

The Formentera Council's departments of tourism and environment launched Posidònia Fòrum on Friday, a day for dialogue between business, island residents and the administration about tourism on the island, how it effects neighbouring ecosystems and how sustainable forms of it could promote sound use of natural and cultural resources, a stable economy and quality of life improvements for Formentera's inhabitants.

**Posidònia Fòrum**

The day, which kicked off at 9.30am in the Sala de Plens of Formentera's dependent care centre, had two points of focus—first, tourism and second, Save Posidonia Project-related initiatives.

Tourism secretary Alejandra Ferrer got the Fòrum going with an opening address. She was followed by journalist Carmelo Convalia's talk on changes in local tourism in the last decade. Convalia gave an overview of recent years that included the transition from the era of mammoth tour operators to à la carte holiday deals and online bookings. He also explored the shift from Italian mass tourism to the current trend of courting medium- to high-spending visitors as well as some of the attending pros and cons.

Up next was Carlos Bernús, head of tourism, who detailed Formentera's arsenal of promotional activities, from workshops with small-scale travel agencies, to trade shows across Europe, to pursuing off-the-beaten path travellers in China and North America. Bernús spoke about discounts and specially programmed events aimed at propelling tourism in spring and autumn, as well as reaching out to communication firms and niche media outlets and organising journalist junket trips in an effort to spread the word about Formentera.

Analysis of the so-called “tourist barometer” was handled by Ainhoa Raso of CEGOS, a specialised consulting and training firm. Raso looked at the barometer's most recent readings including responses from 864 individuals and identified some peoples' most and least favourite features. While people raved about the island's stock of beaches, vistas, safety and peace and

quiet, they bemoaned high prices, crowds and noise, particularly during the high season.

After a break, environment secretary Daisee Aguilera ushered in the second part of the day with a report on SPP's progress in 2017 and 2018 as well as some of the take-aways. Participants then heard from Raquel Vaquer of IMEDEA about the group's *Antroposi* project.

*Antroposi* examines the footprint humans leave on posidonia meadows, monitoring the impact of marine traffic in shallow waters as well as the effects of the surging nutrient levels linked to treatment plant drainage and ballast water from ships. One more focus of the project is to study changes in the way posidonia siphons CO2 that are due to effluent waters and watercraft.

Up next, GEN-GOB's Xisco Sobrado led a presentation on posidonia and sustainable uses of marine ecosystems. The featured study, an environmental audit of mooring points on Formentera's coastline, strives not just to pinpoint the main points of impact and create use maps for those areas, but to offer a diagnosis of the health of posidonia meadows where ships anchor.

Moderated by Carmelo Convalia, *La convivència, no sempre fàcil, entre el turisme I el mediambient* ("Tourism and ecology: a sometimes tricky coexistence") saw Vicent Tur, Santi Costa, Pep Mayans and Manu San Félix sit down to exchange perspectives and explore ways to align environmental safeguards with tourism, the economy and quality of life improvements for islanders.

After the discussion, San Félix took the floor to discuss Posidònia Maps, an application that proposes detailed maps of posidonia meadows, a crucial step towards protection from the anchors and chains of nearby ships.

Secretary Ferrer oversaw the Fòrum's closing, which included an overview of the day's conclusions.