



Alejandra Ferrer, Ana Juan and Rafael Ramírez —the island’s president, vice-president/chief of the department of the elderly and vice-president/chief of social welfare, respectively— held a press conference this morning at the head offices of local government to describe the precautionary measures being taking with regard to the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus.

“The people of Formentera stand with all those affected by the virus”, said Ferrer, “particularly in the hardest hit areas, like certain regions of Spain and the entire country of Italy, whose ties with our island run so deep”.

She gave an overview of coronavirus developments from its appearance and subsequent spread in China to its arrival in the Balearic archipelago. While no case of the illness has yet been declared on Formentera, the local government will begin implementing, in the president’s words, “various cautionary measures, the goal being to safeguard those among us who are most vulnerable, namely, our seniors”.

For two weeks starting Friday 13 March, care for the elderly and individuals with disabilities at the Formentera Day Centre will be suspended. The measure is effective immediately for the next fourteen days of programming at the island’s senior centres.

Postponing programming

The decision to postpone was also extended to various other programmed events like the Tribute to Elderly Women [*Homenatge de la Dona Gran*], scheduled for Saturday 22 March, and the 18th Festa Intercultural on 29 March. The president indicated that the measures stemmed from recommendations issued by the Govern balear and Spanish health ministry and would be reviewed twice a month. According to Ferrer, not only is the administration “in contact with all the authorities, but daily meetings are additionally taking place between the cabinet team in order to update protocols”, which she acknowledged were subject to “continuous and sudden changes”.

Message of calm

President Ferrer encouraged islanders to keep calm, underscored the virus's innocuousness for most of the population and described the slate of measures as "geared toward getting us out of this situation and back to normal as soon as possible". "Panicking is useless", she stated, "What we need is for people to take individual responsibility in making sure we protect those who are most at-risk. What we need is responsibility, commitment and cooperation with regard to the recommended measures".

Clubs for the aged

Vice-president and consellera Juan met this morning with the directors of the island's seniors' clubs in order to explain the direct relation between the Formentera government's decision to suspend seniors' programming in La Savina, Sant Francesc, Es Cap, Sant Ferran and La Mola, and the desire to prevent outbreaks of infection among the island's most vulnerable inhabitants. Juan traced the decision to cancel the celebration of elderly women to the same logic. "The event will happen as soon as we can adequately guarantee the absence of risks to public health", said the consellera.

Day Centre

For his part, the social welfare chief highlighted a 4.00pm meeting this afternoon aimed at explaining to families of individuals at the Day Centre the motives behind the decision to close the facility starting Friday. According to Conseller Ramírez, "to the extent that it's possible, we're preparing a battery of measures to enable islanders who require it to receive at-home services like meal preparation".

As for the Festa Intercultural, Ramírez said a meeting had been scheduled for 8.00pm to make clear that the decision to postpone was about following established protocol aimed at reducing risk among vulnerable individuals by avoiding group activities.

Communications

Formentera will reinforce internal communications to provide personnel acting protocol and coronavirus details. All staff have been called to take part in a targeted training session Thursday 12 March, while another session is being put together specifically for those individuals who work with the public. Local police and firefighters are also being given information and specific acting protocols.

Schools, health professionals and sports groups have also been given the established acting protocol. A continuous back-and-forth between the island government and health authorities

ensures the protocols are constantly updated.

Information for visitors

The Consell de Formentera is also working to keep ferry companies appraised of the latest. Information —on preventing the coronavirus's spread, for instance, or advice for individuals who suspect they might be infected— will be made available in multiple languages.

General guidelines

The principal directives are as follows:

- If you are in good health, lead your life as you normally would (if still respecting recommendations aimed at stemming virus spread).
- If you suspect you might be infected, call 061, stay at home and avoid contact with others.
- Mobile Covid-19 care units will provide front-line medical service on Formentera from Thursday 12 March.
- Individuals presenting mild cases will be encouraged to stay at home while more serious cases will be sent to Can Misses or Son Espases depending on their symptoms.

For more **information** or to ask questions about coronavirus, the Govern balear has activated another help line — **900.10.18.63**— in addition to 061.

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Department of Communications

Consell de Formentera