

thebusiness|year



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A view of Barcelona's
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THE BUSINESS YEAR: BARCELONA SPECIAL REPORT

The Business Year is making its debut in the Spanish economy in 2020 with two publications, focusing on Barcelona and Spain at large. For these editions we partnered with AMEC, COTEC, and the Catalan Trade and Investment Agency and conducted more than 300 interviews in the most important sectors that make up the economy. The editions focus on a range of topics, including investment opportunities across the nation, newly emerging industries such as technology and innovation, as well as the unique political circumstances.

Spain in general, and Barcelona in particular, have a rich recent history that is crucial in our understanding of its business today. Barcelona's economy, in particular, has been growing in spite of the pressures of its political limbo. A notable event that called into question its economic stability was the October 2017 independence referendum held by the Catalan regional government in spite of the central government's rejection of its legitimacy. Toward the end of 2019, this resulted in long sentences for nine Catalan leaders on sedition charges. Furthermore, the Spanish government has held four elections in the past four years; the most recent of which, in November 2019, once again resulted in a hung parliament.

In spite of this, and the hard-hitting 2007 financial crisis, Spain is the world's 13th-largest economy today, and the fifth-largest economy in the EU, with GDP of USD1.4 trillion. Spain is also the 15th most-attractive country for FDI, the 13th-largest issuer of FDI, and the 11th-largest exporter of commercial services. In the interviews we held, pushing companies to become more global in their markets was often cited as the best consequence of the financial crash. In particular, the trend toward expanding into Latin American

markets was prominent. Growing exports and supporting companies, particularly SMEs, to internationalize has propelled further growth in all its biggest industries.

This edition focuses on specific sectors that have been important in this evolution. First, the real estate and construction industry has made notable progress over recent years, effectively rising from the ashes. Second, Spain is leading the European transition to a green economy in line with the central government's ambitious plan to make its electricity sector reliant on renewable sources by 2050. This, coupled with Spain's climate, has made it a reference in terms of photovoltaic and wind energy.

Thirdly, Spain's world-renowned tourist sector continues to lead, breaking its own records on arrivals YoY. There is a conscious effort here to diversify tourism and transform Spain into a hub for MICE tourism. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the technology sector is consolidating efforts to digitalize the economy as a whole, successfully becoming a tool for the growth of all other sectors. New players in all the aforementioned sectors are disrupting and reshuffling the framework of business in Spain, breathing new life into the economy. Testament to this is the sheer number of start-ups being created across both Madrid and Barcelona.

This publication is unique in that it provides a holistic and multisectoral view of development at a point of much political uncertainty, all amidst notable efforts to become a leader in Industry 4.0 in the European bloc. With information straight from the mouths of leaders and decision makers across the economy, this is a comprehensive guide to investment throughout the diverse and industrially rich region of Catalonia. ✖

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TIMELINE

FEBRUARY 2019

The largest annual mobile event, Mobile World Congress, is held in Fira de Barcelona for the 13th consecutive year, reaching an **economic impact of EUR473 million**.



APRIL 2019

Snap national elections are held in an attempt to stabilize Spain's political scene following the 2018 vote of no confidence that ousted the conservative PP party. The socialist party PSOE, led by Pedro Sanchez, wins the election, though still falling short of a majority.



DECEMBER 2019

Barcelona prepares to implement its low emissions zone from January 2020, **covering 95sqkm with the promise of easing pollution and traffic in the region's central city**.



OCTOBER 2019

The Supreme Court sentences **nine out of the 12 Catalan leaders being tried for sedition**. With sentences ranging from eight to 13 years, this result prompts widespread protests across the region and growing demands for independence.

JANUARY 2020

The head of Catalonia's regional government, **Quim Torra**, announces plans to hold early elections at some point in 2020 in order to stabilize the government following growing rifts between the governing coalition and smaller independence parties.



FEBRUARY 2020

The GSMA, the organizer behind the annual Mobile World Congress event, **announces its cancellation of the tech fair** over COVID-19 concerns, a huge blow to the industry.



