

## HOUSING

# A 'desire' demonstration with a lot of rain and without the expected success

The demand for a decent home this May 1st only gathers a hundred people

ALEX MONTERO / LAURA GÓMEZ  
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Perhaps it was the bad weather and the rain that accompanied us throughout the week, or perhaps a drop in spirits on the part of the country's citizens to see how the government institutions continue to not remedy the housing problem. Be that as it may, the demonstration held last Wednesday afternoon regarding this issue, promoted by the Trade Union, only managed to gather a hundred people. The forecast of 5,000 demonstrators that the general secretary, Gabriel Ubach, mentioned a few days ago in an interview with EL PERIÒDIC is a long way off: «Last year we were 3,000, this year we hope to reach 5,000 people».

Precisely Ubach was the one who led the mobilization along its entire route, which gave the starting shot a little later than 7:00 p.m. in Plaça Coprínceps of Escaldes-Engordany. From there they continued on their way down Carlemany avenue, with the intention of finishing at Plaça del Poble, at which point they proceeded to read the manifesto. Along the route, more citizens joined the rest of the demonstrators, among whom we could see well-known faces from the country's political scene such as the president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group, Cerni Escalé, or the president of the Social Democrats, Pere Baró.



Image of the demonstration held this Wednesday, May 1st.

Whistles and chants were also the main protagonists of the day, a constant that did not stop repeating throughout the entire walk. All of them in the same line, and some better known than others as they have already been heard on previous occasions: «It's enough» or «Unpayable rent, unstoppable people» have been the most repeated, while others were a direct shot, as it could not be otherwise, at the current head of government, whom the Trade Union holds as the most responsible for the current problems with housing: «Espot sacks» or «Espot listens, the town get pissed off». Chants that went in line with

the words affirmed by Ubach in the aforementioned interview: «Espot should take responsibility and come out and say: I was wrong».

### «TIME HAS DONE THE TRICK, NOT THE INDIGNATION OF THE PUBLIC»

Questioned about the impetus that has led her to take to the streets this May 1st, one of the demonstrators was direct and critical: «I'm coming out because of the general situation we have in the country, which is unsustainable. They are playing us for a fool with all this speculation, people cannot live with a salary of 1,300 euros and pay a

rent of 1,200», she said. In addition, regarding the new measures promoted by the Executive to try to alleviate the housing problem, the witness assured that they will only serve to «shut up, they seem ridiculous to me», underlining that these will not solve anything. «The solution is to raise salaries and curb speculation. It cannot be that someone from outside comes and buys an entire building», she dictated.

And it is that, according to Ubach himself, it is beginning to be a bit exhausting to always talk about the current case of housing: «The only thing we would like is to finish with this issue and go claim others

that are not the same», such as for example official protection flats, both for sale and for rent. «The government only talks about the latter, but it also does not want to set a price», mentioning that the Shock Plan that is currently in place will be of no use if this issue is not dealt with. «If we calculate that 30% of the value of the salary must be allocated to rent, we would be talking about 450-800 euros, no more.»

In subsequent statements to the press, Escalé remarked that «any occasion is good to emphasize the precarious situation we live in our country», adding that what is being asked from the parliamentary formation he represents is for the Executive to enter the Project of Law on sustainable growth and the right to housing «as soon as possible to stop real estate speculation». Even so, for Escalé the measures are not as critical as one might initially think, a fact that he pointed out clearly: «We think that many measures are positive, but we are also waiting for how these intentions will end up being transferred to the law».

However, the president of the Concòrdia parliamentary group highlighted the contradiction that has generated the fact of presenting the measures «before entering the proposal

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### Gabriel Ubach

GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE TRADE UNION

«We want to end this issue [housing] once and for all and go claim others that are not the same»

### Cerni Escalé

PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF CONCÒRDIA

«We ask that the Executive submit the Draft Law in the shortest possible time to the General Council»

### Pere Baró

PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP OF THE PS

«Citizens demand decent housing, purchasing power to survive and rights for women».



The banner with which the demonstration was headed, last Wednesday.

as Law in the General Council», which has further encouraged speculation that currently affects the country: «What has been done is to send a message to the market for everyone outside who wants to buy or carry out a real estate project», sending, in addition, a message to all those who want to carry out this intention: «Who wants, let him do it now because there will be changes».

For his part, Baró wanted to congratulate the citizens who demonstrate, as well as the organizers for the good work done: «It is a shout that has been heard for a long time. Citizens demand decent housing, purchasing power to survive and rights for women,» he said, under the promise that his politi-

cal formation will continue to claim these demands. «Today it has been shown who is on the side of the people and who is not, and we will continue to fight despite an Andorran right-wing majority that is more concerned about the rich and powerful», continued the general councilor, who also mentioned that from the social democrats they see the need to set a price for affordable rental flats, a property registry and a reference price index. «It's the only way to regulate the housing market», he said. Even so, Baró emphasized that «we have a Government that only does marketing policies to make it look like they are doing something», remarking that the proof that they are not achieving any success is that people, even with rain, «has demonstrate to say that it's enough and that they want to live in their country with decent conditions». Asked about the success of the call, which was certainly lower than that of the demonstration held last October 31st, the president of the PS pointed out that there are many working people who had to work this May 1st: «Maybe if it had been a party like had been claimed, the number of people would be different», emphasizing, however, that the success obtained must be evaluated very positively. ●

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