



SUSTAINABILITY

Superficial water analysis is of excellent quality

The Ministry of the Environment attributes this improvement to the low activity during the pandemic

The sanitation network has a total of 37 stations throughout the Principality



SFGA / CESTEVE

► The Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, Sílvia Calvó, attends to the media along the Valira River.

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The analyzes of superficial water carried out by the services of the Ministry of the Environment throughout the Principality record the best quality in history during 2021. This was highlighted by the Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, Sílvia Calvó, on the occasion of the World Water Day. In this sense, Calvó stated that «Andorra is a mountainous country in which, at first glance, it seems that water resources are abundant and of high quality, but this involves a very important prevention work by the spill correction teams, and specialists in Environment». Similarly, she noted that since the country has water sa-

nitiation infrastructure, «the data recorded in 2021 mark a historic milestone, as low economic activity, both in terms of transport and industry, led to this improvement in 100% of water resources. It is worth mentioning that in 2019 there was a lower quality which was around 95% of the total water with a good or excellent quality.

Calvó warned that, despite the good results in the management of resources, «we must not forget that we are the head of a basin, and this position gives us a very important responsibility», as Andorra «must return the water with the highest possible quality, both in the Ariège basin and in the part of the river Ebro». Today, the ministry wants to promote collaboration with the municipalities to identify all spill points along



Sílvia Calvó
MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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the river and be able to correct them. According to the Minister of the Environment, «it is a shared work with the communal technical teams who are also in charge of the task of spreading awareness among the inha-

bitants of each parish». Regarding the points of the river most susceptible to spills, Calvó reported that «the wastewater network is dynamic and from time to time a point is identified where it is necessary to intervene,

but there is no specific point.

Regarding the technical aspects of the analyzes, the director of Environment and Sustainability, Sílvia Ferrer, pointed out that during the high seasons of purification, which include the months of January and February, «there was a decrease in the load pollutant entering the sanitation infrastructure». She also clarified that «this is not a reduction in pollution in general, but a minor detection linked to the decline in economic activity in 2021».

This year's results are not currently being considered by the ministerial services, but in reference to the figures recorded during 2020, «we also experienced a period in which most of the stations were in a good situation or excellent, except for two of which were of a fair and

The municipalities, in collaboration with the government, are working to identify the spill points along the river

mediocre quality». As for the biological quality of water, the 15 stations specializing in the analysis of microorganisms «have also experienced a marked increase in the quality of the aquatic ecosystem; in this sense, the stations with a passable diagnosis are decreasing and those with good and excellent results are increasing».

Finally, the director of the Environment explained the monitoring system of the stations. In this sense, there are 37 points established throughout the territory to record real-time data in the physiochemical aspect. Of the total stations, only four have the capacity to analyze the amount of hydrocarbon particles that can be filtered into the river. «Periodic sampling of the parameters to obtain results on the oxygen and nitrate deficiency of water resources to establish a certain degree of quality» is carried out at the control points. She added that «during 2021 there were no samples of oil spills». ≡



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TOURISM

Uncertainty in the sector over the entry into force of the future tourist tax

Torres emphasizes the desire to start it in the summer, but the organizations see it as more viable that it will be later

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The entry into force of the tourist tax is still uncertain. While it is clear that this tax will be a reality during this 2022, there is no agreement between the sector and the Executive on the exact date that this will begin to be applied in Andorra. On the one hand, the Minister of Tourism and Telecommunications, Jordi Torres, declared on Monday in an interview with Ràdio Estel that «most likely» it will start charging from the summer. On the other hand, the director of the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), Jordi Pujol, was skeptical and stated that «I am not clear that the rate will start in the summer; I'd say no right now». It should be noted that the Bill regulating the Tax on stays in tourist accommodation is in parliamentary proceedings, and as Pujol remarked, «we must wait for the law to be passed and see when it finally enters into force the tax».

However, after a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce in which the entity called for the implementation of the tax from December, the parliamentary groups that support the majority were willing to postpone the start of the tax until the fall of 2022. In any case, tourism entrepreneurs insist on not applying the tax during the next summer campaign. «We advocate that it enters into force as soon as possible,» said the president of the Association of Tourist Accommodation Companies (AEAT), Alex Ruiz, who said that «it would hurt us a lot to have to apply it to the «summer because we already have a lot of sales».

This debate is still going on at a time when the winter season is still in full swing, and on which the UHA and AEAT do not agree on whether or not the pre-pandemic turnover will equal. Pujol acknowledged that «while it is true that the trend is to recover pre-pandemic figures, we are not there yet», adding that «the sensations are good, especially considering where we come from». Specifically, the director considered that once this year's winter season is over, and can be compared to previous years, the overall result will be «more similar to 2015 than 2019». «These are promising figures, but the absolute result is not yet a



► A person on the Pla de la Cot skimo circuit.

JORDI PUJOL DIRECTOR DE L'UHA

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ALEX RUIZ PRESIDENT DE L'AEAT

«[The Russian tourist] is a valuable customer and has significant purchasing power. We would be sorry if he could not come and it is an inconvenience»

pandemic,» said Ruiz, on the other hand, pointed out that «we have an occupation that matches those be-

fore the covid», thus showing the same opinion that the Minister of Tourism pointed out the day before.

CUSTOMERS FROM RUSSIA // Regarding the presence of Russian tourists in the country, the reading was also different by Pujol and Ruiz. The UHA confirmed that the pandemic had affected the arrival of visitors from Russia.

However, the director said that the loss of this tourism is not something that has happened this year, but that «in the last six or seven years it has been noticed that Russian tourism did not sell as much as it did a long time ago». However, Pujol pointed out that, given that he is a customer who comes from far away, his average overnight stay is higher than that of local visitors, and consequently, this increases his average volume of spending.

For his part, Ruiz valued the Russian tourist as «a valuable customer with significant purchasing power», and therefore «we would be sorry if he could not come».



► A tourist downtown.

Hotel occupancy was 62.5% in the last week

► The average weekly hotel occupancy for the last week, that is, between March 14th and 20th, was 62.5%. This is shown in the data made public yesterday by the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), a figure that is declining compared to the last records - last week it was 66.5% and the previous one 75.2% -. As shared by the director of the UHA, Jordi Pujol, the data is part of «the figures and the normal trend for the time», and pointed out that it will be necessary to see how they develop in the coming weeks, although he stated that «we believe they will be similar to today».

Thus, despite the fact that the AEAT disagrees with the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, they do not see that from the European Union and NATO, the member countries «put obstacles in the way of Russian citizens visit», remarking that «it is an inconvenience for us». It should be noted that Torres counted 50,000 Russian tourists who may stop visiting the Principality next year.

However, despite the difficulties of mobility and the restrictions still present by the coronavirus, Ruiz said that «customers have come from Russia this year», although «it has not been a very large influx». In fact, the AEAT shared that these arrivals have been going on until the last few weeks, as they have been able to see «now they are starting to have financial problems» and this may slow down the influx of Russian customers in the Principality. ≡

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