MARCH 2020

As the number of confirmed **COVID-19 cases surpasses 18,700**, the Catalan government pledges to provide EUR80 million to fight it. At the same time, FC Barcelona players agree to a 70% pay cut to ensure non-playing staff are supported.

FEBRUARY 2020

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announces plans to meet the head of the Catalan regional government, Quim Torra, to begin discussions on the Catalan question.

01

Diplomacy

GLOBAL
CITY

Catalonia's diplomacy model features a number of organizational bodies and initiatives that promote ties between the region and the rest of the world. This chapter is opened by Alfred Bosch i Pascual, the former regional Minister of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations, and Transparency, who spoke to us about the ministry's goals, strategies, and desired outcomes.

The chapter also features interviews with other notable diplomatic figures, including Laura Foraster i Lloret from the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (Diplocat), Anwar Zibaoui from the Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce (ASCAME), and Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau, providing a good roundup of the region's wide-reaching diplomatic efforts.

According to Foraster i Lloret, citizens have an equally important role to play as diplomats. For example, one of Diplocat's main plans is to encourage citizens to create relationships of trust between citizens of Catalonia and the rest of the world. The drive is particularly interesting because Catalonia is not an independent state, which means it lacks both the power and resources that independent states enjoy. Despite that, the region's effort to brand itself through a num-

ber of regional government agencies and private organizations is nothing short of impressive. This is further helped by the fact that both the public and private sectors are in sync and creating an identity for themselves that is both unique and different from the rest of Spain.

One aspect of this identity is maintaining Barcelona's status as a global city. This explains the Ministry of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations, and Transparency's presence in 12 countries, where it works to shape public perception of Catalonia and encourage trade and collaboration. Such delegations mostly exist in Europe, with an important focus on Brussels to cultivate representation within the EU. It must be noted that these diplomatic missions are not without their challenges. For example, due to the recent political situation, the Catalanian government's plans to send new delegations to Tunisia, Argentina, and Mexico were put under a cautionary suspension by Spain's courts.

Even still, efforts to promote Barcelona's identity as a global city continue. Bosch i Pascual, for instance, was a strong promoter of the city on a global scale as "a dynamic and talented society that is peace-loving, hardworking, and freedom-loving." ✖

The Military Government
of Barcelona building in
Portal de la Paz square





THE CITY *with all the strings*

Alfred Bosch i Pascual
FORMER MINISTER OF FOREIGN
ACTION, INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS,
AND TRANSPARENCY

Barcelona has long played a leading role in ensuring Mediterranean integration continues in a progressive and prosperous fashion.

What were your main responsibilities as the Minister of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations, and Transparency?

We are best known for being responsible for any foreign action involving Catalonia. It is a competitive global world that we inhabit, and we cannot afford to lose ground. Apart from that, we have other responsibilities such as institutional relations, which include bilateral relations with the Spanish government, which is within my scope. The last part is what we call participation and transparency, which is telling people what we do, how we run our operations, and how we spend our money in an open and transparent way with open data and whatever else is needed. Within the sphere of international relations, there is also aid and cooperation with countries in development, where we sustain financing and promote a number of development projects. There is another aspect regarding the UN's 2030 Agenda, which is not only about sustainability, but also human sustainability in general. Topics such as poverty, gender inequality, and the urban agenda comprise a significant amount of work. We have a fair number of functions, though most people identify us with international relations first.

How do you ensure Catalonia is represented within the EU?

Regarding the EU, we do several activities. We carry out all of the functions associated with the fields where we have exclusive powers recognized legally within Spain. We have exclusivity when it comes to education, healthcare, and general social welfare. That includes agriculture and fishing. There are a number of fields in which the Catalan government has fully devolved powers. There are other things, among which are international relations, which have to be coordinated with the Spanish government; however, we do

