



In press conference this morning, the councilor of Tourism, Trade and Transport of the Formentera Island Council explained the measures and sanctionary proceedings adopted this summer in Formentera to counter a series of recent issues. Infractions upon noise pollution regulations, unauthorised advertising and non-compliance with established hours of operation for night locales were several of the most common instances.

The measures that have been adopted come from a need to regulate commercial activity in businesses serving the tourist sector. Regulation allows a guarantee of legality of business activity, which serves as a mark of quality for visiting tourists.

In recent years there has been an increase in commercial establishments that routinely change hands every year and open their doors for only the heaviest months of the summer season. This together with our current economic situation makes it more and more difficult to reliably control the image given to tourists visiting the island.

It is for this reason that the Office of Activities and Tourism Regulation are working to fit their workloads into a single department overseeing information, inspection, sanctionary measures and licences/authorisation for all matters related to tourism and trade. The restructuring will allow for a simplification of proceedings, a streamlining of application resolutions and will also assist in informing businesses of the regulations affecting them.

In October and as part of the sectorial meetings held on the topic of tourism, these issues will be put on the table for discussion between business owners and residents of the island. The Council will attempt in this way to gain first-hand information the problems being faced by island residents, and, based on the conclusions drawn thereupon, will establish which measures must be adopted looking ahead to 2014.

Essential to this office's work are inspection and control, and this more now than ever, given the increasingly frequent instances of unlicensed practise of business and unfair competition. Small businesses make up nearly all of the island's businesses, and for this reason it is very important that fair competition can be guaranteed, lest grave problems to the island's economy be risked.

Sanctionary measures

In the previous year 33 changes of management and 11 new business establishments have been listed in the Office of Tourism's register of complementary businesses. These figures were 7 and 1, respectively, among Formentera establishments offering accommodation. These attestations, whether related to a title transfer or new business, are completed using what is known as a responsible declaration of new activity and a corresponding inspection to follow.

In summer of 2013, the Formentera Local Police and the technical services of tourist inspection oversaw different checks of tourist establishments with the goal of improving service quality and the image of tourism in Formentera. At that time several sanctionary procedures, cautionary measures and instances of due diligence were enacted, and charges are still being processed for more than one case brought by local police and local Formentera residents.

One of the most assiduously monitored activities due to the toll that it stands to take on Formentera's tourist image is unauthorised advertising. So far, charges have been brought by Formentera Local Police against 21 businesses, many of these not first-time offences. Likewise, a total of 25 sanctionary measures have been adopted, of which 13 have been for posting promotional material in unauthorised areas and the other 12 for advertising using handouts, wristbands or groups of individuals. Such activity has proliferated in recent years, which is why its prohibition was proposed and approved. The Council can, in this way, respond to the need to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of advertising as well as assure cleanliness on the island.

Simultaneously, the Office of Activities works to maintain a harmonious living environment for all of the islands' residents; one that can combine leisure and nightlife activities with the right of residents to tranquility. This is achieved via noise level checks and the enforcement of restrictions on business hours. This year hours of legal operation for businesses were modified, reflecting a necessity to bring authorised business activity into line with laws on noise and vibrational pollution. Also included in the modifications was a set of principles to regulate live music performances.

The changes provide Formentera business owners a fair range of operating hours according to the type of activity exercised within each establishment. 17 businesses opened applications in 2012 that are currently in processing, and 13 applications have been opened in 2013 for new nightlife locales.

In 2013, six new charges have been brought against different nightlife locales for noise pollution infractions, and offending sound equipment (speakers, stereo equipment, etc.) has been confiscated at four establishments in Es Pujols for failure to comply with legal noise levels (dB). Three of these business have already brought practices into compliance and, in these cases, offending sound equipment has been returned.

Currently, 11 sanctionary measures are in proceedings for businesses found to exercise activity for which they were not licensed. Said measures exist to ensure that local island establishments take part only in those commercial activities for which they are authorised, and that these businesses engage only in commercial activity during the hours specified for their particular business model.

Several sanctionary measures have been brought against one accommodation establishment in particular. This has first included the application of a town-planning sanction for the execution of remodel activity deemed 'major' despite possession of 'minor'-project size building permits. Secondly, sanctions were applied for failure to possess the necessary activities-license and for establishment of commercial activity in a zone that did not permit use for such purposes. A third sanction was given for motives of 'tourism'.

Recent years have born witness to increasing numbers of establishments yearly changing hands and opening only for the heaviest months of the tourist season. This, together with our country's economic situation, makes it ever more difficult to control the image received by visitors to the island. Last year alone 33 changes of owner and 11 new businesses were logged

by the Tourist Registry for complementary tourist activities. In local accommodation, figures noted seven changes of owner and one new business. All of these changes were registered via declarations of new business activity and the corresponding inspections that must accompany them.

Two police officers are assigned to oversee control and interception of itinerant vending, motive for which charges were brought in 146 cases this year. Of the 146 cases opened, sanctionary measures were applied in all 146. As reflected by statistics on itinerant vending for the end of the 2013 summer season, and given the current economic framework, the increase in legal charges brought is attributed to evermore exhaustive police checks.

Public order and compliance with the law stand among the administration's priorities and as such, in the high-season summer months, government regulation of these elements must be at its most vigilant if the island is to offer a tourist product of quality and one that distinguishes itself from the model of 'tourism for the masses'.