

Members of the island's small- and medium-sized business group (Pimef), Formentera Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Hotel Owners and assorted representatives of the local tourism sector and political parties gathered for a session of the Formentera Committee to Plan and Promote Tourism (COPT) — an encounter chaired by Consell de Formentera premiere and tourism chief Alejandra Ferrer.

As attendees took stock of summer 2020, overlap was evident in feedback from the island's tourism sector and from the Consell. After the encounter President Ferrer summarised the general sentiment around this year's tourist season as "short, but better than expected in May".

On the changing face of visitor habits during the pandemic, attendees pointed out drops public transport use and the increasingly frequent sight of private vehicles entering the island via the port. Hotels reported low occupancy while the reverse was true for homes and apartments, where private facilities allowed guests greater perceived safety amid the public health situation. The report-back was similarly rosy for local restaurants, whose outdoor spaces were apparently key to customers' sense of security.

Current events

Talk alighted on the current state of emergency as well, not to mention the state of play across Europe. Attendees also heard an account of the year's marketing campaigns. President Ferrer indicated that lockdown had found COPT members busily hammering out a promotional strategy, with some plans subsequently retooled for different markets and changing public health protocol — two factors that loomed large in the organisation of events and campaigns.

Economic reactivation and tourism 2021

Ferrer insisted that the winter ahead was a time to "roll up our sleeves and get to work" on the tourism and economic stimulus strategy, a document she said would take government involvement at the local, regional and national level. She asserted that the future strategy would "draw stock from islanders' experiences rescaling summer 2020 events and divvying them up to avoid crowding and respect public health protocol".

Ferrer highlighted plans next summer to promote Formentera as a ‘safe as possible’ destination, and said controls and screenings for national and international tourists, workers and residents were a key part of the public health conversation. With luck, testing alternatives will allow faster and more reliable antigen-based testing which, by summertime, can be workers in public-private sector partnerships. Additional discussion concerned other measures to enhance Formentera’s stability as a tourist destination.

Multiple encounters this November are aimed at ensuring the draft document is completed by the deadline at month’s end. A COPT gathering on the 30th will also serve as the opportunity to report on the tourist satisfaction barometer and updates from the island’s data observatory.

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Consell de Formentera