need to be in the EU whenever an agricultural deal is made, for example, since we have exclusive powers. The same goes for education and many other social aspects. That is why we have an office and a delegation in Brussels. It takes care of many things, though the important point is that it deals with all these issues that are dealt with in the European Commission or other European institutions. Otherwise, whatever deals Spain conducts with the EU would not respond to our administrative or economic reality. Apart from that, we have institutional participation in things like the Committee of Regions, an official European institution in which we are also officially represented. Another example is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which, apart from agricultural assistance, is our most important source of funding from the EU. That has also been devolved. The partner for receiving, administering, and deciding how those funds are allocated is the Catalan government. An added factor is that we have historically and traditionally been very central in leading Euro-Mediterranean relations. There was the first Euro-Mediterranean conference almost 25 years ago, and in 2020 we are celebrating an important anniversary. The Union for the Mediterranean, an EU organization, is headquartered in Barcelona. We have traditionally been active in all kinds of networking on both shores of the Mediterranean. The most important city network in the Mediterranean, Med Cities, is also headquartered in Barcelona and is helped by many administrations. In this regard, we still have a strong will and determination to act as a Mediterranean hub in leading a more social and sustainable Mediterranean region, apart from being an economically efficient base.

Several new delegations are being opened abroad. What is the status of those, and which markets are you looking to expand the Catalan influence into?

We currently have 15 delegations, mostly in Europe, but we are also present in the US, Mexico, Argentina, and Tunisia. We want to be present on the five continents and broaden our vision of international relations. ✕

BIO

Alfred Bosch i Pascual is the former Minister for Foreign Action, Institutional Relations, and Transparency of Catalonia. Bosch holds a BA in history from the UAB and a PhD on Nelson Mandela and the civil rights movement in South Africa. He was the leader of the ERC on the Barcelona City Council from 2015-2018 and of the ERC's parliamentary group in the Spanish Congress from 2011-2014. He has been a university professor in Spain and abroad in addition to working as an international correspondent in 20 different countries. He was involved in the organization of the Olympic Games of Barcelona in 1992.

INCLUSIVE *growth in action*



Mayor Ada Colau aims to position Barcelona as an international example by developing strategic economic sectors that generate quality occupation and growth, and addressing inequalities and climate change.

Ada Colau
MAYOR OF BARCELONA

Building more than 4,500 public housing buildings

National government must enable municipalities to regulate rental prices and end abusive increases

Barcelona's major challenge is maximizing space and increasing access to decent housing. How is the 2016-2025 Right to Housing Plan being implemented to tackle this problem?

In Barcelona, the real estate crisis meant that we suffered a delay in terms of public housing policy. In similar cities, public housing accounts for 15-30% of the total housing, but in Barcelona, it was only 1.5%. To right this, we used the municipal machinery and placed housing as a central objective of our government. We are building more than 4,500 public homes, buying back buildings, and introducing new types of sustainable housing; however, more structural measures are needed to deal with the rent bubble. The national government must enable municipalities to regulate rental prices and end abusive increases. With the new government, this will be possible. As a municipality, we have approved a new measure that has created structural change: for some time, any new housing development in the city must make 30% of the housing built affordable. We have also fined those who have empty housing and use it solely for tourists.

What is the strategic plan to ensure that Barcelona's entire metropolitan area benefits from the city's wealth?

There is no point in talking about Barcelona without considering the entire metropolitan area. We must overcome center and periphery debates to deepen the analysis and better plan the entire metropolitan area. Regulating tourism in Barcelona is of no use if we do not carry out similar reforms in all the surrounding cities. The challenge of affordable housing can only be answered from a metropolitan view. The generation of wealth must be distributed throughout the metropolitan territory. Therefore, it is important to move toward greater metropolitan governance and generate dynamics of shared sustainable growth. The commitment to an economy based on innovation, knowledge, and sustainability requires metropolitan development plans. The Besós Plan is one such type of plan and is a commitment to generate an economic eco-district of the municipalities that lie east of Barcelona along the Besós river. Our development plan for

the entire coastline is another such plan, ensuring greater capacity of our port and free zone.

Barcelona has gained much traction recently as an international hub for start-ups and innovation. How are you working to create an ecosystem that can continue fostering innovation and attracting investment?

When I took office, the 22@ district, where we have opted for an economy based on technology and digitalization, was experiencing slow growth. We are in a moment of greater growth in this area, with more space offerings and support for start-ups. Most companies that come to Barcelona never want to leave because they find an active economic and technological ecosystem that helps them grow. This balance between quality of life, culture, services, and economy has allowed Barcelona to position itself as an exemplary city.

