

## *Evolution of the economy.*

### **Communications**

As regards the road connections, we must highlight the talk given in the Chamber of Commerce by Maurice Ruban, the controller of the French-Spanish traffic observatory and general manager of facilities in the Midi-Pyrénées region. The speaker highlighted the most immediate projects that will help to improve road connections between France and Andorra, such as the Ax les Thermes and Tarascon variants, planned for 2006. These two variants of the RN-20 will prevent drivers from having to cross the two towns. According to Ruban, the number of vehicles entering by means of the French border with Andorra in the summer reaches 8,000 a day, and 12,000 on peak days in August.

It must also be said that the new French motorway, the A-66, opened on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002, shortens the journey from Andorra to Toulouse.

Porta has maintained a territorial confrontation for the transfer or bordering lands between Andorra and France. The French village demanded the cancellation of the transfer, which was agreed with France at the time of the construction of the Envalira tunnel. The issue dates back to the year 2000, when the two governments signed an exchange pact, which was ratified by the respective parliaments. On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2001, the first meeting was held of the Franco-Andorran commission to stipulate the border limits. Later, in August 2001, the village in the Alta Cerdanya region protested against the land exchange agreement.

In the end, the granting of the lands that belonged to Porta was finally resolved in June 2002. The Andorran government agreed with the French village to devote 40,000 euros to improving the village in exchange for the works licence for the roundabout linking the road of the northern entrance of the tunnel to the national highway RN-20.

The Envalira tunnel was opened to light vehicles on 26<sup>th</sup> September and to heavy vehicles on 17<sup>th</sup> December. The official opening will be in spring 2003. The adoption of security measures in the construction raised the cost by more than 6 million euros and the final budget was 662 million euros (11,000 million pesetas). The length of the concession is 3,892 metres; the length of the tunnel, 2,879 metres, and the gradient lies at between 0.50% and 0.75%. The altitude at the Grau Roig mouth is 2,043 metres and at Pas de la Casa, 2,052 metres. The tunnel is two-way and has two lanes with a width of 3.50 metres and two hard shoulders of 0.40 metres. It has the following equipment: semi-transversal ventilation, fire and accident detection, SOS posts, mobile phone coverage, loudspeaker system, alphanumerical signalling, collection of polluting liquids, emergency power units, pollution level detection and luminous guiding lights. The exit in Pas de la Casa connects with a roundabout and a viaduct with the French national highway RN-22. The new French-Andorran customs point will be located two kilometres from the roundabout to avoid traffic problems.

The viaduct and the roundabout in French territory that join the exit of the Envalira tunnel to the French RN-22 were opened in November 2002. The project of the

Envalira tunnel was deemed complete with the construction of the joint customs platform 3.5 from the tunnel exit.

In the month of July, the new Anyós bridge was opened over the Valira del Nord. The infrastructure cost more than 1.5 million euros.

In November, the new de les Nacions Unides avenue (which translated into English gives the United Nations Avenue) was opened to vehicles in Escaldes. The ceremony was attended by Butros Ghali, the former secretary general of the United Nations (UNO), who performed the symbolic opening. The consul of Escaldes, Lydia Magallón, qualified the new road as an essential axis the country, which would allow planning to begin on the new form of the Carlemany avenue.

Andorra has an impressive vehicle fleet with a volume of 900 vehicles for every 1,000 inhabitants. According to the Mobility Agency, this high degree of motor mobility exacerbates the traffic problems on the roads, which can not cope on days with a massive affluence of visitors. Therefore, it is noted that public transports and specific actions are the solution to releasing the traffic, as the orography makes it difficult to improve the network and build new infrastructures.

According to data from the same Mobility Agency, Andorrans make an average 97,000 trips in their vehicles on working days, to which it is necessary to add the vehicles entering across the two borders. Most of the trips are between the capital and Escaldes. At weekends the volume of traffic increases by 50% and in the last decade, the growth has been an overall 4% a year. The average circulation speed is 35 kilometres an hour in sections between towns and 22 kilometres an hour in town.

The seasonal nature of the tourism that visits us means that the connecting roads with France and Spain are collapsed on days of greatest affluence. Although these data are foreseeable no satisfactory solution has yet been found to the saturated road situation.

