



Today Ana Juan, president of the Consell de Formentera, together with Tontxu Rodríguez, secretary of state for justice (*SEJ*) and Francesc Miralles, general director of institutional relations of the Balearic Government, inaugurated the second pilot project of the Municipal Offices of Justice (*OJM*) to be implemented throughout Spain. The first OJM was launched in the province of Albacete, and Formentera's is the first in a territory that is characterised by insularity. The inauguration was attended by councillors of the local cabinet, Balearic and state law enforcement authorities and judicial representatives of Eivissa and Formentera.

At the presentation, President Juan asserted the new office will mean "public judicial services on the island are more agile and straightforward" and "simple judicial matters no longer require travel to Eivissa or Palma". Juan stressed that "this modernisation of justice is critical for territories like ours" and made assurances that "we will not lose access to any court of instruction and will continue working to improve public services for residents, just as this new office does".

Mr Rodríguez offered, "Justice affects every area of life - personal, family and employment. And as a public service, it too needs a structure that is close enough to meet citizens' demands with immediacy". Under the Organisational Efficiency Act, an OJM will be set up in every municipality where there is no Court of First Instance. "OJMs fulfil this need and are especially relevant in those smaller localities with communication difficulties", added Rodríguez. In the words of the SEJ, "with OJMs we can rethink the means available to local offices of justice, and tailor them to the social and technological reality on the ground", adding, "the benefits are particularly clear in island territories like Formentera".

The new OJM will mean islanders can attend trials by videoconference to which they have been summoned; local police officers won't have to spend an entire day travelling, or be dependent on weather conditions to travel to Eivissa. It will also make it easier to grant power of attorney *apud acta*; make it possible to avail oneself of the right to legal aid; validate degrees obtained overseas and more. Rodríguez traced the pilot project's coming to fruition to "intense collaboration" from the Government Chamber of the High Court of Justice, the Government Secretariat of the High Court of Justice of the Balearic Islands (*TSJIB*), Courts of Eivissa, staff of the Justice of the Peace Court of Formentera, Civil Registry, and Territorial Management Office of the Ministry of Justice and its teams. To achieve it, the SEJ held up new technological

equipment and reinforced personnel at the Justice of the Peace of Formentera. The additional staff will collaborate during roll-out of the OMJ so that the residents of the island do not need to travel to seats of the judiciaries of Eivissa or Palma to handle legal matters.

Project launch

During the presentation, attendees saw demonstrations of some of the services now available at the Justice Office of Formentera. Those present at the Justice of Peace of Formentera connected via videoconference with Pilar Llop, Minister of Justice at the Government Delegation in Palma, where the Minister is on an official visit. Later, one individual took a sworn nationality oath by video and a connection was established with the Office for the Care of Victims of Violent Crimes and Crimes against Sexual Freedom. As well, officers of the Guardia Civil tested the connection with an Eivissa courtroom. Fruit of an agreement with the Ministries of Justice and Interior, the new system means witness and defendant no longer need be in the courtroom together when charges are brought based on witness reports. Finally, presenters demoed a remote work station, which enabled an official of the Administration of Justice of the Court of First Instance number 5 of Eivissa to work from Formentera.

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