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VILLAFRÍA AIRPORT

The new Burgos commercial airport will not be operational until May or June, 2008. This means postponing again the opening of this €45 million facility. The culprit this time might be two high-voltage lines that will have to be buried as they might hamper air traffic.

The Minister for Transport and Public Works, Magdalena Álvarez, came to Burgos escorted by senior officials within her Department to supervise on the ground how construction work was progressing at Villafría. She refused to take questions from reporters on this facility or any other transport facilities currently under construction such as the Northern Ring Road.

The truth is that the construction of the access roads off Logroño National Road (n-120) as well as the runway and the terminal building might be at its final stage, with some finishing touches being added to runway lighting, signs and marking devices.

Total investment in the air transport facility has come to €45 million, a figure that can be broken down into the following items: 8.75m will go to the passenger facility, the new landing field will require 32.8m and access roads total 3m. In the new terminal building there will be a 2,000 square metre concourse for arrivals and departures with 4 check-in desks available, together with a support 1,900 square metre centre housing cargo and freight services, the power plant and emergency services.

The landing field will have a 2,100 metres long runway and two taxiways connecting it to the aircraft parking area.

BURGOS DIVORCE FIGURES

Most petitions for divorce in Burgos are initiated by married couples, whether church or civil marriages, whose marital life span averages 20 years, are well into their 40s and their grownup children take good care of themselves.

However, the trend is being reversed and marriage breakdowns are on the way down, slightly. Fresh data published by the Central Statistics Office for the year 2005 confirms a 2.2% drop on 2006, the exact figures recorded being 648 divorces, 105 separations and only one annulment.

Although recent divorce law has not triggered a sudden increase in splitups, it has, as it was most feared, made divorce take precedence over separation as the legal remedy out of the emotional upheaval. 84% of all dead marriages have opted for divorce, a 41% increase on 2005. IN contrast, only 103 petitioners chose separation, a slide that is attributed to this legal remedy ceasing to be a mandatory procedural step under the Divorce and Separation Reform Act, 2005.

Senior members from the National Family Law Solicitors' Association argue that, *"if given the choice, petitioners want a speedier conclusion which is facilitated by the so-called 'fast-track divorce'. It is only petitioners who have religious scruples about divorcing who stick to the halfway stopover, that is, separation"*.

"Although all in all the reform is satisfactory, we miss some clear guidelines in the Act regarding the use of the family home. We advocate some provisions so that both spouses may be entitled to live in it".

Much water has gone under the bridge since 1981, a year in which the Divorce Act made it legal to terminate a marriage through divorce proceedings. Since then divorce patterns have changed significantly. Now petitioners average 40 to 50 years of age. Women are beginning to take the initiative and start divorce proceedings, and they do so at an earlier age. They do not shy away from taking the step as they used to because of their increasing financial independence.

As to qualifying periods, at present a divorce can go through within six months, whether it is by mutual agreement or enforced by a court order, even if it involved a ruling on an appeal. Only 22 proceedings of those 753 recorded by the Central Statistics Office for 2006 took longer than a year to be resolved.

A new trial court only hearing family law and legal incapacity cases will be up and running by December 28. This is expected to speed

up ruling as well as bringing into line standards and criteria in relation to type of evidence that can be produced and grounds for expeditious court orders.