolomé

► Asked about the studies commissioned by the Generalitat de Catalunya on the viability of new train lines in Catalonia, including the one that would link La Seu d'Urgell with Andorra, the Secretary of State for Economy and Enterprise, Èric Bartolomé, stated that «if these studies go ahead, are viable and financially sustainable, it would be good news for the Principality in this historic desire to have a rail connection», while pointing out that «it is fully aligned with the interests expressed by part of the head of government to have, in the medium or long term, a train connection». In this sense, the Se-

cretary of State pointed out that «we are aware of what is being done» thanks to the good relations between administrations, despite insisting on the «previous nature and very incipient phase of the analysis». All in all, he was hopeful that this work could go ahead, and that at the moment there is something likely «there will be a dialogue with the Government of Andorra to continue this project initiated by the Catalan side.» At the same time, on the heliport, Bartolomé reported that if the deadlines are met, the decision on this infrastructure will be made during the same year.

gitaly and physically, the subscription will be automatically renewed. Therefore, the title will be valid until the end of the year.

On the other hand, one of the elements that was pending for the development of this measure was the payment system to the bus companies that operate the service, Nadal and Coopalsa. According to the director of Transport, the formula found to «guarantee the financial vitality of the concessionaires» has been to make a payment with an estimated amount «according to the forecast of historical sales», and at the end of the month, to settle the difference, if it is the case. The government will pay companies 30 euros for an activated subscription, which means that the person will use it at least once a month. It also seems that it would also favor the arrival of an agreement for the compensation of the monthly

subscription since its launch in September, despite the fact that the Secretary of State for Economy and Enterprise, Èric Bartolomé, recognize that there are divergences in the value given to it in the variables of a formula, the principles of which «are shared by all». However, aware that the number of users may increase, the Government has been open to making changes to the service, time-tables and frequencies if necessary. «When we look at passenger data and validations, we will make changes, if it is necessary,» said Pujol, who said that «thanks to the new public transport system and its platform, it is easier to track.» In a similar vein, Bartolomé shared that «we have worked with different scenarios, but we expect a massive response», adding that «the pilot test will allow us to see the reaction and acceptance of the population.»

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