



PROMOTION

The government expects the tourist tax to take effect on July 1st

The deseasonalization of tourism and the promotion of sustainability are the priorities of the sector

The war in Ukraine will bring down 80% of visitors from Russia

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The government expects the tourist tax to take effect on July 1st. This was emphasized by the Minister of Tourism and Telecommunications, Jordi Torres, during the inaugural ceremony of the 11th World Congress of Snow and Mountain Tourism, which this year has chosen the parish of Canillo as its host. In relation to the tax measure proposed by the Executive, the director of the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), Jordi Pujol, has already expressed in this newspaper his doubts about the imminent application of this tax stating that «I am not clear that it will start in the summer» in contrast to the statements of the head of the ministry. Similarly, the president of the Association of Tourist Accommodation Companies (AEAT), Àlex Ruiz, admitted that applying the tax in the summer «would be detrimental because many sales are already made».

Regarding the development of the Snow and Mountain Congress, which hosted almost 400 people, most of the speakers agreed on the promotion of the deseasonalization of the tourism sector in order to embrace the maximum possible period of time with economically profitable activities. However, political representatives emphasized sustainable culture as the only possible way to pursue tourism. According to the Consul General of Canillo, Francesc Camp, «we need to expand the activity in the mountains throughout the year, in the same way that we need to find a balance between tourism and the preservation of the environment».

In turn, the Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), Zurab Pololikashvili, highlighted «Andorra's ability to attract new opportunities in a sector that, without looking deeply, offers an offer that only revolves around the mountain». In this sense, he added that «deseasonalization goes the way of music, heritage, culture, trade and gastronomy; and that's working very well. « In addition, Pololikashvili reaffirmed that given this



►► Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili at the opening of the Snow and Mountain Congress.

The spa and wellness center will be the star of next year's congress in order to diversify the industry

context of a triple health, climate and humanitarian crisis, «this is an even greater challenge, not only for Andorra, but for all European countries». Regarding Torres' position, the minister noted that the congress «is an essential milestone in addressing the views on the sustainable development of the sector and resilience to the geopolitical situation that is affecting us». He added that «the industry cannot live for only a few months a year, with digitalization and innovation

we will open up to more branches such as the promotion of spa and wellness». Following this line, the head of Tourism stated that the next edition of the congress will add the theme of thermal baths and that «we are working hard on deseasonalization through new music and dance shows» for the resorts with less influx of visitors.

On the other hand, the UN Secretary-General also said that the armed conflict in Ukraine would lead to «a reduction of up to 80% in

Esport is committed to sustainable tourism models

►► The head of government, Xavier Espot, yesterday evening gave a welcome reception to the participants of the 11th World Congress of Snow and Mountain Tourism, which is being held in Andorra to this day. The event took place in Soldeu - Canillo is the host parish - and in his welcome speech, he highlighted the evolution of this biannual congress, created in 1998 in Escaldes-Engordany. In this sense, he noted that «what was born as a meeting with the desire to constitute a forum for permanent debate on the development and sustainability of tourism in mountain areas has managed to internationalize and become a point of meeting and reference for professionals in the sector from around the world'. Espot also stressed the importance of holding an event of this nature in the country as tourism is one of the key sectors for the economy. For this reason, he said that «Andorra cannot remain impassive in the face of change. We need to have a broad debate on tourism models, on how to move towards a balance between quantity and quality that ensures continuity on an economic, environmental and cultural basis».

Russian tourists due to restrictions and fears caused by the war». In this sense, visitors from Russia «are one of the most important assets in the field of high purchasing power tourism», so it is necessary to promote local tourism as already produced during the hardest stages of the pandemic, especially in the course of the sixth covid wave, «said Torres. Finally, the head of Tourism added that the economic losses can be «significant for the sector», therefore, «we must work for peace as soon as possible, not only for the recovery of visitors, but to solve the humanitarian tragedy in all senses».

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SOCIAL CARE

The Council of Europe sees shortages in unemployment benefits

Of the total of 16 articles analyzed, the body only sees compliance in five, and the minister emphasizes the requirement



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«The demand from the Council of Europe is very high, but it does not mean that countries do not have to work to achieve change»

COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE // These results will be taken into account by the Administration, as the head of Social Affairs stated, «when these reports are made we take note». In this specific case, the Minister confirmed that work will be done to improve the aspects reported by three different ministries: Foreign Affairs, Health, and the one led by Pallarés herself. «We are firmly committed to working continuously with these recommendations,» she said, adding that the demand from the Council of Europe is very high, but that does not mean that countries should not work to achieve the changes they ask us». In this way, Pallarés shared that «we think it is positive for the states to have these challenges, so

Pallarés reaffirms that emergency medical care in the Principality is guaranteed for all people

that the political forces at the head are involved to respond to the demands».

Taking a look at the conclusions of conformity of Andorra, of which five have been considered, these have to do with: the services of consultation and health education within the section of the right to the protection of the Health; maintaining a social security system at a «satisfactory» level; on the right to benefit from social services, the promotion of these and public participation in their creation and maintenance are highlighted; and finally, the right of the elderly to social protection is valued as compliant.

In any case, the Executive has highlighted the high degree of demand of the Council of Europe for the evaluation of these articles of the European Social Charter. As an example, in the case of the section on termination benefits and the existence of a social security system, «none of the 20 countries evaluated have obtained compliance», as stated by the Government in a statement. ≡

►► The Minister of Social Affairs, Youth and Equality, Judith Pallarés, during her appearance.

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The Council of Europe (EC) has set duties in Andorra for compliance with the European Social Charter, especially with regard to benefits for sick leave, safety at work, and universal medical and social care. According to its latest review of 16 articles made public last Wednesday by the same body, Andorra only complies with five of them; there is a finding of non-compliance in four more; and in the remaining seven, we have considered that there is not enough information to issue a verdict.

Going into the details of the articles concluding non-compliance,

it is necessary to highlight the warning about the social security system, pointing out that «the minimum levels of benefits for illness, accident at work and occupational disease are insufficient». In addition, they also criticized the coverage of people moving between states, a situation on which they concluded that the minimum residence requirement to be entitled to certain social security benefits is «excessive», nor is it guaranteed right to maintain benefits acquired in other countries. Regarding these specific points, the Minister of Social Affairs, Youth and Equality, Judith Pallarés, who last Wednesday appeared at the press conference after the Council of Ministers with the functions of spokesperson, highlig-

hted that some countries with more tradition of social benefits «this article has also been marked», and in fact, virtually none have complied with these elements. She also recalled the «open debate» currently being held on the service structure of the CASS, in which «I understand that it would be an issue to be added», due to the fact that the Government has not taken the decision to take action immediately because it is an issue that needs more time and consistency.

Regarding the right to medical care, the Council of Europe concluded that «it has not been established that all foreigners in an irregular situation in Andorran territory have the right to emergency social and medical care». referen-

ce to both disability, housing, family and other benefits, as well as health care. On the last point, the minister emphasized that «the General Health Act always guarantees coverage in an emergency», and was in favor of providing this information to the body.

An exercise, to provide more data, which the Executive is willing to do also with all those areas that could not be completed due to lack of details and that have been required again. In this regard, Pallarés pointed out that the Government's action by expanding the National Statistics Plans, which «are bringing us closer to European standards», will contribute to being able to have all the required information.

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