



## WAR IN UKRAINE

# The consulate serves about 100 tourists, while some have already been able to return

|| About 30 Ukrainians are waiting for a solution in a hotel in the capital that they have paid until day 1

|| The residents' association regrets that they have found little solidarity among the local population

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**O**n the second day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, frantic activity continued at the headquarters of the Honorary Consulate of Ukraine in Andorra. Honorary Consul Antoni Zorzano explained that he was looking after a hundred tourists from that country. Specifically, a group of 40 people are in a hotel in Andorra la Vella, with the expenses paid until March 1st and waiting for a solution from that date. In fact, nine members of this group had managed to leave, leaving only 31. And they were not the only ones, as some of the three hundred Ukrainian visitors to Andorra had returned to their country «worried about the family» mostly by air to nearby cities and then by land». We're working on solutions on the fly, and more and more people are volunteering to help, as well as the institutions», Zorzano said. In fact,

**Montaner calls for «neutrality»** in the government and «respect» for the Russian community living in Andorra

Ukrainian tourists were still unable to pay with their credit cards, and many were only guaranteed to stay until day 1.

For her part, the president of the Association of Ukrainians in Andorra, Anastasia Kravets, explained that she was making various arrangements, some of which were coordinated with the consulate and others on her own. In some cases, they help tourists from their country who are in Andorra to visit relatives or for business, and who have found a place in their homes, and also make arrangements for the same relatives who live in Ukraine with money and transportation». The truth is that the drama has united more Ukrainians living in Andorra, and even some Russians, while I regret that we have not found so much solidarity among the local population», he said. In this regard,



Escura (left) and Cortés (right) in Lviv.

## Escura, one step away from crossing the border into Poland

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Former Andorran international footballer and current physical trainer of the Ukrainian women's national football team, Jordi Escura, is one step away from being able to cross the border from Ukraine to Poland. Escura, who is traveling by van with former Barça women's coach and current Ukrainian women's coach Lluís Cortés, took 19 hours to cover the approximately 500 kilometers between the capital, Kiev, and the border city of Lviv, with the main goal of being able to get to Poland, and from there find the best solution to return home. They both arri-

ved in Lviv last Thursday morning, and the plan is to travel the 50 kilometers that separate them from the neighboring country at night.

«We haven't been able to sleep much since we left Kiev», Escura said, adding that when she arrived in Lviv, «the situation is different. We were able to get out of the hotel, walk the streets, and eat out». However, the Principality also wanted to speak clearly, stating that «we do not know what will happen next. We will have to see how the roads are near the border, but what we have clear is that we want to get out, as soon as possible. The situation on the outskirts of Kiev, as both Escura and

Cortés showed, was a real mess». There were people with suitcases and bags, and roads full of vehicles trying to get out of the capital», they said, noting that in their case, the couple's reaction was very quick, in addition to being able to count on the help of the Ukrainian Football Federation.

At the close of this paper edition, Escura and Cortés were preparing to leave for Poland at night to try to cross the border. The other three Andorrans are also heading towards the same border, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from which they assured that they are in constant contact with them.

## Armed conflict is hurting some travel agencies

►► One of the sectors most affected by the pandemic was travel agencies, and after Russia's aggression on Ukraine, companies working with tourists from Eastern Europe regretted that their situation has become unsustainable. The co-owner of the Open Andorra travel agency, Yulia Kovaleva, said that despite the precarious situation they are facing due to the covid and the war, they are now focusing on helping the Ukrainians return to their country». Many of them were sightseeing and skiing in the Principality. As a result of the outbreak of the conflict last morning, many of them had to cancel their activities, «she said. She also explained that the agency was able to send three families to Barcelona, two of whom took a flight to Poland and one of them - consisting of eight people - is still in the Principality». From the agency we offer them our help in finding flights or flats to Andorra», said Kovaleva.

he added that there were two types of reactions among the resident Russian population: those who regretted the war and offered to help, and those who did not even want to hear about it.

