



Economy ▶ Xavier Espot and Conxita Marsol appeared throughout during the day on Friday

Espot calls for an effort to agree on wages

The representative goes directly to the employer and the various unions in the country

However, he assures that the proposal promoted by the CEA has been «courageous»

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«Ask for an effort from the business sectors and unions to achieve more consensus» and «accompany the Government» in socio-economic matters. In this way, the head of government, Xavier Espot, appealed to the unions and employers to agree on the increase in wages for next year. In fact, he added that the Executive «has no desire to adopt» this decision unilaterally. And he went a little further by assuring that the proposal of the Andorran Business Confederation (CEA) has been «courageous», while the unions continue to claim the thirteenth salary payment.

In this sense, Espot emphasized that the CEA has made progress, since although last year they only agreed to increase the minimum wage, this year they have come to the negotiation table with a proposal to increase wages between minimum and medium. «They asked for the thirteenth pay and continue to ask for the thirteenth pay, therefore, there must be an evolution», highlighted Espot. On the other hand, regarding the demands of the unions, he added that he does not say that the thirteenth pay «is not important», but he remarked that, considering that the CEA has made a proposal, it might be interesting for the workers' representatives to make a «counterproposal» in order to reach, in this way, an agreement. This, he remarked, would be a relevant «message of tranquility and pacification» and he reiterated that it is not the role of the Government to «take action» in this matter.

Espot made these statements at the end of the 21st Andorran Family Business Forum (EFA) in the fra-



▶ The Head of Government, Xavier Espot, during the closing speech of the 21st EFA Forum.

mework of which he also called for «greater involvement» of the private sector to «create a climate of trust» that serves to promote public and private projects in the field of housing. In this sense, he emphasized that the fact that there are these complications for staff to find places to live also makes it difficult for companies to have a workforce, which «mortgages the economy». Thus he defended that there must be an involvement of the municipalities and the Government to solve the problem, but also of the priva-

te sector.

The head of government, as reported by the ANA, agreed with the president of the EFA, Daniel Armengol, that the country's economy is growing, but that it also has its vulnerabilities, such as the fact that half of the GDP depends on same sector. This is why, he defended, that work is being done on economic opening and on the association agreement to «diversify» the economy by betting on sectors that are «less resource-consuming» and that require «less staff» and have less «pressure» on the

housing market.

Precisely on the Association Agreement, he reminded the business community that the last round of negotiations will take place this December and that Andorra will have managed to «maintain» the red lines that were marked at the beginning. Thus, in terms of goods, he highlighted the transitory 30-year period for tobacco or that the franchises are three times higher than those of a third country. In terms of monopolies, he stressed that electricity should be maintained and that, in practice,

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XAVIER ESPOT
HEAD OF GOVERNMENT
«The CEA came this year with a proposal to increase wages between the minimum and average»

«I'm asking for greater involvement of the private sector to promote housing projects»

the «tolls» that are being imposed on telecommunications mean that Andorra Telecom can also be maintained. Regarding the free movement of people, he celebrated that it has been possible to maintain a system of quotas and the affidavit of antecedents, as well as a «unilateral declaration» of public order and, finally, regarding the financial sector, he valued that equal conditions are being reached between Andorran and foreign entities.

Espot emphasized the important weight that family businesses have in the country's economy and stated that he «collects» the demands of the president of the EFA regarding the fact that the administration is more agile or efficient (he recalled that the budget includes 17 million euros for digitization); he acknowledged that more data is needed to be able to «fine-tune policies», as Armengol claimed, and he expressed the effort he has made for a single tax agency to «prosper», as well as the claim of the welfare state that has succeeded. ≡

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Marsol reaffirms the need to work on salary increases

The minister is committed to growth that respects the environment

EL PERIÒDIC ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

The Andorran Family Business (EFA) kicked off the organization's 21st Forum with the aim of putting on the table various visions around impact investments in the framework of family businesses. Specifically, the day consisted of presenting different cases of companies that, apart from seeking economic performance, are also committed to the social and environmental impact generated by their activity. Along these lines, the Minister of the Presidency, Economy, Work and Housing, Conxita Marsol, stated during her initial parliament that «without growth that respects the environment, it will be impossible to think about people's well-being» and, for this reason, from the Government «we are betting on an economy that we want every day to be more diversified and respectful of the natural heritage and that brings us added value as a society».

