

Earlier today the island's Planning and Promoting Tourism Committee (COPT) passed the Tourism Reactivation Plan (PRT), a document setting down the island's strategic axes and a roadmap for 2021 and 2022 tourist seasons. Chaired by Consell premiere Alejandra Ferrer and first deputy premiere Ana Juan, the committee meeting was attended by representatives of the local tourism industry, including the Formentera Hotel Association, Chamber of Commerce, Formentera's league of small- and medium-sized businesses (Pimef), Confederation of Balearic Business Associations (CAEB), travel agencies, as well as political party representatives and the Consell's head of marketing for tourism, Carlos Bernús.

Ferrer said the PRT had received input and buy-in from stakeholders in local tourism and described it as "a reflection not only of local priorities, but of the work done over a year during which covid-19 has loomed large". Ferrer also pointed out that, with the public health situation in constant flux, the plan would have to be "adapted based on the changing face of the pandemic and restrictions".

The first part of the plan concerns public health measures, controls on their application and education to ensure compliance. The second, economic responses to mitigate fallout from the crisis. The third portion, which deals with the island as a tourist destination, marketing strategies and "the Formentera model", looks at the island's weaknesses and opportunities together with insight into practical adaptation of the Tourism Promotion Plan (PPT) for 2021.

'Safe as possible' destination in summer 2021

COPT attendees reviewed efforts in 2020 to enforce public health measures and raise awareness about them among islanders and tourists, before enumerating required steps to become a "safe as possible" destination ahead of summer 2021. President Ferrer talked about the key importance of "getting national and European vaccination rates to where they need to be for safe reactivation of the economy". The PRT calls on the central government to keep working with regional authorities on safe corridors, "to make the Balearics a competitive destination" and to establish provisions for efficient controls on arriving travellers.

It also urges Madrid to put systems in place to guarantee a workable form or "health passport" and proper analysis and data checks.

The PRT focuses particular attention on the importance of safe arrivals, in which travellers can be called on to attest low incidence rates at places of origin plus proof of negative Covid status and/or vaccination, as well as, now that the vaccination push is progressing, vaccines for workers and flat-rate Covid tests.

The PRT also calls for the creation of infrastructure and a service in charge of measures to enable mass testing on arrival and/or departure if travellers' countries of origin so require.

Ferrer said appropriate measures would mean islands working separately: "Public health data should be treated on a per-island basis so the whole region doesn't close based on the situation on just one island. And we need to differentiate between positive cases among residents and positive cases among visitors, so we can be sure we're getting real rates of actual cumulative incidence and positivity. This is key to ensuring an island isn't sealed off to travel due to incidence rates among departing travellers".

Lastly, the document urges the Balearic authorities to work with individual island governments on a single document, or roadmap, detailing summer measures and strategies after emergency orders are lifted on 9 May.

Economic response

First deputy premiere Ana Juan highlighted direct and indirect aid from central and regional authorities in the past year, on furloughs, for instance, as well as aid disbursed by the government of Formentera. She also held up other measures, set to continue till 30 April, like rebating fees on occupation of the public thoroughfare, extending deadlines on works and delivering assistance to freelancers and small businesses. "Work to lead Formentera to economic recovery continues, as do efforts to restore our tourist destination to its pre-pandemic state", said Juan.

The PRT asks for the possibility of full or partial furloughs both during and after the tourist season; and that lower rates of the Sustainable Tourism Tax, tied to reduced occupancy rates, be extended until things return to normal.

COPT participants also agreed on the importance of rebate measures so companies can cut costs and increase their viability, and resolved to work with the ferry companies to guarantee adequate connections and fares favouring longer stays.

Marketing and tourism model

The PRT also includes a summary of the 2021 Plan to Promote Tourism, which highlights Formentera's destination, marketing and tourism model and offers analysis of the island's weaknesses and opportunities. The local strategy remains tied to sustainability, including in mobility, rural recovery, safeguards on culture and heritage, and aims to achieve social equilibrium, economic improvement and environmental protections.

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