



## General election 2A candidate interview

# «The housing problem will only be solved by creating more rental flats»

**XAVIER ESPOT** is a lawyer by profession, having previously worked as a judge. Follower of the musical group Coldplay and lover of walking through La Mola park, remembering his childhood. Paris is also a chosen destination.



ZAIDA  
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PeriodicAND

### DEMOCRATES

The head of the list of Democrats has

already been in charge of the Government for 12 years.

#### –What is your position regarding the association agreement with the European Union?

–The position of the political formation that I lead in terms of rapprochement with the European Union I think is well known, it has been a very consistent and very constant position since at least 2015 when we started negotiating this agreement association with the European Union, we ultimately defend that the European Union is our natural space, and therefore, it is welcome that we intensify this relationship. What does it mean to belong to the European internal market? It does not mean in any case to be a member state of the European Union but to assume the four community freedoms, free movement of people, goods, services and capital, but to assume them with some specificities, linked to our idiosyncrasy, and particular demographic and territorial reality.

#### –What do you think about abortion and its current situation in Andorra?

–We have a weighted, focused position that attends to all the concordant elements within the framework of a certain problem that we have raised. We obviously, as a matter of principle and as a liberal and humanist political formation, have no principled opposition to the fact that women can voluntarily terminate their pregnancy in at least the three basic cases. We must take into account that we have a particular institutional structure that in the end has been the guarantee of the survival of our independence and our maintenance as a sovereign state and that, in addition, serves us to weigh in the international concert and have the two



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co-princes. Obviously, our institutional text right now is incompatible with the legalization of abortion.

#### –How do you see the vertical growth of some of the country's infrastructures?

–The competences in urban planning in this specific area are common and therefore I believe that we can have little productive debate in the wake of this, but if you ask me for the opinion of my political training, as always we must take a step back and have a more global view.

#### –What do you think about house prices in Andorra (both rent and purchase), and how would you solve it?

–This question must be contextualized particularly with regard to sales prices, I believe that there are all kinds of sales prices. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for rentals. I am concerned about this situation and we are concerned as a political formation and these four years we have worked hard to attack precisely the root of this problem, but it cannot be solved only with interventionist measures. This problem can only be solved by creating more rental flats, if there is more supply and the same demand, prices will gradually stabilize. It will be a priority of our next four years of government.

#### –How could the lack of professionals in the health sector be solved?

–First we must take into account that this problem is not exclusive to Andorra, and this shows that Andorra is also very permeable to the countries around us. I believe that there is an obvious shortage in the medical field not only in Andorra, but in France, Spain and all the countries around us.

We don't have a medical school and we depend a little on what can be done in the countries around us, but we can offer better conditions so that Andorran students who have studied medicine decide to return to the country and be able to attract talent from outside. In this sense, we have started a reflection process with the SAAS and now we are working from the human resources department itself on a process of reviewing the salary scales and with a whole package of incentives, not only financial, but also

improvements in working conditions to make these professions more attractive.

**-How do you see that the oncology center has not been built next to the hospital?**

-More than an oncology center it was a radiotherapy center. Oncology goes far beyond radiotherapy, and beyond the specific radiotherapy unit that wanted to open in Andorra. I think that in the end what we all want and must offer Andorrans and the residents of Andorra is the best treatment for the disease they suffer from.

We are working with an expert in the oncology field; and until there is a guarantee we will not go ahead with this center. We prefer to boost the accompanying and support much more.

**-What do you think that everything related to mental health is not covered by Social Security and that, in addition, prices have increased?**

-Psychiatric care, which is closely related to mental health treatment, is covered. The government has taken decisive steps in this regard. We are the first government to have opened the door to the inclusion of psychology services, and we have spent two years negotiating side by side with the association of psychologists to finally agree on the terms on which these services should be included.

**-How would you solve the collapse of the country's judicial system?**

-First of all, we cannot talk about the collapse of justice. We have various problems in the administrative, civil sphere, which is what governs the daily and economic relations of a country. It is true that justice is not characterized by speed, neither here nor everywhere, but I think we cannot talk about collapse. There may be slowness in some specific judicial processes, but the machine is working, particularly in the civil field which in the end is what occupies the vast majority of litigation in a country, and with the new code of civil procedure that has entered force this legislature, the legal operators themselves agree that there has been a before and an after and that things have gone very well. Where we have a si-

tuation of collapse is in the criminal field and I believe that here there is a multiplicity of factors, there is a lack of resources, taking into account the particular increase of some causes or the complexity of some causes derived particularly from the BPA crisis.