On the other hand, the non-attached general councilor, Carine Montaner, asked the government last Thursday for «neutrality, as Andorra has always done, a fact that has given us 700 years of peace», she stated. She added: «Neutrality on all geopolitical issues and especially in the field of armed conflict». Finally, she called for «respect» for the Russian community living in Andorra. On the other hand, the deputy chairwoman of the Democratic parliamentary group, Mònica Bonell, took part last Thursday in the extraordinary meeting of the joint committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), where the Russian invasion of Ukraine was addressed with the intervention of the two delegations involved. ≡

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## SOCIAL AFFAIRS

# The reasoner warns that the housing problem is getting worse

The institution has received about 80 complaints in two months, when it usually receives 150 in a year



MARICEL BLANCH

►► The reasoner of the citizen, Marc Vila, calls for action to solve the problem of the lack of affordable rental housing.

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The problem of high rental housing prices is affecting more and more people and, it seems, is still a long way off. This can be deduced, at least, from the statistics compiled by the citizen's reasoner, who has seen an increase in consultations in this area since the beginning of the year. And if in a normal year the institution receives about 150 complaints about this issue, so far this year, with the month of February still unfinished, it has already received about eighty. This is a very high figure compared to other years, «and at the end of the year it will be very high if this trend continues». Sorry, they're trying to terminate the contract», said Marc Vila's reasoning officer.

Given this scenario, one possibility for more flats and, therefore, to

moderate their prices is that some of the more than 6,000 homes in the country, as announced a few days ago by the Ministry of Housing, they can be rented. In this sense, Vila advocates carrying out fieldwork to have more details on the characteristics of these flats «without waiting for the commissioning» of the National Habitat Institute (INH). It would be a question of determining how many of these vacant flats could be incorporated into the real estate market, with the necessary legal accompanying measures before the situation could worsen further in the coming months». We have to see the formulas that can be implemented and not wait another year to start doing it because otherwise everything will be delayed and with the economic recovery and the democratic increase that Andorra is experiencing, in a few months we will be in an even worse situation », stressed Vila. The



**MARC VILA**  
THE REASONER OF THE CITIZEN

«I'm noticing an increase in complaints about landlords who, looking for excuses, want to terminate the contract»

«If the situation is worse than it was three years ago, the measures will have to be extended for as long as necessary»

aim should therefore be to speed up the actions taken by the administrations: «I already agree that things are being done, but the processes should be speeded up a bit; I think this issue needs to be tackled more quickly

than is being done».

On the other hand, the head of the institution considers that to address this issue, as the Government has done again this year, measures aimed at protecting people with ren-

tal housing will have to be extended, and not just one year». But two or three if necessary». If the situation is worse than it was three years ago, the measures will have to be extended for as long as there are enough flats on the market for prices to stabilize». The aim, according to Vila, is to maintain, among other measures, the freezing of rents «until market tensions are more reasonable». Many of the complaints received by the landlord are about the landlord's attempt to evict the tenant in order to significantly increase the rental price. Thus, a specific case of this practice is that of a landlord

**Victor Filloy recalls** that creating too many officially protected flats has caused problems in some countries

who told his tenant that if he wanted to continue in the flat he would have to pay 1,150 euros instead of the 750 he had stipulated so far». What I'm doing is trying to reassure people who are suffering from a case like this by informing them that they can take advantage of the extension of the rent», Vila said. For this reason, the reasoner understands that «until there are no results» of the actions carried out by the National Housing Institute (INH) «measures such as the freezing of rents» should not be lifted». These statements by the reasoner of the citizen coincide in time with those made last Thursday by the Minister of Territory and Housing, Victor Filloy, according to which growing too fast in affordable housing has caused problems in some countries, where now «they do not know what to do with so many public protection flats». Filloy told RTVA that «it's hard to make people understand that things are being done». In this regard, he mentioned the freezing of rents, the relaxation of criteria for the emergence of flats and the creation of social and affordable housing, as well as the study that is being promoted on the real needs in this area. ≡

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