



Amós García Hueso, Director General of Andalusians Abroad in the Ministry of the Presidency of the Andalusian Regional Government, has been a provincial deputy, regional parliamentarian and spokesperson for European Affairs. In 2018 he was appointed honorary Ambassador in Andalusia by the European foundation Finnova, in recognition of his work in dynamisation and entrepreneurship policies, employment, innovation and European Union. He was recognised as well for the dissemination of these values through the public-private participation and open innovation of the Start-up Europe Awards in Andalusia.

Q. The international sphere, especially the European one, has been part of your political career for years. You were Deputy for Employment and Economic Promotion (2011-2015) in the Provincial Council of Almería, -an area to which Europe Direct Almería was attached during that time-, and later spokesperson for the political party PP-A in the European Affairs Committee (2016-2019) in the Andalusian Parliament. Has your previous experience in the European field influenced in any way your current activity as Director General for Relations with Andalusians Abroad?

All experience counts, of course, and the experience gained both in the Provincial Council of Almería and in the Andalusian Parliament has enriched my work. It is important to know the information channels, the administrative procedures and to bear in mind that when challenges are set, there is a whole administrative machinery that must be coordinated.

The challenge of the current government is to attend and connect the Andalusian population abroad. This is essential in a world as globalised and mobile as the one we live in and where, increasingly, part of the training, specialisation and work experience is carried out abroad. Andalusia is also one of the Autonomous Regions that has ones of the highest emigration rate and, therefore, the work we carry out in the Directorate General is also one of gratitude to all those who, living outside their birthplace for working or training reasons, collaborate with us in the development and recognition of Andalusia. We are also working

to implement a closer collaboration with the University, which will allow us to be in contact with all those who, in the future, may become part of the Andalusian population abroad.

The response to our initiatives from the Andalusian population abroad has been very positive. I believe that establishing direct channels of communication where the important advances that are taking place in our community are shared and at the same time, we can learn about their concerns and situations, generating important synergies that help us move forward and encourage us to continue working.

Q. During your period at the Provincial Council of Almería, it was published “Almería creciendo” (2011), which included all the aid from European Funds in the province during the period 2000-2009, which exceeded -as indicated in the publication- 2,000 million euros. What other initiatives and activities carried out by Europe Direct Almería do you remember from that period?

I remember a web application that was created between the Provincial Council and the University of Almería to help students search for scholarships and internships abroad. There, we presented the grants that best suited the needs of applicants through a user-friendly tool. It was very well received.

Besides, I remember very fondly the Eu-



ropean volunteering project for enhance mobility of young people in Europe. I have not forgotten the excitement when they left and the satisfaction when they returned. Something I am very satisfied with was the implementation of the first Local Employment Pact of the Province of Almería, an action co-funded by the European Social Fund, whose objective was to facilitate job creation by bringing together the social and economic agents of the province. Representatives of trade unions (UGT, CCOO, CSIF), business entities (Asempal, AJE and Chamber of Commerce) and social agents (FAAM, Red Cross, Fundación del Secretariado Gitano...) participated.

And as projects, the Calmarr Project, through which we obtained investments

“Thanks to all those who, living outside their place of birth, collaborate with us in the development and recognition of Andalusia.”

worth one million euros from the EU to revalue tourism in the Province of Almeria, or the PILA project (Project for Work Insertion in Almeria), with which we set up some 80 Escuelas Taller throughout the province, where unemployed people with difficulties learnt a craft. Recently, on a route through the province, I stopped for breakfast in a café that was a rural accommodation, and the owner told me that she knew me because I was part of the project and I had set up this rural tourism project. I was very happy.

All these experiences have allowed me to see the proximity between the Andalusians and the European project. In particular, last year, during the first months of the pandemic, the Andalusian Regional Government sent a message of solidarity and support to all the countries that compose the European Union - we also mentioned the United Kingdom- through the video Go Europe! It is our daily experience what shows us that Andalusia and the European Union complement and enrich each other.

Q. As spokesperson for the PP-A in the Andalusian Parliament's European Affairs Committee, you participated in bilateral meetings with committees from other EU countries and in numerous occasions, you called on the Andalusian regional government to increase the European funds for the province of Almeria. More precisely, the use of these funds within the deadlines set by the EU has been one of the great challenges of the Andalusian Regional Government. How do you assess the measures carried out over the last two years?

First, there is greater commitment and efficiency, as evidenced by the high level of execution of the funds. The figure of the coordinator, which has been created, together with a total of 21 coordinators are present in each regional ministry for the monitoring and management of European funds. The objective is to reinforce coordination and guarantee the proper management of the different European funding programmes that are underway.