What are some of your main objectives for 2020?

We have to position Barcelona as an international example while attracting strategic economic sectors that generate quality occupation and economic growth, and addressing inequalities and climate change. We must move toward a new green deal, in which we work hand in hand with administrations, companies, and citizens on economic and social transformation. We need to strengthen strategic sectors, advance in energy rehabilitation, decarbonize transport and energy, and support an economy committed to green sectors. Recently, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology designated the MOBILus consortium, led by Barcelona City Council, as a center for R&D in urban mobility at a European level. This represents an economic opportunity that will mobilize EUR1.2 billion to find sustainable solutions to mobility. Finally, we will continue to place the issue of housing at the center of our political agenda, which is essential in the fight against inequality. Our fight will be dependent on the newly created Metropolitan Housing Operator and other initiatives for developers and companies. Speculation is not welcome in Barcelona, but good collaborative ideas that can increase affordable housing are. ✖

BIO

Ana Colau is the current Mayor of Barcelona, a position to which she was elected in 2015, becoming the first woman to hold the office. She is also a founding member of the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages, set up in 2009 in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

planning DONE RIGHT

Barcelona City Hall is assembling all the resources to improve the city's tourism services and at the same time safeguard the rights of citizens.



Jaume Collboni Cuadrado
FIRST DEPUTY MAYOR,
BARCELONA CITY HALL

Barcelona is a consolidated tourism destination. Additionally, the city is gaining traction as a MICE destination. How important is it for the city to consolidate the tourism sector?

For Barcelona, tourism is a crucial source of income. In relation to MICE tourism, we are currently the number-one city in the world in terms of number of delegates at international congresses, and it is, therefore, a priority for us to continue strengthening this sector. With this vision, we are dedicating ourselves to improving some key aspects, such as our cultural offerings. We are adopting a sustainable mobility system and setting up the largest low-emission area in Southern Europe. We are also working on crime prevention by increasing the number of police officers. All these changes have a direct impact on improving the quality of life, both for citizens and visitors.

In an effort to foster local commerce, Barcelona is renovating some of its markets. Why is it important for the economy to work on these emblematic markets?

We are currently promoting a constant modernization of Barcelona's neighborhood markets, because we understand that these local markets contribute to improved social cohesion. Such spaces are fundamental to our urban model and for the identity of Barcelona. Therefore, in 2019, we made improvements in almost 30 markets. In addition, we recently completed the renovation of the Sant Antoni and Bon Pastor markets. We will continue carrying out actions along these lines.

The Barcelona City Hall is endorsing the eighth edition of the Conciliation and Time Prize, known as Premi Conciliació i Temps. What is the aim of this initiative?

This award aims to recognize, promote, and disseminate the work of companies committed to achieving a better work-family-life balance for employees. These are companies that implement measures to make it easier for employees to better organize themselves, while simultaneously improving the internal organization of the company. Promoting work-life balance is one of our top pri-

orities. For example, we are interested in attracting business investments that create quality jobs in the technology and digital sectors, as they are better paid and more flexible. Barcelona is currently ranked eighth globally in terms of work-life balance, according to the Cities for the Best Work-Life Balance 2019. We are the best-ranked city in southern Europe, substantially ahead of cities around the world such as Paris, Vancouver, London, Toronto, Sydney, and Milan. This proves, once again, that we are one of the best cities in the world in terms of quality of life.

The Generalitat agreed that the Barcelona City Hall would collect part of the tourism tax. How will this work in practical terms?

We are a city of less than 2 million inhabitants, and yet, throughout the year, we receive more than 13 million tourists. The dimension of tourist activity in Barcelona forces us to constantly improve all of our tools in order to manage tourism properly. For this reason, we have reached an agreement with Catalonia's regional government that the Barcelona City Council will apply a surcharge to each tourist for the amount of days one stays in the city. The tax will be a maximum of EUR4, and it may vary depending on each specific neighborhood. All these extra resources will then be used to improve the city's tourism services and to offset the effects of tourism on the city.

