1- Presentation of the organisation

This statement is provided by the Andorran National Youth Forum, an independent public-law organisation born in 2015 as a tool to channel young people’s concerns. Every person living in Andorra between the ages of 16 and 29 is a member of the Forum, whether national or resident. Thus, the organisation counts on almost 12,000 members and it is the country’s most inclusive and representative entity.

2- Consultations

The process includes comments from various elected members of the Government, the professionals working in the youth services and syndicates and associations as well as data from the recent laws developed during the last couple of years.

Sociological Research Centre (2018), Survey on Andorra’s labour market.
Sociological Research Centre (2010), Survey on Andorra’s youth population.
Andorra’s Government Statistics Department.
Secretary of State of Civic Participation and Equality.

3- Declaration Plan

In the present statement we will address the following issues: (1) youth participation policies; (2) labour scenery in the Andorran society; (3) housing conditions, especially in renting; lastly (4) opportunities and inclusion of migrants.

4- Declaration

(1) Youth participation:

A. Follow-up

No recommendations were made during the last review.

According to the governmental Statistics Department, voters during elections have steadily decreased for the past 15 years. Abstention is at its most amongst young people, around 45%, and the trend is likely to keep growing. Youth sections within the main political parties have been consolidated and have gained presence in recent years but it has not shifted the negative trend. The Forum has noted that youth policies and proposals are scarce and with barely any technical foundation. Urgent measures must be taken to guarantee a democratic and participative civic society.

The Law takes into account easy procedures to create youth organisations but for people under the age of 25. This condition is contradictory with the age established in the Law of the Youth Forum and it hinders the maintaining of such organisations.

There are no tools nor programmes in motion to gather young people’s concerns or proposals when they are not formally organised. Resources offered by administrations are often focused on teenagers under 16 and have a strong paternalistic approach.

B. New developments

The National Youth Forum, founded in 2015, is to be the main civic tool for direct participation for all young people living in Andorra. The Forum has a solid legal structure that allows it to act independently of other institutions, but the resources available are very scarce during these
first years when the Forum is not yet well-established. Certainly, participation within our organisation is far from the expected target: the Forum reaches around a 1% of young people.

Recently, the inter-institutional survey Moviment Jove (“Youth on the move”), a collaboration among the Carnet Jove d’Andorra (“Andorran Youth Card”), the regional and central administration offices, was conducted to collect the main concerns of young people. Nevertheless, these issues have not been properly addressed by the local politicians according to the needs that young people expressed.

The recently created Secretary of State of Civic Participation and Equality has created the online platform “Visc”, an online tool meant to ease the communication between the administrations and the citizens during public consultations on the projects. Later on, this will be extended to all civic organisations, associations and other citizens, for them to organise events and coordinate efforts.

C. Recommendations

Include in the school curriculum workshops that promote democratic participation outside the election period.

Endow the Youth Observatory, a long-time project on stand by with the goal of obtaining current data about young people. These surveys have to be the basis and the tool for measuring long-term, practical youth policies.

Respond to young people’s concerns suggested in the survey Moviment Jove. Continue the same cooperation approach, among administrations and civic associations, to further pursue common goals with better resources and more efficient policies.

Provide the Youth Forum with the necessary resources: qualified staff, a site to develop our activities, reform the legal text to update it... in order to carry out our duties properly.

(2) Employment status

A. Follow-up

Many States recommended signing the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It was noted the recommendation to ratify the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, No. 138 and 189.

According to the survey on the employment status in Andorra conducted by the Sociological Research Centre, young workers’ situation is startling as in the recent years it has severely suffered an ongoing precarisation. While the legal framework advocates for equality, many different circumstances contribute to a society where in practice young people suffer a growing inequality and an increasing restlessness about a seemingly unsustainable retirement allowance system.

Firstly, the population has aged since 2005: active workers decreased around 5,000 people (12%) while the dependent population increased by about 1,000 people (5%). Nevertheless, the dependency ratio is high compared to the EU average, but the recent pension cuts suffered by many workers raise the concern for the long-term planning.

Secondly, young people’s average earnings are substantially inferior in all sectors and on all degree levels. On one hand, temporary contracts have increased overall but they are specially high amongst young workers. A specially disturbing remark is that temporary workers amount to 27% of the civil servants, where we expect many to be young people but we lack further information. On another basis, up until last year, under 18 workers could earn, by Governmental ordinance, an inferior hourly minimum wage than adults even though they were allowed to work.

Regarding gender perspective, the wage gap between men and women exists in all professional sectors, in all jobs and responsibilities, and it is larger in the higher degrees. Furthermore, women are not usually found in decision making places, only about 25%. While overall women are more qualified than men, they continue to hold most of the non-qualified jobs (70%).

Every winter, temporary workers sustain the Andorran economy, mainly in ski resorts and hotels and catering businesses. After the pronouncements made by such workers, these jobs are especially harsh and sometimes do not respect workers’ rights, neither are migrants informed about
those rights nor the available plans at their disposal. Temporary workers amount for up to 10% of the total work force in the country but they lack any organisation representing them and they are rendered unable to voice their unease.

B. New developments

The Civil Service law was negotiated during 2018 provoking the rejection and unrest that unleashed a two-day strike. Syndicates manifested their discomfort as they denounced coercion against temporary workers within the civil service and considered the minimum services established excessive and impending towards the strike. Officers have repeatedly manifested through their syndicates their dissatisfaction with respect to the administration of the political leaders. Around 800 people attended the demonstration in front of the Parliament, an impressive and unprecedented feat since the early 30’s. The manifesto claimed for an update in the legislation to regulate the right to strike and a syndical organisation that was not guaranteed in practice. Concerns were raised for the growing precarisation within the civil officers and the apparent fragility of the retirement pension system. By the end of 2018, four laws were passed to update employment relations and civil service, to regulate syndical activities and collective conflicts.

