According to the Formentera Council's Office of Social Welfare, a plenary meeting this Friday February 24 will involve an official statement from the administration urging fewer obstacles to incoming refugees. Drafted by political groups Gent per Formentera and PSOE, the document airs concerns over the desperate situation of Syrians displaced by war in their country, a conflict now in its fifth year. The text also highlights, explained social welfare councillor Vanessa Parellada, Spain's refusal to meet intake quotas for asylum seekers set by the European Union in 2016.

The manifesto decries “Europe's failure to provide an adequate response to refugees. Efforts till now have centred on policing our own borders and turning Europe into a fortress. The result is that hundreds of thousands of people are forced to risk their lives on perilous land or sea crossings”. The document also underscores the “particularly tragic situation of women and children, who face exploitation and sexual violence” and “other vulnerable individuals, such as those with disabilities”.

Hence the Formentera Council's decision, first, to point out the universally recognised right to asylum and, second, to call on the Spanish government to disentangle the application process for asylum seekers and cut down the administration's response time. Those are just some of the measures laid out in the manifesto, which urges an array of improvements to refugee reception measures and guarantees to the right to asylum.

Second manifesto

Parellada also held up another official declaration, unanimously adopted by the Formentera Council in April 2016, which rejected the EU-Turkey refugee resettlement deal on the grounds that it was an egregious breach of legislation protecting refugees and would only worsen the humanitarian crisis under way.

Formentera with Syria

According to the councillor, the situation of people in refugee camps has been brought into sharp focus in recent weeks thanks to «Formentera amb Síria» (Formentera with Syria), a campaign organised by the Council and the non-profit group «Progreso y Desarrollo Humano». She also thanked the efforts and involvement of the entire population of Formentera.

Parellada called Formentera “an island full of welcoming people,” a fact she said was evident in “our 2015 pledge to put up refugees, which led Spain's department of immigration to create a roster of individuals willing to host refugees or able to offer other resources like clothes, money, childcare, language instruction, etc”.