In addition, a management body has been created for the new Next Generation European funds, offered to member countries by the European Union, in order to help them recover from the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim is to guarantee, as far as possible, both the receipt

of funds and their efficient use, as they must be in line with economic growth and job creation through initiatives that accelerate the ecological and digital transitions.

Along the first year of this new government, 72% more of funds have been executed, compared to the previous government. Thus, you should agree with me that the assessment is therefore very positive

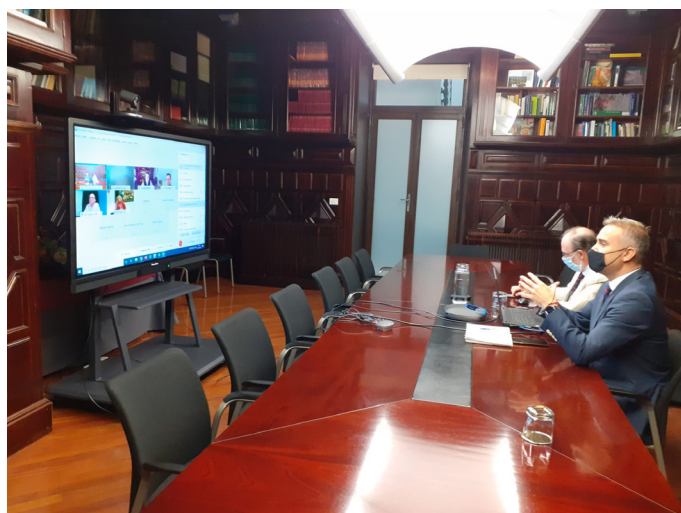
Q. The pandemic that we are currently suffering as a

“Se pretende garantizar, lo máximo posible, tanto la recepción de fondos como la eficiencia de los mismos.”

result of COVID-19 has not prevented -thanks to online communication- your contact with the Andalusian communities abroad. How have you dealt with this particular stage?

We had to open new channels of communication with Andalusians abroad and adapt to this new scenario. The Andalusian communities are very active and their list of events are mostly face-to-face and very participative, as it is a way of socialising. When you are away from your homeland, these activities are exciting and help to reinforce the Andalusian feeling. This is why, with the limitation of movement due to the pandemic, there was a standstill in activities which, together with the concern about the virus, caused a certain discouragement but, to a certain extent, forced us to be more creative in our activities.

From the very beginning, we set up videoconferences with



“Daily experience shows us that Andalusia and the European Union complement and enrich each other.”

the representatives of all the entities abroad, we created a platform where we offered documentaries, guided tours, museums, natural parks, books, magazines... everything about Andalusia and its history.

We also organised a series of webinars with well-known speakers entitled Andalucía hacia el mundo: Historia, Viajes y Flamenco (Andalusia towards the world: History, Trips and Flamenco), which was attended by more than a thousand people. And for young people, we organised the 1st Virtual Meeting for Young Andalusians around the World last December, with the participation of Eva González, David Bisbal, Anikilo Gamer, Cyclo and the football player Joaquín Sánchez. It was a very enriching experience, with a fantastic acceptance, which allowed us to strengthen two basic pillars nowadays: to facilitate communication and online contact with our extensive network of Andalusians abroad and, on the other hand, to involve young people, which is necessary to

ensure the future of Andalusian entities abroad and their essential updating in the use of new technologies. This has been a good starting point on which we must continue to make progress

Q. Brexit, the effects of COVID-19 and the EU's recovery plan are the big issues that have marked us as European citizens during 2020. We face, with these three challenges, a new year with a much higher level of global uncertainty than in past decades. (We will have to make great balances to combine the objective assessment of the challenges, but without forgetting our strength and sense of humour). How do you face the year 2021 from the Directorate General for Relations with Andalusians Abroad?

Always with enthusiasm, with awareness of the situation and with the corresponding responsibility.

Any difficulty must be faced with determination and hard work and, although

we are starting a year marked by uncertainty, we must have sufficient capacity to react and adapt to the circumstances, and if the circumstances change, they will be redirected in order to achieve a proper result.

In the Directorate General we have a project and a desire, and we are going to implement a deep digital transformation, where the Administration and the citizens will be connected. Therefore, increasing their participation to jointly face the great challenges of the future: more direct communication, access to all the services of the administration through a single channel (employment, entrepreneurship, housing, health, etc.), and greater participation, in parallel to the great work done by the Andalusian Regional Government in our region. This is going to set an attractive scenario for all Andalusians, wherever they are, to experience Andalusia, where, by the way, they are more than welcome ■

