



Yesterday at 7.30pm representatives of local associations convened for a special session to open discussion about the future of Formentera. First, attendees got a look at two barometers designed to register the feedback and opinions of Formentera's residents and businesses. Next, they discussed data, perceptions and current problems facing residents and local workers. Finally, with discussion opened, attendees agreed to set a calendar of sectoral meetings to address the varying topics related to the model of island desired for Formentera.

Ana Juan, president of the Consell de Formentera, welcomed the start of the participatory debate, asserting that "data from these two barometers will help us adopt the necessary measures to decide on the Formentera we want." "These measures will relate to the protection of land, environment and coast, but they must also serve to safeguard the right to decent housing, continue promoting the rural environment and local products, and move forward in the energy transition, as determined by the people of Formentera".

In the words of Alejandra Ferrer, vice president and councillor of Tourism, "by presenting the data from the Data Observatory, we hope to open this debate with the necessary information to make decisions". Attendees agreed on the importance of engaging with the public in the months ahead through sectoral meetings on the various issues of concern. "These meetings will help us take the temperature of the current situation and make decisions for the future to find the best solutions to tailor our local model to the new dangers and challenges that Formentera faces", said Ferrer.

According to Vanessa Parellada, councillor of citizen participation, data gathered at the sectoral meetings will inform a second session of the Consell d'Entitats titled "The Formentera we want", where a roadmap will be developed to lay the foundations for the future of the island that citizens want.

She cast "The Formentera we want" as an outgrowth of the 2021 debate on the state of Formentera. There, local decision-makers unanimously urged the island's government to work with the Consell d'Entitats to engage islanders in a debate on emerging local threats on land and at sea, with the results to serve as the basis for new projects and new models of protection.

Resident barometer

The Data Observatory obtained the following feedback in its surveys of 671 Formentera residents:

Weaknesses:

- Negative impacts of tourism outweigh benefits, particularly in terms of environment and land.
- The vast majority of respondents characterised prices, particularly in housing and at the grocery store, as exorbitant.
- Wages are low compared to the island's high standard of living.
- Off-season jobs, services and businesses are insufficient due to the seasonal nature of tourism.
- Access to housing, public transport, healthcare, parking and cleaning services is poor.
- Traffic worsens in summer, increasing accidents and making roads less safe.
- A minority of visitors lack civic-mindedness.
- An extended summer season could increase saturation and overcrowding.
- Other competing destinations have a higher perceived value.
- Changes in the tourist offer generate demand that diminishes local equilibrium and residents' quality of life.
- Prices are made less competitive due to Formentera's triple insularity.
- "Tourism monocrops" have the potential to seriously impact the global economic and political situation.
- Formentera is dependent on other administrations to make local decisions.
- The actions of nearby territories directly affect Formentera.

Strengths:

- Formentera's nature, landscapes and beaches are unique and singular.
- Tourism is the economic engine, with additional economic activities where there is potential for diversification.
- Tourists report a high degree of satisfaction, which further promotes the island.
- Local cuisine and restaurants are ranked highly.
- The tourist season can be elongated.
- Cycling and pedestrian walkways promote sustainable mobility.
- Many areas of great natural and rural importance.
- A longer summer season can benefit employment.

Key issues:

- Fostering awareness of and sensitivity to the environment.
- Continuing to promote and reinforce sustainable mobility.

- Continuing to reclaim and elevate historical and cultural heritage.
- Regulating day-trippers.
- Improving public services and infrastructure.

Business barometer

The Data Observatory also surveyed 318 local entrepreneurs/business owners.

Weaknesses:

- Housing shortage jeopardises the yearly return of workers, making finding qualified personnel difficult.
- Employers are acutely dependent on workers from off the island.
- Compounded insularity makes for uncompetitive prices and transport costs.
- Beaches are not cleaned or maintained and lack services.
- Roads, paths and pavements are in poor condition and dirty.
- More personnel are required to reinforce security services.
- A highly seasonal tourism industry means businesses too are seasonal.
- Day-trippers and vehicles lead to saturation and overcrowding during summer months.
- Local tourism is highly seasonal.
- All-inclusive tourism negatively affects business, hospitality, leisure and entertainment enterprises catering to tourists.

Strengths:

- Island is highly adapted to new technologies, with a growing number of business websites, social media use, home delivery services, online marketing channels.
- Formentera's tourists are highly loyal.
- Tourists are willing to pay advertised prices.
- Formentera's beaches are wonderful and, at present, well-preserved.

Key issues:

- Local government must facilitate steps for businesses.
- Promoting local cuisine in tourist establishments and restaurants.
- Improving commercial, restaurant and service offerings by innovating and diversifying products and experiences for residents and visitors.
- Extending the tourist season and enabling businesses to operate year round.
- Diversifying the tourism product to attract visitors interested in local activities and products complementing sun and beach.

Complete information is also available at www.observatoriformentera.cat .

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Consell de Formentera*