The arrival of tourists in August 2002 caused delays on the border of the river Runer. The collapse took place between la Seu d'Urgell and the borders and queues reach up to ten kilometres. According to the Mobility Agency, more than 57,000 vehicles entered the country on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the second weekend in August. The largest volume was recorded on the river Runer with 29,800 vehicles, as compared with the 27,500 vehicles in Pas de la Casa. At the times of greatest affluence, 1,100 vehicles an hour entered on both borders.

A total 42,973 vehicles entered the country for the weekend of 12<sup>th</sup> October, an increase of 36% over the previous year, when the long weekend contained fewer days. According to the Mobility Agency, on a normal Friday, an average 8,942 vehicles cross the two borders, whereas 11,404 were counted on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 28% more. As for the Saturday, the increase was 52%: from the average 11,918 vehicles that arrive on a normal Saturday, 18,113 arrived on 12<sup>th</sup> October.

On the Sunday, the increase was 26%, from 10,686 vehicles to 13,456. In total, from the usual 31,456 vehicles the traffic rose to 42,973. 29,252 drivers arrived in the country across the Spanish border at la Farga de Moles, and 13,721 did so across the French border at Pas de la Casa.

For the long weekend at Halloween, 49,500 vehicles entered between Friday and Saturday. The Mobility Agency recorded a circulation volume across the two borders of 60% more than a normal weekend. In one single day, on the Friday, 19,000 vehicles entered: on the border of the river Runer 9,803 were counted and at Pas de la Casa, 6,715.

Finally, during the bank holiday weekend of 6<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> December, between 40,000 and 45,000 vehicles entered, a figure than was lower than expected. One of the reason for this was the snow alert given by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, which caused a fall in affluence of tourists coming to the country.

Throughout the year, new road infrastructure projects were drawn up. The cabinet approved the future el Solà d'Engordany tunnel, which will join the village of Anyós with the FEDA centre with a length of 3.5 kilometres, which will have two perforations and a cost of over 78 million euros. This tunnel will be ready by the year 2006. Furthermore, the Cabinet also granted 1,187,000 euros to build a viaduct over the Gran Valira, from the Prat Salit street in Andorra la Vella.

The government will invest 350 million euros in thirty years in building tunnels and variants. In its budget in 2002, the ministry expected to finish the Grau de la Sabata tunnel, which will cost 18 million euros, and a variant of the Borda de la Margineda to the Santa Coloma bridge, with a budget of 12 million euros. In the short term, another variant will be built between Aixovall and the Fontaneda bridge, where there will be a 500 metre tunnel and a link with the centre of Sant Julià, at a total cost of 10.82 million euros. Between the projects in the medium and long term, mention must also be made of the el Solà d'Andorra la Vella tunnel, with a length of five kilometres, which will connect Santa Coloma with the FEDA centre.

Five tunnels have been planned to communicate the whole of the Principality and they will be built in an approximate time of thirty years. One tunnel will go from Grau Roig to Meranges and will have an approximate length of 9.5 kilometres. The exit will be close to Belver de Cerdanya. A second tunnel will go from Ordino to Canillo, to the villages of Ansalonga and Sornàs. Another tunnel will leave Canillo and come out in Sant Joan de Caselles, to divert the traffic from the centre of Canillo and connect with general highway number 2. The fourth will go from la Margineda to la Massana, and may be a tunnel or a variant, which will have an approximate length of four kilometres. The last one will go from Escaldes to la Massana, to join el Solà d'Escaldes with the crossroads between Sispony and Anyós.

Spain is willing to finance 50% of the cost of reopening the airport. In this way, the Spanish and Andorran governments will take equal shares of the cost of expropriating the lands, the investment in infrastructures and air navigation. To

close the final agreement, it will be necessary to decide in what way the control of the airport is to be shared. The starting up of the airport in la Seu d'Urgell will cost some 12.2 million euros, ten of which will be dedicated to the civil work, and the construction will be ready by the year 2005.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July, Andorra Televisió entered the European Radio diffusion Union (URE). Founded in 1950 in Geneva, the URE is the oldest radio diffusion body in the world, and in 1954 it created the Eurovision network, which was a great success in exchanging news. It currently has a total 70 members active in 51 countries, as well as 49 members associated with 20 countries.