



The Formentera Department of Social Welfare has unveiled a two-part push to encourage islanders to start drinking alcohol later in life, if at all, and to curb the unlawful sale of alcohol to minors. In press conference today, Consell de Formentera premiere Alejandra Ferrer, social welfare chief Rafael Ramírez and department staffers Sonia Mayans and Michael Romero turned the spotlight on 'No t'ofeguis en l'alcohol' (Don't Drown in Alcohol) and a number of other bids to prevent underage drinking and promote leisure alternatives for island youth.

"The message is particularly important for young people and their parents", asserted President Ferrer, pointing out that "we're doing more than explaining why underage drinking is dangerous, we're offering resources and alternative leisure activities." The success of the push will take the participation of the entire island, said Ferrer, who pointed to key stakeholders like "schools, business, family members, associations and each and every one of us". She also thanked the public faces of Don't Drown in Alcohol: young people who also actively participated in the campaign's creation.

Drinking on Formentera: figures

Councillor Ramírez called Don't Drown in Alcohol "a necessary response to widespread underage drinking", holding up a 2018 study by the Centre for the Study of Addictive Behaviour (Cepca) which found that not only had 85% of young Formentera residents drunk to the point of inebriation the first time between ages 13 and 15, but a higher proportion of Formentera youth had drunk heavily in the previous 30 days than their counterparts across the Spanish territory. Ramírez said Cepca had been asked to lead a new study with more up-to-date data in 2021.

Even still, Ramírez asserts Don't Drown in Alcohol is about more than just "prohibition and regulation": "We want to build awareness about the health impacts of drinking and other drug abuse, because as adults, it's our responsibility to show young people ways to have quality fun without using drugs".

Fundamental to the success of FDSW's Don't Drown in Alcohol and the effort to stop underage sales is collaboration from other branches of local government, law enforcement, shops, SMEs, schools, families and sports clubs. Councillor Ramírez, for his part, praised business owners for their involvement and called the efforts of FDSW staff "all-important".

New rules on advertising and sales

Ramírez called attention to the island government's adoption last year in plenary of an ordinance dictating how alcohol can be advertised and sold. "Alcohol is one of the three most widely consumed and prevalent drugs on the island", offered Ramírez, describing the ordinance as a "regulatory tool to stop underage drinking".

Business collaborates

Members of the Formentera Chamber of Commerce small- and medium-sized business group (Pimef) and Federation of Hotels have joined in Formentera's effort to tackle the sale of alcohol to minors. Ramírez asserted the collaboration was based on "a shared sense of the importance of putting a stop to underage drinking" and said businesses' role was "paramount". The Consell de Formentera presented the campaign to business owners, who will be supplied informational material in the days ahead to make available in their establishments.

Contest and outreach

Michael Romero described the Consell's dedication early on in the process to engage local youth in Don't Drown in Alcohol's design. Graphics and a slogan were determined in a drawing contest among students at IES Marc Ferrer, with a panel of FDSW and Consell de Formentera design and communication staffers picking a drawing by Daniela Manrique and a slogan by Juan Camilo Gil. Other submissions will be on display at the Casal de Joves until 30 May.

Island youth will even distribute posters and staff prevention tables at popular festivals and other events. Stickers and badges will be made as well; a banner has been commissioned and will be displayed at social and sporting events, and T-shirts, bottles and backpacks will be handed out to summer-schoolers.

Training for young people, parents and professionals

FDSW staffer Sonia Mayans emphasised the importance of training for young people, parents and other islanders with jobs in restaurants and schools. An informational leaflet for parents and round-table discussions are in the works too. The first round-table will be held at Centre d'Esports Nàutics from 5.00pm on Thursday 20 May as part of the Talks for Families lecture series. Psychologist and drug abuse prevention and treatment specialist Otger Amatller will be on hand to offer "Adolescents and Alcohol: Starting from the Home".

Numerous graphics geared toward prevention and awareness will be shared on social media, and an advertising push is coming down the pike as well.

An immensely important tool for individuals who work with adolescents is training. Hence, capacity building sessions on prevention, information and best practices have been organised for wide-ranging professionals, including the *escola d'estiu* administrative team, monitors at the youth drop-in centre, sports trainers and members of Formentera parents' groups. The first session will take place 21 Friday. The IES Marc Ferrer police liaison and social educator have also held talks about the underage alcohol ordinance.

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