

Today at the January full-house session of the Consell de Formentera, the Gent per Formentera (GxF) and Socialist cabinet secured backing for the 2022 proposal on quotas and an enforcement period for Formentera.eco, as well as a proposed agreement to amend the tax ordinance governing fees to bring and drive a vehicle on the island.

Councillors also endorsed lowering the 2021 ceiling on total vehicles by an additional 4%. In 2020 the Consell d'Entitats agreed to "cut the total number of vehicles on the island 4% annually" based on a maximum which was fixed in 2019, determining to achieve fewer vehicles on local roads "in a controlled and progressive manner over four years" for 16% fewer vehicles on the island by 2023. In 2022, with the ceiling fixed at 19,696, the island will accommodate 12% fewer vehicles than when the project launched two years prior. "For the first time, we will drop below 20,000 vehicles", explained Rafael González, Councillor of Mobility.

Assembly members also passed an agreement to tack on two additional weeks' enforcement of Formentera's vehicle count and cap scheme. The regulations will take force 15 June to 15 September. Lawmakers also gave the go-ahead to another change agreed by the Consell d'Entitats: tripling current prices for a daily rate of €1.50 or €3 and a minimum of €7.50 or €15 for scooters and cars, respectively.

Councillor González welcomed the Consell d'Entitats' broad consensus around proposals to discourage stays under five days to alleviate traffic. González stressed that the project, which stems from the initiative of ordinary islanders, focuses on "a more sustainable mobility for Formentera, where both residents and visitors are satisfied in the high season".

The agreement also provides for improvements in public transport as well as on controls and regulatory guidelines. In May the Consell de Formentera will pilot an educational push aimed at making sure that residents have the required permit –processing fees are waived, the councillor pointed out– before enforcement of the rules resumes.

Support for labour reforms

"Yes" votes from the GxF and PSOE overcame Sa Unió resistance "to support the labour

reform agreed among trade unions to promote stable and quality new employment and reduce job insecurity and joblessness in our country". Rafael Ramírez, Councillor of Social Welfare, said that Formentera "feels the weight of this precariousness too", so "we must defend labour reforms to expand workers' rights, improve wages and restore employer-employee equilibrium by reinstating collective bargaining".

COVID-19 protocols

Plenary participants united in support of a proposal about new COVID-19 protocols in classrooms. Susana Labrador, Vice-President and Councillor of Culture and Education, proposed new protocols to respond to COVID-19 in schools amid escalating new cases. "We hadn't seen spikes like the current one at any point in the pandemic", Labrador insisted. "This has complicated the task of managing schools and fed into uncertainties around new protocols".

The proposal urges the Balearic government to account for the exemption of students under six from mask-wearing and the fact that physical distancing cannot be guaranteed by employing differentiated protocols for the first and second tranche of early-childhood education. Councillors went further still, urging the Govern balear to tackle further spread of the virus by maintaining diagnostic screenings and contact tracing when affected individuals are children in early learning programmes. And they highlighted the importance of ongoing assessments and updates of protocol as the vaccination push progresses and the pandemic situation improves, prioritising safety, in-person affairs and work/family balance.

Cross-party support emerged behind a motion brought by Sa Unió party members urging the Consell de Formentera to keep signage for nature trails, or "rutes verdes", in better condition and look into adding routes per provisions in the Sustainable Mobility Plan.

Coastal property limits

There was also unanimous support for a compromise proposal from the cabinet to define the steps required for a fair delimitation of property lines on the island's coast. First, councillors noted that the Consell de Formentera and Platform of Affected Individuals (*Plataforma d'Afectats*) should continue collaborating on a proposal. Second, they called on the Consell de Formentera to convene the Board of Spokespersons to appraise political groups of comments made during the hearing on the modified coastal regulations. Third, they urged the island's government to convene the Consell d'Entitats to report on the reply when it comes, and to activate a working group within the Consell d'Entitats in collaboration with the Platform of Affected Individuals to

lobby to ensure delimitation is fair.

Departmental report

At the close of the session, Paula Ferrer, Councillor of Sports, Island Services and Human Resources, reviewed efforts in the last two years in the areas she manages. On human resources, the councillor highlighted a new path for municipal employees to obtain recognition as career professionals, as well as selection processes and job pools in place which have helped strengthen various essential departments like Formentera's Office of Social Welfare, "to ensure the proper functioning of the Consell at the service of islanders".

In island services, she pointed to regular maintenance and upgrades as well as changes to tailor spaces and working areas to pandemic imperatives. Ferrer insisted that the sports department was among most affected by public health restrictions and thanked both sports clubs and users of municipal facilities and schools "for their understanding, patience and collaboration, without which decision-making would have been even more challenging". The councillor drew attention to competitions which have been scheduled throughout the year, the annual subsidy plan and facility upgrades, including a renovated AC and heating system in the indoor pool, and initiatives promoting values and equality in sport, "with an unchanging focus on youth sport".

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