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In the first half of the year the Port of Barcelona consolidates its 2017 quantum leap

The increase in container traffic, motorways of the sea and liquid bulk is behind the Port's activity high in the first 6 months

In terms of total traffic the first half of 2018 has been the best ever in the Port's history and consolidated the quantum leap that the Catalan port made in 2017 when it became the fastest growing European port. In the first half of the year, the Port channelled 33.8 million tonnes of goods, up 17.8% year on year.

This result is primarily due to the increase in three types of cargo: containers (+18%), liquid bulk (+17.3%) and freight transported on motorways of the sea (+10.3%). The Port of Barcelona President, Mercè Conesa, and General Manager José Alberto Carbonell announced the results at a press conference.

Between January and June, container traffic at the Port of Barcelona exceeded 1.6 million TEU (a TEU is equivalent to one 20-foot container), which is an increase of 18%. The biggest growth (42%) was in transshipment containers (which are unloaded from one ship to be reloaded onto another for final shipment). Foreign trade continues to move forward at a good pace: container exports rose by 7.5% to 366,000 TEU and imports increased by 3.3%, standing at 285,474 TEU.

By markets, the countries that had most interactions with the Port of Barcelona are Algeria (+57%), the US (+13%), Turkey (+6.6%), India (+9%), Mexico (+12%), Vietnam (+34%) and Brazil (+14%). "Companies around us are increasingly seeking to operate internationally. In addition, the Port of Barcelona gives them links to a wide range of markets, which makes them more able to compete on the global market," explained President Mercè Conesa.

In the first half of the year, the Port registered 7.8 million tonnes of liquid bulk, an increase of 17.3% on the first 6 months of last year. The strong performance of products such as gasoline (+35%), natural gas (+9%) and biofuels (+63%) has driven these results.

From the road to the maritime mode

Looking at Ro-Ro traffic (embarked by truck, platform or trailer) the Port of Barcelona channelled 211,000 intermodal transport units (UTI), an increase of 5.6%. This section includes goods transported to the Balearic and Canary Islands (up 3%) and freight travelling on the motorways of the sea (or short sea shipping - SSS), which grew by 10.6%. For the last twenty years the Port of Barcelona has been developing the motorways of the sea – mixed cargo and passenger lines that connect the Catalan capital to various destinations in Italy and North Africa. These services allow trucks to be diverted from the road to the maritime mode, which is more economically and environmentally efficient. Between January and June, the Port of Barcelona SSS lines resulted in 77,000 fewer trucks on the roads.



Vehicle traffic has bounced back after last year's downward trend. In the first 6 months of 2018, some 458,000 cars (+5%) travelled through the Catalan port, mainly for export and import. Exports to various international markets have grown in particular, with an increase of 8%. "This result shows a consolidation in the demand for new models made at Spanish car factories," said José Alberto Carbonell, General Manager of the Port of Barcelona.

More merchandise by train

Rail traffic in the Port had also grown significantly by June. In the first six months, some 125,000 TEUs arrived or left the Port of Barcelona by train, a 10% increase year on year. This puts the rail container share at 13%.

In addition, over 143,000 cars were transported by rail, an increase of 10.6%. Factoring this result in takes the rail share to 35%. In addition to rail services for export that connect the Port of Barcelona to the main factories in Spain, a direct connection was also launched between Kornwestheim (Germany) and the Catalan port last March.

With regard to passenger traffic, the Port of Barcelona received 1.78 million ferry and cruise passengers in the first half of the year (+13%). Passenger numbers on ferries between the Port and the Balearic Islands, Italy and North Africa were practically the same as the previous year. The number of cruise passengers went up by 20%, although the largest increase was in base port passengers (who start and end their journey in Barcelona), and it is this group that makes the greatest economic contribution to the city and its surroundings (+29%).

Economic results

In the first half of the year, the Port of Barcelona recorded a net turnover of € 86.6 million, up 7.3% year on year. Net profit of the first 6 months of the year was € 27.6 million, an increase of 26.6%. In terms of generating revenues, the operating cash flow for the first half was € 49.8 million, which is an increase of 11.7%.

The Port's capacity to generate its own revenues has enabled it to significantly reduce part of the long-term debt it has with the EIB. Having now paid back € 22.8 million, the Port of Barcelona debt stands at € 281.1 million.