During her speech, the minister emphasized that in a country of Andorra's size and specificities, «explore new forms of investment that not only generate financial benefits, but also contribute to the well-being of society and the environment, it is a responsibility that we must assume with a certain normality». In fact, she recognized that one of the Government's obligations



►► The Minister of the Presidency, Economy, Work and Housing, Conxita Marsol, during the 21st EFA Forum.

Marsol indicates that new forms of investment must be sought that contribute to the well-being of society

in this regard «is to make available to companies the greatest number of tools to achieve these objectives, a path that we must follow cautiously, but with a firm step and decided».

The head of Economy, as reported by the ANA, took the opportunity to reinforce the need to work on an agreement for the salary increase of workers so that they can face «the increase in the cost of living and this inflation runaway» which, on the other hand, «is beginning to be controlled». «Increasing wages can be difficult to accept in some business plans, but wages and productivity must go hand in hand because in this way all parties win and the competitive advantage that an increase in wages can mean in re-

lationship with neighboring countries would favor the attraction of talent», she explained.

In this sense, and after the meeting held this Thursday between the unions and the employer, the minister assured that the two actors have positioned themselves more clearly and, for the first time, «we have a proposal from the CEA on the table». However, she acknowledged that «she is disappointed that we have not yet found total agreement» and, therefore, advanced that the Executive «will have

CONXITA MARSOL
MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY, ECONOMY, WORK AND HOUSING

«We are committed to a more diversified economy that respects the natural heritage»

to make some decision about it» if there is no agreement in the end. In this case, she said, «we will try to find a balance for the general benefit». «The positions have been getting a little closer and I think it's already a first step, and that's why I also wanted to send the message that we should all work hard because the future of our country depends on us.»

Throughout the presentation, Marsol recalled some of the actions that have been implemented in order to improve the competitiveness of the business sector such as the opening of foreign investment in 2012 and its recent modification this year in order to have greater control. She also referred to the tax figure that has completed the revision of the law. At the same time, she showed the Government's commitment not to increase the fiscal pressure on companies, taking into account that «economic development is essential for social well-being» and, in fact, «this is a cornerstone within the action of the Government and our country project».

Before closing her parliament, Marsol also referred to the housing crisis, a problem that «directly or indirectly affects us all», so she took the opportunity to call for public-private collaboration in this area. «The housing deficit and the loss of purchasing power can be a serious risk for the prosperity of the country», she concluded. ≡

Armengol warns that the signs of social inequality may be on the rise

The president of the EFA believes that we must «maintain our competition»

EL PERIÒDIC ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

The president of the Andorran Family Business (EFA), Daniel Armengol, warned the social inequalities that are already being seen in the country can go up «if we are not able to maintain our competitiveness and create an economic impact and social» in the future policies related to the Association Agreement or the communal competences regarding the control of inflation. In this regard, he warned that, in the medium term, this situation could upset the welfare state. As part of the closing lunch of the 21st EFA Forum,

Armengol highlighted the importance of transforming the Principality's economy into an «economy of purpose» while taking advantage of the size of the country and the close relationship between institutions. In fact, he advocated for Andorra to become «a first-class country» in terms of impact investments.

All this, he added, cannot be achieved without a control of the CPI, an indicator that in October stood at 5.6%, a figure well above that of neighboring countries and which «doubles the European average». «It is unlikely to address everything if we do not control inflation», he explained. The president of the EFA also called for the simplification of procedures, stating that by now «hope for a single tax agency has been lost», and the

need to have data «that help guide our decisions». Without records, he added, «we will not be able to get out of the problem we are immersed in» regarding the housing crisis or foreign investment. In this sense, he emphasized that the contribution of the EFA will continue to be that of providing studies that are of help to the political class.

In relation to the accession to Europe, as reported by the ANA, he advocated that the agreement that ends up being reached «preserves our particularities and does not put the specificities of the country at risk», and also that «does not step on the red lines drawn by the Government». That is why he reiterated the help of the entity to, once again, «be more competitive to be able to face the Europe-



►► The president of the Andorran Family Business (EFA), Daniel Armengol.

an market and fight economically» with the companies that can establish themselves in the Principality. Also in relation to Europe, he said that «whether we like it or not we are already in a global market suffering from day-to-day intrusion» and, in addition, «we see how

Andorran companies open their headquarters abroad». Also, the agreement with the EU still «long transitional periods» that will force Andorran companies «to compete in more established market conditions in the rest of the continent». ≡