

# el Periòdic News

## GRECO REPORT

# New breakthrough in preventing corruption among parliamentarians and judges

The Council of Europe continues to warn about the composition of the CSJ and the declaration of assets



The Minister and Secretary of State for Justice and the Interior, Ester Molné and Joan León, with GRECO representatives last year.

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The Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) published a report this Wednesday that analyzes Andorra's measures to prevent corruption among parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors. Although it recognizes progress in several areas, the organization highlights some important shortcomings that need to be addressed urgently.

The report regrets that the Superior Council of Justice (CSJ) has not modified its composition to ensure a more balanced representation of judges, magistrates and prosecutors elected by their coworkers, despite this being a recommendation made previously. Although it is appreciated that transparency has been

strengthened in the nomination process, as well as in the election of the member designated by the judicial professionals themselves, the document states that these measures "do not allow for a rebalancing of the composition of the CSJ to ensure appropriate representation". This is a concern for guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary.

In the parliamentary field, GRECO positively assesses the implementation of a code of conduct and a practical guide to facilitate its application. It highlights advances such as the establishment of integrity principles for parliamentarians, the obligation to declare possible conflicts of interest, including during the mandate, and the creation of training, control and sanction mechanisms to ensure compliance with the rules. How-

ever, it underlines as a negative point that, although a declaration of assets is now required, this "is not public nor does it extend to members of the parliamentarians' family, a regrettable fact that limits transparency".

Regarding efforts to prevent corruption in the judicial system, the report welcomes the amendment to the Justice Act, which establishes the automatic renewal of the mandate of judges and magistrates except in cases of disciplinary liability. It also welcomes the fact that the disciplinary regime has been revised to offer "more procedural guarantees, publicity and transparency". It also welcomes the fact that decisions to dismiss prosecutors must be motivated in writing and that ethics and integrity training has been implemented for judges, magistrates,

## ASPECTS TO BE IMPROVED

- 1 That the composition of the CSJ be modified to ensure more balanced representation.
- 2 That the declaration of assets be public and extended to members of the family of parliamentarians.
- 3 That the ethics committee provided for by the new code of judicial conduct be operational soon.
- 4 That more forceful measures be applied to guarantee correct applications in key bodies such as the CSJ.

and prosecutors. However, the body insists that "the composition of the High Council of Justice still does not ensure adequate representation of members of the judiciary elected by their counterparts".

The Council of Europe also highlights recommendations that have not yet been fully implemented. They welcome the creation of a system to provide confidential advice on ethics and integrity issues to parliamentarians, but note that, in the case of prosecutors, this system is not fully operational. It also regrets that the ethics committee provided for by the new code of judicial conduct is not yet operational. "This situation prevents us from considering that the recommendation has been fully implemented," the document states. ●



## NO CLEAR ANSWER ON THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT

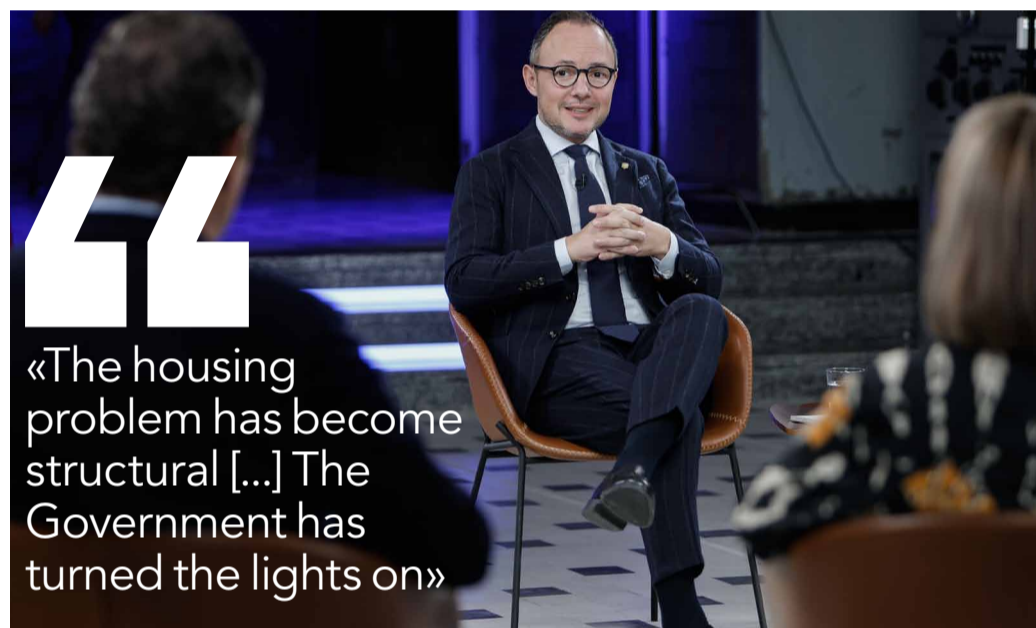
# Espot intensifies the defense while doubts persist

He calls the detractors "siren songs", but does not clarify the concerns of the citizens

LAURA GÓMEZ / ALEX MONTERO  
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

The debate on the Association Agreement with the European Union was one of the central points of the RTVA program "El cap de Govern respon" (The Head of Government Responds), held this Wednesday. Espot began his intervention to reinforce the importance of the Association Agreement, emphasizing that its approval is essential to guarantee the future of Andorra. In this context, he defined the detractors as "siren songs" that can distort reality. "We have been to all the parishes answering the doubts of society" and insisted that the campaign is not based on fear, but on speaking "clearly and loudly".

When questioned about the campaign budget, the president defended that it is a legitimate use of public resources in the general interest. Referring to the impact studies prepared by the opposition, he remarked that "they are also paid for with public money because they have



The Head of Government, Xavier Espot, during his participation in "The Head of Government Responds".

been paid for with the budget of the parliamentary groups that are part of the general annual budget of the Government."

Regarding the free movement of people, Espot highlighted that an asymmetric solution will be implemented. "We will be able to settle in any EU country, but people who come here will do so with many restrictions", similar to those of the current Qualified Immigration Law. Three different quotas have been planned for workers, re-

sidents and temporary workers, with strict control of entry conditions.

**HOUSING CRISIS: LONG-TERM MEASURES** // Espot acknowledged that housing prices are skyrocketing, both for residents and for immigrant workers who arrive in the Principality, and stated that this situation has been worsening since 2016 or 2017. "The housing problem has become a structural problem", he declared, arguing that immedi-

ate solutions cannot be applied. "We have put the lights on from the Government", he assured, emphasizing the development of plans with a six or seven-year view to guarantee their effectiveness. The president also addressed the tension that these measures generate with homeowners, especially due to the impact that regulations have on the profitability of the real estate market. "The more intervention there is in housing, the more disincentives for owners," he explained, while defending that the Government is working to balance the needs of regulation with the sustainability of the sector.

**ABORTION: LISTENING, SUPPORT AND INFORMATION** // Finally, and regarding the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, Espot reiterated his "firm conviction" that the decriminalization or legalization of abortion is not compatible with the structure of the Co-Principality. "Wanting to maintain the structure of the Co-Principality and allowing abortions in Andorra is not compatible," he stated. Despite this position, he defended that the Government can make progress in "the matter of women's rights" with measures that include listening to them, providing support and offering information on where they can interrupt their pregnancy outside the country. ●

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