

Ana Fe Gil Serra, Director of the European Documentation Centre in Almeria interviews Mr. Amós García Hueso

Mr. Amós García Hueso, External Action Director-General of Andalusians in the Presidency of the Andalusian Regional Government, has been a province deputy, regional parliamentarian and spokesperson for European Affairs. In 2018 he was appointed Honorary Ambassador to Andalusia by the European Foundation Finnova, in recognition of his work on policies to boost entrepreneurship, employment, innovation and the European Union, as well as the dissemination of these values through the public-private partnership and open innovation methodology of the Start-up Europe Awards in Andalusia.



**QUESTION.** These months will remain engraved in the memory of many Spaniards. They will be memories marked, without a doubt, by the suffering experienced in the hospitals, the anguish before the always ascending number of sick and dead people, but also by the strength and union of those painful applauses, which filled our balconies every afternoon. As Director-General of Andalusians Abroad, how do you remember those first weeks after the state of alarm was declared?

**ANSWER.** Well, with a lot of uncertainty about the situation and concern about the lack of information and the Spanish Government's ability to react. We saw that, in spite of the alerts from international organisations and the serious situation in nearby countries, there was not a forceful and comprehensive response to the events. On the one hand, the health workers were demanding human resources and individual protection to deal with the avalanche of hospital admissions and, on the other hand, the security forces did not have clear instructions.

It should also be remembered that, during those first weeks, activities involving high concentrations of people were maintained and in the most affected population centres, such as Madrid, there was a mass flight to other territories; food and basic products were hoarded, causing occasional shortages. Everything in the purest "every man for himself" style, generating among many citizens, other countries and international organizations the image of a de-structured and indecisive government, as has been echoed by the international press. Without a doubt, the best response and the best image has been given by health personnel, who, independently of the government's ravings, have given us all a lesson in responsibility, humanity and involvement. Only they know what they have really suffered. Most of us have only received images of motivation and gratitude, but almost none of the hardest. And the hardest thing has been living through the death of more than 25.000 people in solitude. We boasted of having the best health care in the world and what we have is the best health care workers in the world.

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**QUESTION:** Has contact been maintained with Andalusian communities outside Spain and have repatriation actions been carried out in collaboration with the Central Government?

**ANSWER.** Of course, the Andalusian Communities Abroad are a network of entities of great value, built with effort and will for many years, some of which have over a century of history and spread over the five continents. They are eminently supportive communities and the impact of their activity is multiplied by all the territories in which they are located. There is a large number of Andalusians who are part of them and we have maintained continuous contact with them. On some occasions, it has been precisely these international Andalusian communities that have allowed us to make contact with citizens who, due to different circumstances, were trapped outside Spain when the state of alarm and border closures were established.

With regard to repatriation actions, as they are not within our competence, we have maintained from the beginning a full disposition to collaborate with the Central Government.

On March 20, we informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of our most loyal collaboration and our entire network of more than three hundred Andalusian entities abroad so that, with the solidarity that has always characterized us, requests for assistance could be attended to, in case of need. And we have participated in very diverse situations with Andalusians trapped in countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Miami, Peru, Senegal or Morocco.

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**QUESTION:** Andalusia has been one of the least affected regions, in general terms, by this pandemic that no government was prepared to face. What have been the main lines of action of the Andalusian Regional Government?

**ANSWER.** Andalusia has made anticipation the main shield against the pandemic in Andalusia. Our Regional Government has always been ahead of the game because going ahead gives results. The Andalusian Government did not wait for the National Government to declare a state of alarm, because it understood that it had to act firmly and with foresight. With less than a thousand cases of coronavirus in Andalusia, we had already designed two contingency plans for 9.000 and 15.000 infected people: In addition to the installation of an auxiliary hospital in Carranque, next to the Regional Hospital of Malaga, we also developed a project of medicalization of hotels, leisure residences and hostels as supplementary care spaces.

And not only that, Andalusia has shown solidarity and has provided ventilators to other autonomous communities such as Madrid, when the pandemic was at its worst.