**-What do you think Andorra's economic situation is? And after the war in Ukraine, how do you see the rise in the prices of basic necessities at a global level?**

-A country that has had the highest GDP in the last year in all of Europe, a country with a full employment situation, where we have just closed an extraordinary tourist season, we have returned to pre-covid debt levels, at least we have to make a positive observation. Situations of economic growth and economic expansion also have negative consequences, nothing is black or white, but I can guarantee that it is much better to manage the evils of economic growth than to manage an economic recession. There is a situation of rising prices due to the energy crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine and it is true that there is a part of the public that has difficulty making ends meet.

**-What do you think about the management of the pandemic?**

-I don't know if it is up to me to do the reading, I think that this should be done by the citizens, if I refer to the political opinion polls, I think they have done a positive reading. We knew how to stand by the citizens, not only giving them moral comfort but also providing financial support, 300,000 euros and we knew how to maintain the productive economy and jobs.

**-If you win the election, do you plan to expand the catalog of Bachelors at the University?**

-I think so, and private universities have already been expanding a lot, and I think it goes in the direction of diversifying the country's economy in terms of added value. In the case of the University of Andorra, this has been a term of consolidation of existing bachelor's degrees, although new master's degrees have been created.

**-How do you see the fact that many**



**«In the end we have governed this country reasonably well during these four years»**

**young people consider not returning to the country after finishing their studies?**

-I don't think we have a statistic that can lead us to this conclusion, there are many young people who return to the country and who have possibilities and we are working to ensure that they have more and more. For example, the Grifols center will make it possible to have new work opportunities in the field of biomedicine and biotechnology that currently, due to the lack of activity of this type in our country, have to leave to work in France, Spain or Switzerland.

**-How do you interpret the diaspora of people in the country in recent years? What do you propose about it?**

-Perhaps I live a different reality to the one you live in, well, I haven't noticed that there is a diaspora of the people of the country, exactly the population of Andorra grows year after year. Right now we have a lack of workers in many activities in our country and I had to make immigration quotas more flexible. I do not deny the majority, it is true that there are people who are currently having difficulties in being

able to continue living in Andorra as they did before. Our absolute priority is to reverse the housing problem in our country in such a way that these people do not even consider having to leave our homes.

**-Why do you think Andorrans should vote for you?**

-Because I claim that in the end with our mistakes that everyone has, and we must be able to recognize them, I claim that in the end we have governed this country reasonably well during these four years and in very difficult circumstances. At the end of the pandemic, we had to manage the economic and social consequences of an energy crisis resulting from an aggression carried out by Russia in Ukraine, which has played with the price of food and the price of raw materials, despite this the country is growing economically, socially, the education, health and social protection system is going well, even so it can always be improved and done better. I think that if anyone is ready to do it, it is our political formation

that we are the ones who have the most experience in the action of Government, twelve years governing this country.

**-Tell us about one of your future projects. What do you propose to the public?**

-All the cultural projects, the next legislature must be the one in which we carry out the national museum, we believe it is important not only as a sign of identity, as a possibility to explain not only to tourists but also to the people at home our real identity, as a place where artistic and cultural activities of all kinds can take place. We also focus our program on the issue of housing. It will be the legislature in terms of infrastructure where we will push ahead with La Massana path, and we will start the Sant Julia de Lòria path. We will continue to work to become more and more energy independent and therefore not depend on price fluctuations derived from external circumstances, we will build the Maià wind farm. ≡

**UP CLOSE**

**A book**

Les Misérables by Victor Hugo

**A television program**

I never watch TV

**A social network**

Instagram

**A drink**

Sparkling water

**A place in the country**

The Mola park

**An animal**

A dog

**A beach**

Vilafortuny beach

**A music group**

Coldplay

**A place you would like to go**

Japan

**A city of the world**

Paris

**A country**

Andorra

**A historical fact**

The abolition of slavery

**An international politician**

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

**An athlete**

Joan Verdú

**A referent**

My mother



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(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad