



Last Friday, a small group of pupils from IES Marc Ferrer (secondary school), joined by the school's director, Raquel Guasch, met with Formentera Council president Jaume Ferrer and councillor of Education and Culture Sònia Cardona to deliver more than 200 signatures from residents of the island who oppose plans to explore for petrol on the Gulf of Valencia and west coast of the Pitiüsa Islands. The act, mostly symbolic, was part of an effort by Formentera students to give the youth of the island a voice in the issues that affect them.

The idea came from the students themselves. After witnessing outreach work done by the school's environmental commission – la Comissió de Medi Ambient –, a group of students at the high school, acutely aware of their right to take part in the discussions that affect the future of their island, decided to take action. Although not yet old enough to vote, the students wished to manifest their rejection of the seismic drilling plans and join the growing collective of more than 2,500 Formentera residents who have already voiced their opposition.

For its part, the Council committed to delivering the signed petitions to the Ministry of the Environment and Industry, thus making the opinions of Formentera youth known to those with decision-making power.

In addition to the Council's absolute support of the youth initiative, in the final trimester of 2013 the administration also ratified the constitution of the recently-formed local youth council, El Consell de Participació Infantil i Juvenil. The youth council was envisioned as an advisory body whose role it would be to provide a voice to Formentera youth as well as promote their active participation in local politics. Giving youth a voice, it was reasoned, would be the first step to considering that voice in the decision-making process.

This month's plenary session of the Formentera Island Council will raise that very issue and introduce a proposal to declare Formentera a UNICEF Child-friendly City. If approved, such a declaration would stand to certify that the municipality of Formentera upholds the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.