



Formentera Island Council president Jaume Ferrer, councilor of Tourism and Transport Alejandra Ferrer and councilor of Local Events and Community Involvement Sergio Jiménez received this morning regional minister of Tourism and Sport of the Govern Balear, Jaime Martínez, along with directors general of Tourism and of Ports and Airports, Montserrat Jaén and Antonio, respectively.

It was the regional minister's first official visit since occupying his political charge and it served as an occasion for the meeting's attendees to discuss several issues of acute importance here on the island, such as the transfer of authority in tourism promotions, the revision of the Llei de Transport Marítim (Maritime Transport Law), the question of 'party boats' along Formentera's coastline, as well as the necessity of improving investments for the development of a host of different sports, among which are sailing, tennis, judo and track.

The first order of discussion dealt with the transfer of functions in tourism promotion. To this point, the Council has always manifested its absolute predisposition to reach such a compromise, on the condition that there is an accompanying fair economic compensation. The Council will not accept a scheme that does not fulfil this basic condition.

On 31 January a technical platform (Ponència Tècnica) was convened to discuss the transfer of functions and services in tourism promotion to the different island councils. The platform served as an initial point of contact between the islands. Then, 10 February, the different islands presented their proposals for tourism promotion and the concomitant levels of financing necessary for these.

One of the proposals put forward by Formentera on the issue of financing was the establishment of both a fixed base and a variable base taking into account factors like the Gross Interior Product, the number of occupied tourist places, etc. All of these questions, once consensus has been reached, will be redacted by the technical platform and finally submitted for approval by the transfer commission (Comissió Mixta de Transferències), approval thus making official the transfer of functions to each island along with the economic assistance corresponding to that island's individual tourist promotion.

The day's second order of businesses was approval for the decree outlined by the Maritime Transport Law of the Balearic Islands, which would allow for the establishment of minimum frequencies in boat passages and maximum ticket prices for passengers and businesses. Council president Jaume Ferrer expressed frustration at the Govern Balear's demonstrated lack of interest on this subject. As of today's date there exists, for example, no written record of the evolution of this topic in the Balearics.

In the case of Formentera, where residents are subject to a kind of triple isolation, the topic of maritime transport takes on vital importance for locals. Recent massive reductions in connectivity, besides supposing a highly unfair situation for Formentera residents, represent an extreme economic injustice for our local businesses, who must daily face the impossible task of competing with the rest of the Balearic Islands.

Council president Ferrer noted that “clearly, it would be very positive news if, by the end of this legislature, a roadmap for future approval of the decree were produced”. To which regional Tourism councilor Jaime Martínez responded by committing to the redaction of such a draft before the end of the current legislature.

Another topic raised for discussion were the party boats in the waters surrounding the Ses Salines Natural Park, a concern not only with respect to the noise pollution produced by such gatherings but also for the negative image they impact upon visiting tourists. It is important to understand the added difficulty of coordinating between the different public administrations on this point, given the fact that there are certain overlapping authorities and it is at times difficult to determine which office is the acting entity on a given matter.

Representatives of the regional ministry of Tourism reported that sectoral meetings would be held to assure that certain good practices were upheld and a satisfactory solution to the problem found.

Finally, Council president Ferrer spoke of the necessity of a modernisation of the sports practised here on Formentera. Three years ago, the Municipal Sailing School of Formentera received an annual assistance package of 60 thousand euros, a figure since reduced to 24 thousand. This has made travel more difficult for our high-level athletes, routinely asked to attend sporting competitions at both the national and international level. Sailing is an extremely

popular sport on Formentera and its base on the island includes a range of promising young athletes, both internationally-classified and among the highest ranked in competitions. This is a subject that has been repeatedly raised by the municipal school's director, Asier Fernández.

On this point, president Ferrer requested an increase in the funding for the modernisation and development of this and other sports, giving Formentera athletes the same conditions as their counterparts across the Balearics.