The new Law of Employment Relations extends trial periods for new contracts, it prolongs short-term contracts and eases dismissals, therefore creating, in practice, more temporary jobs. All these measures are of special relevance to the young population that is entering the labour market for the first time and getting new work contracts.

On the other hand, in early 2019, the law for Equal Treatment and No Discrimination was passed after a speedy consultation with the civic society. This law expresses that no discrimination with respect to age, gender or nationality is to be accepted but it lacks the programmes and protocols to take action and guarantee that equality is enforced. For example, it states that men and women shall perceive the same salary for the same activity but there is no mechanism for the workers to be aware of their situation compared to their colleagues nor any mechanism to correct eventual breaches. On the good side, starting 2020, the Government has decreed that under 18 workers must perceive the same minimum wage as adults.

Lastly, the regulation for strikes has set the following limits: political and solidarity strikes are not allowed and the employer has the advantage of designating the minimum services in case of disagreement.

In all, these laws do not contain actions nor plans to improve the current situation nor does it push for indefinite hiring. Nonetheless, the Government has eliminated the age discrimination from its official decree on the minimum salary.

C. Recommendations

The Government must sign and ratify the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Implement periodical surveys such as the survey of work forces regularly to have up-to-date information.

Empower the creation of syndicates mobilising resources and providing support during the process.

Eliminate the restrictions on the right to strike and give more decision power to strike action committees.

Implement further services to hear civic society, syndicates and migrant workers in the negotiation tables and preparation of laws. Up until now, many claims were ignored during the commissions leading up to the writing of the laws.

Launch a commission with representation from all age groups and workers to agree upon a sustainable pensions system.
(3) Housing:

A. Follow-up

No recommendations were made during the last review. Nowadays, the housing situation is delicate because many factors contribute to an expanding problem to find a place to live: there are many empty apartments, rentals keep increasing, more temporary workers and tourists arrive every year, tourist apartments rise as well... All this adds up to creating an offer extremely difficult to afford by a large part of the population since, according to the Government, the square metre price for rental is above 12 €, which means renting 70-square metres for 840 € while the minimum salary is at 1,084 €. The data available is very limited even for the administrations since there is neither a completed real estate register nor a thorough follow-up of the rental agreements. To this, we must add the precarious work that proliferates among young people to see that they are the most affected ones by this issue.

With regard to the social living facilities offered to young people, very few are available and have long waiting lists. Furthermore, the political opposition have raised concerns about the eligibility criteria and adjudication of such flats, but the administration has failed to properly address such issues. We insist that young people face a combination of poor working conditions and a narrow and prohibitive rental offer that hinders their opportunities to emancipate.

An important problem for all parties involved, is the lack of an endorsement system for temporary workers during ski season. On one hand, real estate agencies and landlords ask for an advanced payment of the complete rental until the end of the season. On the other side, temporary workers cannot afford such payments and are pushed to live in rough and cramped apartments. Moreover, some people have brought up the abuses undertaken by some real estates on temporary workers. Some break the agreement, others keep the deposit and force tenants to sue in order to get it back, there are many overpopulated flats where we can even find sofas for rent online.

B. New developments

In December they passed the Law of Urgent Measures for Housing, and the Housing National Commission and Housing Office were created. The law focuses on sponsoring landlords but it offers little help to tenants. The only measures are to secure the rent increase to the retail price index (IPC) and to keep landlords from evicting their tenants.

The Housing National Commission is formed by representatives of all possible landlords but there is only one civic organisation that represents tenants.

The Housing Office is a temporary service set up to inform people about the available services or the procedures they should follow. It opts to take a passive approach instead of trying to tackle the problem by being active in going to find out which people need help. During this year, the creation of the Housing National Institute is expected to take place although no information has been put forward regarding how it will function nor what it will include.

C. Recommendations

The Government needs to implement periodical surveys to accurately evaluate the housing status in Andorra.

First, empty flats have to be accounted for and tourist apartments must be regulated to have a wide vision of the offers. The new law lacks measures to include new apartments into the market and guarantee an affordable rent. Protocols should be implemented to allow tenants to get information and report abuses.

To ease young people’s emancipation, the adjudication of social housing has to be reviewed. The Government also has to further inform about the available programmes such as rent aids. For 2020, the national budget includes an item to build new social housing. It has to be executed and the adjudication criteria needs to agree with civic organisations.

Launch initiatives to support temporary workers on finding well-conditioned and affordable housing as well as with all required procedures.
(4) Migration:

A. Follow-up

The recommendations made by France and Mexico were noted: those were to lower the residence period for having access to obtain Andorran nationality to 10 years; and to allow family reunification for temporary workers.

According to the up-to-date information provided by the Statistics Department, 52% of the population are not Andorran nationals. They do not possess any political rights and they find their participation in Andorran society systematically limited. In particular, many young people educated in Andorra cannot exert these rights as they came to live in Andorra when they were children but did not study complete compulsory education in the country. We have already mentioned above that this group is particularly vulnerable and finds many obstacles in employment and housing.

B. New developments

The sole action taken that improves young migrant’s representation and participation is the creation of the National Youth Forum, that represents residents and nationals equally and they have equal rights within the organisation. Migrant members amount up to 37% of Forum members but their participation is almost nonexistent, caused mainly by the lack of knowledge that surrounds our organisation’s existence.

C. Recommendations

First, the Government should follow the suggestions and lower the residence period to 10 years for obtaining the Andorran nationality. Migrants who get to Andorra are not aware of the programmes and tools at their disposal. The Government has to set up services to inform and invite migrant people to participate in civic and political activities in the country. There is no guide nor resources available to this end.

We express our most sincere gratitude for your attention.