

At the Consell de Formentera's January full-house assembly today, participants connected virtually for an encounter that was largely characterised by public health measures related to the ongoing pandemic. GxF-PSOE cabinet members won cross-party backing on their first proposal, a measure dealing with Covid-19 vaccines.

First councillor and tourism chief Alejandra Ferrer defended the initiative, which found local decision makers pressing the central government to continue work with the European Union around international agreements to expedite production and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, key to guaranteeing sufficient levels of local immunity and reactivating island tourism.

Councillors prodded officials in Madrid and Palma to ensure nationwide immunity levels necessary to restoring free and safe movement between the distinct Spanish regions and restarting national tourism as soon as possible. They highlighted the importance of creating safe corridors, increasing Formentera's competitiveness as a destination spot and putting travellers in a position to get here safely.

Civil law on Eivissa and Formentera

Assembly members struck unity on a joint GxF-PSOE cabinet and Sa Unió proposal regarding fair taxation of civil law succession agreements involving the personal income tax (IRPF). In the words of economy and tax office councillor Bartomeu Escandell, "our islands' civil law must be respected".

In defence of the measure and vis-à-vis a draft bill on combatting tax fraud currently under congressional review, councillors asked the central government to jettison proposed changes to an article of related legislation from 2006, and otherwise block any part of the Spanish constitution, the Balearic Statute of Autonomy, or legislation recognised by the regional government and parliament that perverts the capacity of local institutions to act on civil and fiscal measures. The Consell de Formentera urges the government and parliament of the Balearic Islands to defend diversity of local institutions as enshrined in the Balearic Compilation of Civil Law, namely agreements currently facing fiscal reform by the central government.

Fibre-optic connections
Cabinet councillors and the opposition came together to support a proposal to make fibre-optic connections available across the island. New technologies councillor Vanessa Parellada defended the measure, pointing to such technologies newfound importance since the start of the Covid crisis: "New technologies have enabled remote work, put families in a position to balance work and family and created new ways of socialising, gathering and sharing information". The councillor said fibre-optic technology was to thank for "significant leaps forward in terms of universal Internet access on Formentera", while insisting there were certain parts of the island that "continued to trail behind". Councillors called on relevant administrations and companies to extend fibre-optic connections to every home, business, bar, restaurant, hotel and tourist establishment on the island.

Formentera, zero-waste municipality
Assembly members struck unity on backing for Formentera's membership in the 'Programme to Certify Zero-Waste Municipalities'. While underscoring recent circular economy initiatives such as the pallet and bicycle reuse programme at the household waste recycling centre, environment councillor Antonio J Sanz said still more remained to be done, and trumpeted efforts like the Zero-Waste Municipality programme, "which strive to cut waste and use resources in more efficient ways".

After tweaking by cabinet councillors, one Sa Unió-backed measure to receive unanimous support involved extending the validity of holiday rental registrations into 2021 — a measure which built on the success of a similar Consell-led initiative earlier in the pandemic.

Public health proposals
One more Sa Unió proposal to win cross-party backing after modifications by cabinet councillors was a message to the Balearic government reiterating the need for urgent action to secure mass voluntary screenings with rapid antigen tests to pinpoint Covid-19 cases on the island.

In yet another unanimous vote, assembly members asked the Balearic government to increase the island's Covid-19 services and accelerate funding to establish a local base for 061 emergency response service, including an additional plea for special resources to tackle simultaneous emergencies. Social welfare councillor Rafael Ramírez defended the measure, which was brokered by cabinet councillors and the opposition, insisting that "Formentera residents deserve a decent service just as much as islanders elsewhere in the Balearics". Ramírez additionally pointed out that the region's 2021 spending plan included a budget line item for creation of emergency response infrastructure on Formentera. The councillor concluded by insisting that "public services like education and healthcare that ensure equality need to be

built up, not cut back".

Unanimous backing materialised yet again around a cross-party call to require negative Covid-19 test results of all inter-island travellers. Once Formentera's "perimetric sealing-off" is lifted and while certain islands remain in situations of risk, councillors asked the Balearic government to take steps to implement identical controls to those which visitors from outside the archipelago are already subject to.

Official proclamation on World Cancer Day

The January plenary concluded with a special proclamation marking World Cancer Day on 4 February. In the words of social welfare councillor Rafael Ramírez, "the crisis succeeding the pandemic has done nothing if not exacerbate the social and healthcare precariousness that people with cancer and their families endure already". According to Ramírez, the Consell "supports cancer research because it is an essential part of the fight, and applauds the ongoing commitment and efforts of all the associations and groups accompanying those affected by cancer".

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