

This week has been full of excitement and intense emotion. Formentera got its chance to begin Phase 1 of the process to ease out of confinement, a change that comes with the promise greater freedom, not least as it applies to visits—the first in 50 days—with family members and friends. The start of this phase means hard confinement—an imperative of the global pandemic—is through, but the time is not one for relaxing, because the public health crisis isn’t over: the disease still claims countless lives daily, and new transmissions are all but eradicated.

These days have been extremely trying. How we’ve yearned to get back—to our loved ones, to our customs, and even, to our daily routines. But if the new phase is cause for joy, it is certainly no reason to let down our guard. Otherwise, this step forward might be a future step backward in disguise.

Rollout of Phase 1 of confinement de-escalation brings with it an immensely significant vital change, and that is that social gatherings of up to 10 people are now permitted. Not only that, but small shops and restaurant terraces can receive customers again. The result is a return to life in society, and a small step towards economic reactivation. But the effort of confinement will have been meaningless if we get carried away by carelessness: now more than ever, at gatherings, your responsibility and sense of precaution in respecting the measures laid out by health authorities is crucial, for the risk of transmission hasn’t disappeared, and we can’t afford to put our healthcare system at risk. So our plea to you is this: keep protecting those most vulnerable. We’ve gone from a phase of control to one of responsibility, where appropriate handling of the liberties we regain is everyone’s business, both as individuals, and as members of society.

This week was exciting and intense for the Consell de Formentera, as well. Monday marked Formentera’s passage to Phase 1 of lockdown loosening amid the Covid-19 crisis, and we did it before the rest of Spain. In one fell swoop, we and three other islands in the Canaries became a proving ground that will help prepare the rest of the country as it implements the same changes in the weeks ahead. In Spain and abroad, the spotlights are on us, and our island is the mirror reflecting the future that awaits the other Spanish territories.

To ensure the correct progression through each step in the process, de-escalation must happen

respecting the particularities of each place, and empowering regional and local authorities with greater decision-making abilities, since it will be up to each territory to implement and monitor the public health, hygiene and social measures key to attaining our objectives.

De-escalation has only just begun. There’s a long road ahead, and we’ll be walking it together as we move slowly from this initial and local lockdown lifting to, health situation permitting, the phases that follow.

We must keep in mind that Formentera may be among the first islands to ease into post-confinement, but this isn’t a competition. In order to move forward and reopen the island to visitors, first, from neighbouring islands, next, from the rest of Spain, and finally, we hope, from the world at large, the rest of the country must rise to its feet, and start down this same path.

Our efforts have been colossal, and I won’t ever tire of voicing my admiration in that respect. But the work must continue, and we must do it as one: conscientiously, responsibly, carefully and with common sense. And, with these as our foundations, I am confident the steps forward will only continue.

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President, Consell de Formentera

9 May 2020
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