



Today in press conference, Dolores Fernández, the Formentera Council's councilor of Social Welfare, Youth Services and Equality, together with the president of the association Espai Dones, Maria Antònia Ferragut, presented the programme schedule for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Scheduled for 25 November, the day's events are founded upon one objective: eradicate violence against women and move towards a more egalitarian society. Formentera's Office of Equality maintains a close working relationship with the Espai Dones association, and the day represents an important moment in conscious-raising efforts and in the defence of the rights of women.

The Formentera Council and Espai Dones are both deeply involved in the task of reporting, reflecting upon and raising awareness regarding violence against women. Both groups are implicated in the daily struggle of bringing this sort of violence into the collective consciousness.

This year's programme kicks off today, 14 November, with a talk oriented towards families: "Educating our children today", organised by the Associació RANA and in anticipation of the World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse (19 November). The following day is Universal Children's Day, also known as Universal Day for the Rights of the Child. One of these rights (XIX) refers expressly to protection of children against acts of abuse.

Next Tuesday, 19 November, the programme continues with a round-table discussion entitled, "Consequences of domestic violence at the family and societal level," at which individuals in the field (including, among other participants, an attorney, a psychiatrist and a social worker) will share their expertise on the subject. A selection of shorts created will also be projected regarding the topic of domestic violence.

The actual day of 25 November, an informational table will be set up at the Plaça de la Constitució and Espai Dones will read a text against domestic violence. Wrapping up the programmed schedule of events will be a projection of the film "The Princess of Eboli" (28 November) and a communal dinner for the women of Formentera Saturday, 30 November. The programme would of course not be complete without the adult storytelling of Encarna de las Heras, scheduled for 2 December.

The Office of Social Welfare provides a telephone-based support service for female victims of domestic abuse with specialists available for immediate response in emergencies. The office's principle resource is its availability (24 hours/day, 365 days/year) and close coordination with other departments of the public administration. In practise this often includes collaboration with local police or health and social services, the most common avenues of entry into the system for a victim of domestic violence.

Depending on the nature of the conflict, victim care can include monitoring, follow-up visits, on-going support and recommendation to other professional care. If need be, Social Welfare can provide victims and any children temporary lodging a safe-haven apartment. This allows for an immediate separation from the attacker awaiting the woman's transfer to Eivissa.

These urgent response services are organised in close collaboration with a solicitor who evaluates the proper course of action in the defence of the victim's rights and – in cases where therapy is necessary – the victim's psychologist. This feature of the care is what makes the service an indispensable resource in Formentera and aligns it with the services of the Oficina de la Dona (Women's Centre) of Eivissa.

Aware of the importance of continuing education in the prevention of domestic violence – indeed, it is essential to reducing this kind of conflict – the Office of Equality focuses fundamentally on programming equality-related training sessions. In this respect, the Office of Social Welfare acts in concert with the Office of Culture on outreach and awareness-work, the two departments sharing goals of advancing policies of sexual equality and female-empowerment. It is the opinion of the Formentera Council that a woman must be strong in order to achieve real self defence and put a stop to domestic violence, even more so in a setting like Formentera.

Espai Dones Association of Formentera

The year 2007 saw the birth of the women's association that would eventually set precedent for

participation among females in the Pitiüsas. The Office of Equality's close collaboration with this feminist association is principally centred around the celebration of the International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Both events are key in the struggle for women's rights; the days stand as moments to speak out against persisting injustices, in order to move towards resolution and effective equality. They are moments to reclaim empowerment; important moments in the prevention of violence, but also moments to reject violence per se as a solution in our society. These days serve as reminders that those who continue to be disproportionately affected by violence are women and children.

The association is founded on a desire to build a new reflective space, for encounters, dialogue and empowerment, to achieve recognition of equal rights as well as the chance to fully exercise these rights. It is founded upon a wish to promote sexual equality, through informative talks, training opportunities and leisure activities.

This February the Formentera Island Council signed a collaborative agreement with Espai Dones earmarking 2,500€ in financial support for the association. The agreement is intended to strengthen the association and formalise the group's collaborative work with the Council.

Espai Dones encourages all of the women residing in Formentera to come share this associative space. The contact number is 697.941.016, or the association can also be reached by e-mail: espaidonesformentera@hotmail.com.