



SOCIETY

# Andorra needs an update in accessibility

The Principality must adapt to the new needs and demands of the population

The administration must make an effort to apply the current law and, if necessary, update it

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The Constitution of the Principality of Andorra recognizes the dignity and equality of all people, and guarantees their rights, in addition to prohibiting any kind of discrimination.

So, the accessibility law that was presented in 1995 recognizes people with any type of disability who may have the conditions so that the equality and freedom of all those people who present a disability are effective.

In the case of urban environments, the law states that the Government and the Municipality must guarantee accessibility to ro-

**This law was introduced in 1995** and guarantees that all people can get to all places

**Any type of construction work on the public road must be marked** so that people can detect the obstacle

ads and outdoor spaces. This means that pedestrian crossings, pavements, stairs, ramps, public toilets, parking lots, traffic lights, waste bins, public fountains and any other urban object.

So, the law states that any kind of work on the public road must be marked and protected so that these people can easily detect the obstacle.

In the case of accumulation of snow or ice on the sidewalks, the free spaces of the dimensions provided for pedestrian itineraries must be respected.

So, the law states that all people who have some type of disability should have no problem moving around the Principality. ≡



► File image of a person in a wheelchair and another person pushing it.

## Nice, but affordable?

People with disabilities have difficulties accessing the country

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Is Andorra accessible for disabled people? Do people with visual, hearing and motor disabilities have difficulties in their day-to-day life?

Toni Fernández is a musician and has been blind since he was a few months old, as he suffered from eye cancer and now wears prosthetics. He explains that urban planning from the Government and the Municipality of Escaldes - the parish where he has lived since he was a child - is not accessible, and even less now with the works on his house. In addition, he explains the case of a visually impaired neighbor of his parish who lost a reference point, a pedestrian crossing - without being

warned. It was when a traffic officer warned her that there - where Toni's neighbor had crossed so many times - there was no longer any pedestrian crossing, and she pointed out that «if we don't worry about securing the land then there could be problems».

Fernández also explains that although he knows some routes to get to places, he cannot get where he wants, since not all traffic lights in the country are accessible.

On the other hand, Alexia Vallés is hearing impaired, due to an autoimmune disease that causes her to gradually lose her hearing. Alexia explains that one of the biggest problems on a daily basis is going to the doctor: «normally they don't lower their masks as per protocol,

and I can't quite understand what they mean». She also adds that «I have to go to the doctor with my mother when I'm 26».

Vallés also highlights the two years of the pandemic, since she couldn't go shopping alone anywhere normally because «I couldn't read the lips of the dependents. More than once I have taken my bank card and spent it without knowing how much I was being charged.»

Finally, Xavier Fernández has reduced mobility, and has been in a wheelchair for 33 years. He is an emergency operator technician, that is to say, he manages them. He finds that in some works there are certain shortcomings, for example in Meritxell Avenue «it is not accessible for people who wear wheel-

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**TONI FERNÁNDEZ**  
MUSICIAN

«If we don't worry about securing the land, disabled people will have problems»

**ALÈXIA VALLÉS**  
STUDENT

«I have to go to the doctor with my mother because I don't understand them well with the mask on»

**XAVIER FERNÁNDEZ**  
EMERGENCY TECHNICIAN

«Some works are not accessible to people in wheelchairs and the blind»

hairs or for blind people who wear canes». The technician also explains that during his day-to-day work he comes across many pedestrian crossings that are not adapted, and even disabled parking spaces next to trees or on a sidewalk.

Xavier Fernández explains that «as there are no criteria in public bodies, everyone uses the criteria they want».

The three protagonists have also explained that they have never received any subsidy from the Government for their disability, only in the case of Xavier Fernández, who was a Paralympic athlete: «if you want to be an athlete, the Government subsidizes you a part».

So, both Toni and Xavier Fernández, as well as Alexia Vallés, have had problems in their day-to-day lives with accessibility due to their disability.

But what is the use of beautiful urban planning if it creates accessibility problems? ≡

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

EL PERIÒDIC



►► Archive image of the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley.

# A new edition of the «Vall del Madriu» conference cycle begins

The Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley is considered a World Heritage Site by UNESCO

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This year, the second edition of the «Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley, Heritage of Humanity, Heritage of all» series of conferences has been scheduled, after the good response that the first edition received last year. This cycle of conferences aims to bring the Valley and its values closer to all citizens of the country, with the aim of dealing with all kinds of topics related to both its natural and cultural heritage.

The first of these conferences will start next March 15th, with the name «A walk through the forests of the Valley, past, present and future». This is an informative talk about the evolution of the role and ecosystem services of the forests of the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley, where through a journey through time we hope to improve the understanding of the forests and the challenges that they will become Marc Font, forest engineer from Andorra Research + Innovation, will be in charge of the talk.

Then, on April 19th, all those who want to attend the conference «The fauna of the VMadriu-Perafita-Claror Valley» will meet. In this talk, some of the species present in the valley will be presented, in addition to talking about their origin and implementation, the links with their biotopes, their particularities and the possibilities we have of meeting them. In this case, the speaker of the talk will be Marc Mossoll, biologist, mountain guide and member of the Grouse Specialist Group of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

On May 10th, the conference «Steelwork in the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley» will explain the impact that steelmaking activity had on the valley and on the shaping of its landscape, as well as the evolution of the works of rehabilitation that is being carried out at Farga del Madriu. Oliver Codina, historian of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Government of Andorra, will coordinate this talk.

Finally, on May 24th, the conference «Huts and lands of the Madriu Valley» will be held. In it, the

historian David Mas will explain the past of the valley through the hut type constructions that can be found in the Madriu Valley, both isolated and forming a piece of land. A type of witness to the process of colonization of the valley by humans, as well as their type and location, their uses and the approximate time they were built.

All conferences will take place at 7:00 p.m. in the municipal hall of Escaldes-Engordany, except for the one on May 24th, which will take place on the 3rd floor of the Escaldes-Engordany Art Center (CAEE). They will last approximately one hour and will be completely free.

**A SUCCESSFUL FIRST EDITION** // Last March 2022, the guide of the MW Electricity Museum, Katia Vilana, and the Director of Transport of FE-DA, Laura Bonet, inaugurated the first cycle of «Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley, Heritage of Humanity, Heritage of All», which was organized by the management commission of the Sant Julià de Lòria Valley.

With a historical tour from the initial project of hydraulic exploi-

tation to produce energy from the different basins of Andorra to the current importance of the water of the Valley for the Hydro-electric power plant, the audience was able to learn about the value of the valley for the national production

of electricity from water power, a 100% renewable method.

**UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE** // The Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley was declared a World Heritage Site in 2004, in the cultural landscape category. Located in the southeast of the Principality of Andorra, it extends through the parishes of Andorra la Vella, Escaldes-Engordany, Encamp and Sant Julià de Lòria.

This valley is the most important secondary river basin in the country and is 12 km from end to end, with an elevation difference of 1,855 meters. Its highest point is Pic de la Portelleta (2,905 m) and through the whole valley it is possible to make a large number of excursions, where you can see its rather strange or endangered animal and plant species.

In addition, in the summer you can spend a night in any of the five shelters offered by the entire Valley or practice your sports activities: horse riding, climbing, hunting, fishing and, in the winter season, snowshoeing and skiing mountain, among others. ≡

## conferences

### March 15th

►► «A walk through the forests of the Valley, past, present and future»

### April 19th

►► «The fauna of the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley»

### May 10th

►► «Steel industry in the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley»

### May 24th

►► «Huts and lands of the Madriu Valley»

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