



PURCHASING POWER MEASURES

Bus passes will automatically renew their validity

As contemplated by the Budget Law, the service will be free throughout 2023

With the latest reinforcements, bus lines run more smoothly and even have fewer users at Christmas

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Bus passes that allow free transport for all residents will be automatically renewed at the end of the year. This was confirmed by the Government, pointing out that, although initially the pilot test of the free bus service was expected to last until December 31st of this year, taking into account that the Budget Law already contemplates the maintenance of the measure, the subscriptions will be renewed without the need to do any formalities with a validity until December 31st, 2023. In this way, the will of the Executive to extend this action, born to improve the power, is beginning to be outlined more formally purchasing power of the population and to contribute to the fight against climate change, and that on several occasions, both the Head of Government, Xavier Espot, and the ministers involved in the decision have hinted in their public statements.

This decision, still unofficial, would also have been passed on the concessionaires of the service, Autocars Nadal and Coopalsa, who were called to a meeting at the beginning of the year precisely to deal with this issue. «We know that the Government wants to continue the free service throughout 2023, as has already been said in the press from the Executive», shared the manager of Coopalsa, Gabriel Dallerès, who explained that «in the message sent to us for the next meeting also includes this statement that the Government intends to extend the free service until the end of 2023». In a similar vein, the general manager of Autocars Nadal, Bartumeu Gabriel, made it clear that what they must agree on in the meeting is the way in which the gratuity will proceed, «to know if we continue with the same conditions



► A bus traveling through the center of La Massana.

as until now».

Beyond how public transport will develop next year, both managers agreed to assess that the bus service has managed to stabilize in-

to a normal service after a very complicated November on some national routes. «We have a significant volume of users, a little below what we had in recent days, but there is

no saturation in any line», assured Dallerès, who emphasized that if there is any incidence, «it is punctual». «In general, it can be considered that we are in a normal pu-

The Government points the advanced arrival of temporary workers in the saturation

► In response to a question presented by non-affiliated General Counsel Carine Montaner, the Minister of the Presidency, Economy and Business, Jordi Gallardo, reiterated that the anticipation of the arrival of seasonal workers in the Principality was one of the main factors in the situation of saturation experienced by public transport for a few weeks in November

and the beginning of December. Gallardo points out in the letter that, in accordance with the experience of recent years, the reinforcement of national public transport used to be done on December 1st, in order to cover the increase in demand for the season of winter. In any case, once it was pointed out that the bus service presented a situation that verged on collapse, explaining that «there

have been times when the resources mobilized by the companies have not been sufficient to absorb the demand in terms of passengers», the Executive required the concessionaires to advance the reinforcements and start operating with the usual high season bus frequencies, also highlighting the recovery this year of the L3 line, which goes to Soldeu.



GABRIEL DALLERÈS
COOPALSA MANAGER

«We have a significant volume of users, a little below the last few days, but there is no saturation in any line»

BARTUMEU GABRIEL
AUTOCARS NADAL GEN. DIRECTOR

«The Christmas holidays relax our service: there is no school anymore, and these users represent 50% of the service»

blic transport situation, with services designed for the high season», he insisted. For his part, Gabriel explained that «we have not had so many problems because we have neither temporary workers nor tourists; our user is the person who lives or works in Sant Julià de Lòria».

Likewise, looking ahead to the coming weeks, and coinciding with the Christmas school holidays, Autocars Nadal explain that «automatically, our volume drops». «The Christmas holidays relax our service, because there is no school and these users represent 50% of the service», explained Gabriel. On the other hand, at Coopalsa, they do not notice such marked variability due to the Christmas holidays, and they were confident that «the service will be sufficient». However, there may be one variable that does negatively affect service: traffic delays. «If the buses cannot pass, it is a problem that makes the service difficult, because if only one bus passes instead of two, the load of passengers accumulates». ≡

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CITIZEN REASONER

Inquiries about evictions and housing double in two years

The president of the ACU believes that Andorran Banking's aid to pay the mortgage «does not contribute much»

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The citizen's advocate, Marc Vila, told to EL PERIÒDIC that inquiries about evictions and housing have doubled in two years. «The housing problem is still very present and disturbs people's lives a lot when it comes to having a dignified and peaceful life, since they live with grief in their hearts every year, suffering for themselves contracts will be extended or not», he assessed. Going into detail, among the most frequent inquiries stand out people who have difficulty paying the rent of their apartment. However, «the majority refer to family units that receive letters from owners to recover a home and increase income disproportionately», he explained. In this sense, the most serious problem is that if landlords recover a home for their own use or for any of the reasons allowed by law, «tho-

The disproportion between the cost of living and access to basic rights harms part of the middle class

se affected find themselves in a situation where, for the time being, they cannot find a rental offer where to live, and this is the most serious issue, the lack of possibilities to move flats», he pointed out.

Currently, there is a disproportion between family income and access to housing, explained Vila. However, wages «should rise a little more, and we must take more drastic measures», because this disproportion between the cost of living and access to basic rights «does not only harm the most vulnerable families, who are further down the social scale, but it is already beginning to touch quite a part of the middle class». Thus, Vila explained that the solution is to «invest with courage the money that is necessary» to be able to offer more flats, either by renovating or building new ones, but «it must «to attack the issue from all possible sides and with a significant involvement of the public budget, because one measure alone is not enough, many are needed very quickly», he observed.

For its part, Andorran Banking has presented in recent days an agreement to facilitate the payment of mortgages to vulnerable



► File image of a man looking at real estate ads.



Marc Vila
CITIZEN REASONER

«The problem with housing is that it continues to be very present and disrupts people's lives a lot»

families, postponing the installments with a grace period of up to two years. Along these lines, the president of the Andorran Consumer Association (ACU), Lluís Ferreira, regretted that «it is a good measure, but at the same time it does not contribute much» since, although it temporarily prevents non-payments, these installments will also have to be paid in the future.

At the same time, he observed that in a hypothetical case in which an eviction occurs due to non-payment of the mortgage installments of a home, whether due to the rise in interest rates or any other factor, «the evicted person that he had to look for a flat to rent, he would not be able to do so, given the current situation». Even so, Ferreira stressed that he is not aware of any eviction cases in the country, «for better or worse, you al-



Lluís Ferreira
PRESIDENT OF THE ACU

«The evicted person who had to look for a flat to rent would not be able to do so, given the current situation»

ways end up cheating and paying, and the percentage of delinquencies in the Principality is relatively low compared to what other European countries have», he pointed out. In fact, the president of the College of Real Estate Agents and Managers (AGIA), Gerard Casellas, indicated in another medium of the country that the economic difficulties resulting from the health crisis have not resulted in an increase in delinquencies when paying the rents. Finally, the president of the ACU asserted that the association has reached an agreement with the citizen's ombudsman to refer all complaints in this area directly to him, so that he can centralize these demands and also be able to do more careful management before the Government. In addition, since the Housing Institute was created, «we are negotiating directly with public institutions», he indicated. ≡

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