

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Jordi Casadevall

PRESIDENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH STUDY COMMISSION

“The report will be the basis for a possible proposal to change the Urban Planning Law”

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This Wednesday, the work of the Sustainable Growth Study Commission, chaired by Jordi Casadevall, officially begins with its first public appearance with the College of Geologists. This commission, created with the unanimous support of the General Council just before the Christmas holidays, was created with the aim of analyzing the dysfunctions and possible improvements in the country's urban planning field. The final objective is to prepare a detailed report before June 4th, which could serve as the basis for a possible modification of the General Law on Territorial Planning and Urban Planning.

—Do you remember what the composition of the Sustainable Growth Study Commission is and what criteria were followed for the selection of its members?

—We created the commission through a plenary session of the General Council, just before the Christmas holidays. We created it with the unanimous will of all parliamentarians to be able to create a working fra-

mework that was the most suitable to be able to collect all the elements that allow us to reflect on dysfunctions and improvements that we could contribute to the Law itself. And then, in any case, if we are able to reach a consensus, why not draw up a joint bill to modify the General Law on Urban Land Planning? But the objective of the commission is to make a report, not to modify the law. This would come, in any case, with a second stage.

—How is the commission coordinated with the other institutions that have to do with the country?

—It is still just another legislative commission. We have the same powers, the same operation. Now what we are doing is drawing up an agreement with a whole series of speakers. We start this Wednesday with the first appearance, which is at the College of Geologists. It should not be about the order of appearances or whether one day two come, another day three come, depending on the importance they may have, but rather about the difficulty of balancing the agendas of both the members of the committee and the guests we invite. There will be



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a break in February, because it is the period outside sessions. The idea is to be able to hold this week's session, two more sessions, and we will resume at the beginning of March because we have a deadline, a final date by which, at the latest, June 4th, we must deliver the report. From there, this report will be submitted to the plenary of the General Council, and each parliamentary group, separately or jointly, will have to decide whether to work on a proposal for a bill of modification.

—What specific axes should this report have?

—We have not yet defined the structure, but I believe that we will finally resume a logical structure of antecedents, points, or inconsistencies and dysfunctions that should be fixed. This could be a level. Then, we would probably need to specify mechanisms or instruments that already exist today but that may not be clear enough. We could also assess innovations, things that the law does not currently contemplate and that it would be inte-

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“We would be wrong if we thought that the commission would solve the underlying housing problems”

resting for it to contemplate. As a fourth point, in parallel with these three, we would like to identify whether it is pertinent to homogenize the nomenclature. Right now, you have seven POUPs and each POUP has used a slightly different nomenclature. In the end, a person, an owner or an architect who consults a POUP of a parish should be able to find a coherent and homogeneous way of interpreting the information.

—What exactly does this mean to homogenize the nomenclature, taking into account that each parish has its own casuistry?

—Yes, there are some realities, but we think that there is a cer-

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tain path, perhaps not towards total homogenization, but towards a convergence of certain elements. For example, the keys to classifying land based on its situation, building capacity or urban use. In a way, we could move towards a certain unification. In the end, this does not raise a question of substance, but only a question of form.

—How can you guarantee this sustainable growth?

—I think that each parliamentary group has some ideas in mind about what we have tried to do and, in any case, we will be able to talk about it once the study committee has finished. The idea is to ask each interlocutor, each speaker, some more or less similar questions to obtain relevant information about this sustainability criterion.

—How will the appearance work?

—The guest will have a period of time in which they will be able to express themselves freely. Then there will be a part dedicated to questions directly related to what interests us, especially about this sustainability criterion.

—How can citizens actively participate in this whole process?

—No procedure has been set up for Andorran citizens to participate in the study commission,



on, due to the complexity of the matter. Afterwards, when we have closed the study committee, we will consider other options. It is such a complex matter and with so many elements that we did not consider it appropriate to open this procedure initially. However, subsequently, at least from our perspective – and here I am speaking as a member of Concòrdia, not as president of the committee – we could consider opening a question-and-answer session.

—How will transparency be guaranteed in decision-making and in the final report that you must present?

—There is an initial exercise in transparency in public appearances, which is important, since not many committees have made public appearances. All meetings will have an act, and finally

the report will be the element that must include the maximum transparency.

—How will it be guaranteed that it is sustainable?

—There are proposals on the table, such as that of La Massana, which has implemented quotas to regulate growth. It is a brave model that allows us to discuss whether it sufficiently guarantees sustainability. ACODA (Association of Civil Engineers of Andorra) has also expressed interest in this idea, based on the Swiss model, which is relevant in many aspects. In addition, it is important that the Government complies with the preparation of a national load capacity report, as it committed itself to. This report will provide essential elements to address sustainability from a cross-cutting perspective.

—How is it guaranteed that the

final report has this cross-cutting nature if we are talking about homogenizing a nomenclature for the seven parishes and taking into account that we have seven different load studies?

—The work of a national load capacity study that integrates the seven existing studies is essential. Although the seven parishes may have certain differences, these will not be so great as to prevent an analysis at the national level. The law no longer makes differences by parish, but is presented in a homogeneous way, ensuring a unified vision.

—Could your tasks include policies or suggestions to protect access to housing for vulnerable groups?

—The local authorities already have instruments to carry out policies on access to housing, such as subsidies or tax reductions. This is not an issue that is directly related to this commission. The key factors, such as the construction price or the cost of a square meter of land, are broader issues that go beyond our competences. However, the report could include some elements such as directing the land transfer towards housing and public protection, an aspect already provided for in the current law, but which has not yet been fully implemented. However, this is not the main objective of the commission. ●

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