

The Formentera Office of Heritage has initiated efforts to preserve files damaged by a fire in the town planning department of the former Ajuntament in 1999. Today Raquel Guasch, councillor of heritage, presented current efforts at the municipal archives "to fulfil the administration's duty to preserve official documents, which are a source of information for the people of Formentera and an asset for our collective memory". Councillor Guasch asserted that "unfortunately, this fire is a dark page of our history, but we believe that these efforts are crucial. We have an obligation to preserve material that was intentionally burned".

The heritage office presented the preservation work on 9 June on the occasion of International Archives Day. Conservation and restoration experts Einam Nieves Peinado and Kena Marí Llano are overseeing the efforts within the Consell de Formentera archives. It is estimated that the team will spend 680 hours processing documents in 22 boxes containing approximately one thousand files. A budget of €7,300 has been allocated for the work.

Preservation process

In addition to the effects of the fire, the documents have also been damaged by water used to put out the flames which remained in the papers in the years since. To the extent possible, work will involve cleaning, disinfecting and reconstituting the files. The team is also extracting the material that has been sullied by dirt and microorganisms so that they do not spread and totally destroy the documents. Important classification work is also being carried out, leaving a record of the information still available and of the entire operation. The preserved material will then be stored in neutral conservation cardboard boxes.

Nieves Peinado explained that "damage to the files is not uniform. In some cases it will be possible to regroup the documents, while other files have been either totally destroyed or, given plastic in the storage material, melted together". Peinado affirmed that "all of the material shows traces of ash and remains of burnt paper. This greasiness affects even those papers that are in relatively good condition, accelerating processes of oxidation and deterioration". The team added that the conventional cardboard boxes used to store the documents is acidic, which complicates matters further.

9 June 2022
Communications Office
Consell de Formentera