***Project "Andalusia Breathes":  
The result of the audacity,  
innovation and  
Andalusian talent, has been  
and is a success***

**QUESTION.** The difficulties in obtaining medical material or the lack of ventilators in the ICUs have been one of the main challenges for Spain, but also for other European countries such as Italy, France or the United Kingdom. What measures have been taken by the Andalusian Regional Government in this area for the future?

**ANSWER.** It has been ensured that the supply of PPE for the whole of Andalusia covers the current needs of Andalusian healthcare personnel. To do this, we had to resort to alternative suppliers, as the usual ones did not have the capacity. We are also working on the acquisition of safety stock of health products, equivalent to 6 months' consumption in anticipation of a future resurgence. And, of course, I would also like to highlight the start-up of the Malaga respirator, already mentioned, and whose supply is assured.

**QUESTION.** After the health crisis we are now facing an economic crisis that already affects the self-employed, SMEs and one of the economic engines of Andalusia, as is Tourism. What would be the main features of the roadmap that the "Junta de Andalucía" is designing?

**ANSWER.** The **public-private alliance** is going to be a key factor in tackling the economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 in Andalusia. Andalusia is aware that the **rebuilding process involves companies and self-employed people, so the Andalusian Administration will offer all the facilities within its reach.** As an example, we will provide liquidity in the best possible conditions by means of 600 million euros in guarantees through *Garántia* and the new *IDEA Agency*.

We have also opened a line of microcredits of between 9.000 and 15.000 euros to meet the demand of the self-employed and those contributing to mutual entities and which will be processed with maximum agility and reducing all unnecessary administrative procedures. There is also a direct aid to the self-employed of **300 euros to meet at least one social security contribution at times when they lack income.** The aid benefits more than **166.000 self-employed people in Andalusia, including 38.000 contributors to mutual entities.** I would also like to highlight that Andalusia has activated aid to small businesses and artisan SMEs worth eleven million euros. Companies can receive subsidies with a maximum amount ranging from 6.000 to 42.000 euros.

**And as for FOREIGN INVESTMENT:**

Andalusia reinforces actions to reposition the Andalusia brand as a **safe and quality destination with an investment in promotion of three million euros.** To this end, it has drawn up an ambitious tourism shock plan, which will mobilise 300 million euros.



Among the objectives of the Plan are to reduce the impact of the crisis resulting from this health alert, trying to avoid job losses as well as to strengthen the employment structure. It is a flexible, dynamic and adaptable plan that includes proposals from employers, trade unions and professionals in the sector.

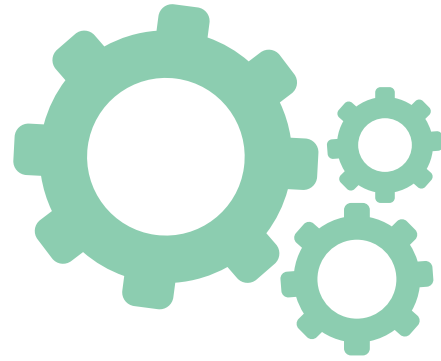
All these measures and projects confirm the change chosen by the Andalusian people in December 2018. Juanma Moreno is a president with new approaches who is building a new Andalusia, updated, attractive and prepared for the new challenges of the 21st century.

Our objective is to position Andalusia as a preferential tourist destination, especially in the national market (Andalusia and the rest of Spain) and to promote Andalusia as a safe destination.

## *Tourism shock plan, which will mobilize 300 million euro*



*This change that we are experiencing must focus on a re-evolution towards a more sustainable, cohesive and supportive society.*



**QUESTION:** It seems that this experience has "humanized" our society a little more. We greet our neighbours, whose existence we did not know until recently, from our balcony; we worry about the health of our colleagues, who until weeks ago were only an e-mail address. Has politics been humanized as well?

**ANSWER.** Unfortunately, we have to live "experiences" of this kind in the first person to "shake hands", to realize what really matters. And when we have felt attacked, we have looked for ourselves in the conviction that a joint action is much more effective. The sad thing is the high price we are paying to get to something as simple as "together we are more". I hope that so much suffering is not in vain and can be extrapolated to other areas of the current situation.