



TERRITORY

Chamber's concern for a possible brake on urban growth

Espot assures that the measures provided for in the new law «will not stop the construction of the country in its tracks»

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The president of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services (CCIS), Josep Maria Mas, pointed out yesterday, during the presentation of the results of the 2021 Economic Report, the anxiety and concern that the Law for the promotion of the sustainability of urban development and tourism in the business and investors sector. Thus, Mas assured that «the Chamber has always defended a balanced and sustainable growth of the country, which is respectful of the environment», noting that the growth plans should have been made a long time ago. In addition, he assessed that it is necessary to plan the decisions that are taken and to accompany the law with a study that evaluates the social and economic impact of the actions.

In turn, the head of government, Xavier Espot, made it known that

The Economic and Social Council will consult the entity about a hypothetical increase in wages

these will not be «traumatic measures» and that «they will not stop the construction of the country in its tracks». At the same time, he pointed out that some condition or some additional requirement will simply be added, pointing out that «it is very reasonable and legitimate considering the situation we are in». Espot also asserted that he understands that there is concern on the part of companies and citizens, but «I ask for confidence in the Government, the municipalities and the economic sectors, which will be consulted in the preparation of the planning managers».

After these statements, the president of the CCIS resumed his speech and considered that if the situation «turns in the direction the head of government has said», it may give another vision or idea to companies, especially in the construction sector, but he maintained that «we think these things had to be said and we can only be the voice of business, which is why we are representing from the Chamber of Commerce at the head of the entities».

The new legislation, which will be published in the BOPA this week, also regulates tourism growth, specifically housing for tourist



► Josep Maria Mas and Xavier Espot during the presentation of the economic report of the Chamber of Commerce.



XAVIER ESPOT
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

«I ask for confidence in the Government, the municipalities and the economic sectors, which will be consulted»

JOSEP MARIA MAS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRES.

«Yes, it [is up to us] to look after what represents an expense for the company, and we will contribute whatever is appropriate»

use. In this sense, the Association of Tourist Accommodation Companies stated that it will present to the Constitutional Court an appeal against the bill, which establishes a two-year moratorium on obtaining new authorizations. On this issue, the head of government assured

that the association cannot go directly to the constitutional court, since it must first do so through the ordinary way. «If it is within the possibilities provided by the legal system, we must respect it», indicated Espot, who also stated that «we will defend our position», since he considered that it is not fair that it can be sold indefinitely a flat and that the license is not associated with the owner, but with the real estate unit. «I think that this would have created a huge increase in prices and speculation around these flats», he considered.

Wage increase/ In relation to the inflationary trend in the coming months, Espot expressed that measures will have to continue to be implemented to mitigate the effects. Thus, he informed that today there will be a new meeting of the Economic and Social Council so that there can be an agreement between the unions and the employer on the salary increase. In addition, the head of government trusted that «a consensual solution will be reached and that the government will not need to take a unilateral deci-

sion». For its part, the Chamber of Commerce is not a member of the council. However, Espot pointed out that it will consult the entity and take its opinion into account. At the same time, Mas asserted that «perhaps it is not our direct responsibility, but we look after what represents an expense for the company, and we will contribute whatever is appropriate», while stating that the employer is the one who is negotiating and «we will lend a hand with what we see that we can help it».

CHALLENGES TO BE REACH// The Chamber of Commerce has highlighted 10 country challenges to promote the improvement of business competitiveness and the economy. Of these, Mas highlighted digitization, and encouraged companies to benefit from the subsidies offered by the Digital Transformation Program. On the other hand, the president of the chamber emphasized the need to adopt patterns of austerity and energy saving. Finally, he explained the need to reduce the infrastructure deficit with France. ≡

The architects ask to regulate the building

►► The College of Architects (CO-AA) is calling for a General Territorial Plan «overriding the public interest» to regulate the future growth of town planning in Andorra, guaranteeing access to housing for all citizens. This is one of the measures they consider necessary to bring about orderly and consistent growth. However, until it is completed, two actions are requested: not to process any application for an urban planning license for major construction work or to process the approval of special or partial plans where there is no visibility or urban planning services with sufficient capacity to serve the needs of the buildings or facilities provided for in the respective plans». The proposal has emerged from the round table organized a few days ago by the college on housing.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

The unions and the CEA find it «difficult» to agree on an increase in wages

The president of the union considers that the proposal presented by the USdA «has set the bar really high»

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Everything points to the fact that the Union of Andorra (USdA) and the Andorran Business Confederation (CEA) will not reach an agreement on the measures to be implemented associated with the salary increase for workers for next year. This was seen in the meeting held last Wednesday by the Economic and Social Council convened by the Head of Government, Xavier Espot, to take into account their positions, although in the current economic context they will have to assume acceptances and waivers by all parties.

For their part, the unions presented the proposal to increase the wages of all public and private sector workers, as well as pensions, by 5% annually in the next four years. In addition, the general secretary of the USdA, Gabriel Ubach, assessed that «we will continue to work, but from here on, this will be a political decision», since Espot warned that if a consensus was not reached, the Executive would take measures unilaterally. Ubach also made it known that the employer and the president of the Association of Merchants and Owners of Meritxell Avenue-Eix Central, Sònia Yebra, «have asked that business owners can do or undo and increase wages as they see conveniently».

For its part, the management exposed the uncertainties that it considers to be present for companies, such as the increase in interest rates, the scarce workforce, the increase in the prices of some products linked to energy and, precisely, increases in workers' wages. In this line, the president of the CEA, Gerard Cadena, declared that «we find the demands of the unions unacceptable, because it can affect the viability of companies». Therefore, he explained that what must be tried to avoid is that a company is not viable and that staff layoffs must occur in the future.

On the possibility of consensus between both parties, Cadena remarked that «I see it as quite difficult», since the proposals are very far apart, «especially if they do not



►► Image of the meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the presence of the head of government.

The council will meet again in 15 days in a more technical meeting to work on the proposals presented.

move from this 20% increase [in the next legislature] that USdA presented, which for us is not feasible». Even so, the president of the employers' association stated that he believes that «more or less» the Government has already taken a position, and indicated that there will probably be an increase in wages, but that in any case, the head of government will have to wait until the end of the year to see how inflation evolves and, from there, give

a figure, which «at the moment is very difficult».

In 15 days the Economic and Social Council will meet again in a second, more technical meeting to work in depth on the proposals presented, «especially those of the employers», explained the president of the CEA, since «they are those who have set the bar really high.»

Housing/ Although the general secretary of the USdA separated the problem of housing from the salary



Gabriel Ubach
SECRETARY GENERAL OF USDA
«[The CEA] has asked that business owners can do and undo and increase wages as they see conveniently»

Gerard Cadena
CEA CHAIRMAN
«We find the demand from the unions unacceptable, because it can affect the viability of companies»

policy in the convened meeting, he remarked that we have a serious problem, for which «the Government will have some responsibility, since it has brought neoliberal policies of wage freezes and pensions». At the same time, Ubach explained that the rental price must be limited, and proposed a price consensus between the Government, the unions and the employer, so that if, for example, an owner wants to rent a house of 700 euros for 1,600, that person has to pay the difference with taxes and an official protection apartment can be created. However, he regretted that «the Executive doesn't see it that way, in other words, he shares the philosophy, but he doesn't see how to do it, and we are very clear that it would be done in three months». However, he explained that it would also be very easy to value a flat and that «we can do it in an afternoon», but «the Government does not want to solve the housing problem that exists in this country.»

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