



In a one-off plenary session convened today, members of the Formentera Council voted unanimously to petition the Balearic legislature to ask the Congress of Deputies to explicitly change article 69.3 of Spain's Constitution in order to allow Formentera to choose its own senator, separate from Eivissa's. Local lawmakers are able to pursue the effort thanks to the so-called “council law” and the Balearic Islands' Statute of Autonomy, which empowers island councils to petition Congress via mediation provided by the regional parliament.

The proposed redrafting of article 69.3 of the Spanish Constitution, which also includes substituting the “and” between “Eivissa and Formentera” for a comma, reads as follows: “In the island territories, every island with *cabildo* or council shall represent its own constituency requiring its own elected senator or senators. For the larger islands (Gran Canaria, Mallorca and Tenerife) these shall number three, and on Eivissa, Formentera, Fuerteventura, La Gomera, El Hierro, Lanzarote, Menorca and La Palma, one”.

The changes also entail the following: removal of the word insular from the designation of the councils (article 141.4 of the Constitution does not in fact prescribe its use), leaving the public administrations to be known simply as “councils;” alphabetised ordering of the islands in both the Balearics and the Canary Islands; and, in keeping with the Canary Islands' Statute of Autonomy, correct use of determining articles in the case of La Gomera and El Hierro.

Long-standing plea

Arguing the current request is in fact not new, president's office secretary Bartomeu Escandell pointed out that “Formentera is the only island in the country that shares a senator with another island”. The petition was first made in 2004, he said, when the plenary assembly of Formentera's local government (formerly an “ajuntament”) unanimously passed a similar motion on August 20, 2004. The call has been renewed on multiple occasions, including at a spokespersons' committee earlier this year, when members crossed party lines to back the current measure.

Escandell said the current political climate is ideal for the change to be made, noting that the two leading national parties, the Popular Party and the PSOE, agree that a constitutional rewrite is necessary. The secretary called it “a one of a kind opportunity for this broad-based and

legitimate local plea”.