What are the main achievements that you would like to see accomplished in Barcelona during your time in office? Barcelona is, and has historically been, one of the leading cities in terms of quality of life, talent, innovation, digital economy, and entrepreneurship. However, in the past few years, it has lost its reputation; therefore, we need to recover it as soon as possible. We aim to open up Barcelona to new public and private investments, ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth. I want to do all this while making sure the city guarantees all the social rights of its citizens, such as access to housing. ✕

Renovation of local markets will create more cohesive neighborhoods and stimulate the local economy

Receives more than 13 million tourists annually

BIO

Jaume Collboni Cuadrado is currently the deputy president of the municipal socialist group and the First Deputy Mayor for economy, labor, competitiveness, and finance. Prior to that, he was the deputy mayor for business, culture, and innovation and the vice president of social and economic development for the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. Moreover, between 2010 and 2014, he worked as a deputy at the Parliament of Catalonia. He also held managing roles at the national level at UGT, and acted as a member of the Economic and Social Council of Spain. A lawyer by profession, he got his degree from the University of Barcelona.

GUEST SPEAKER



STRONGER *together*

Under Tijjani Muhammad-Bande's leadership, the UN is adopting measures to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a particular focus on poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, and climate change.

BIO

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande is the President of United Nations General Assembly. He earned a bachelor of science Ahmadu Bello University, a master of arts from Boston University, and a PhD in political science from the University of Toronto. As a permanent representative, he worked with colleagues from all regions of the world in pursuit of common objectives. He served as vice president of the assembly's 71st session and was active in several other forums, including as chair of the special committee on peacekeeping operations and member of the advisory board of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande
PRESIDENT,
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

The UN will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2020. What are the primary goals of the General Assembly?

As we look forward to the 75th anniversary of the UN's founding, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that confront us, as well as the opportunity for the UN as a multilateral institution to highlight its key role in tackling complex global problems. As president of the 74th session, I will focus on promoting peace and security, with a special emphasis on conflict prevention. Strengthening global action to tackle climate change is integral for the effective implementation of the SDGs that will naturally receive my attention. I shall also give high priority to inclusion, human rights, and the empowerment of youth and women. Above all, my presidency will adopt measures to strengthen partnerships for the purpose of advancing the achievement of the SDGs, in general, and for poverty eradication, zero hunger, and quality education, in particular.

The UN will hold its 'biggest-ever global conversation' on the future of the planet to address issues such as climate change. What is the strategic plan in terms of addressing the outcomes of this conversation?

The General Assembly is the space for dialogue and consensus building. The Biodiversity Summit, also known as the Nature Summit, is an important opportunity and milestone to highlight the planetary emergency and to accelerate action for people and the planet. According to the 2019 World Risk Report, biodiversity loss and other climate-related factors are among the top-10 global risks for 2019. And 10 of the 21 targets of the SDGs set to mature in 2020 are related to biodiversity, so 2020 will be a critical moment for environmental decision making. The global biodiversity framework for post-2020 is expected to strengthen the linkages between and among diverse initiatives, notably, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and other relevant processes adopted under the biodiversity-related conventions. The Biodiversity Summit will build on the political momentum from the climate and SDG summits in New York in September 2019. As president, I will call on world leaders to set ambitious commitments for nature and find robust nature-based solutions. It is my hope

“The impact of new technologies has a security dimension that must be seriously considered to mitigate risks and prevent conflicts.”

that this will make nature and climate change mainstream in all key political, economic, cultural, and social decisions, and more so as environmental pollution and climate change pose grave threats to humanity as a whole and to agriculture, food, and economic security. I hope that world leaders will send the strongest signal at the summit on the need to reverse the loss of biodiversity and to protect and restore nature by 2030.

During the 74th session of the General Assembly, Spain recommitted to tackling security within the UN's framework to face growing global security concerns including cybersecurity, nuclear non-proliferation, and terrorism. What is the role of collaboration and legislation in addressing these threats?

When it comes to global security threats, it is essential to have dialogue and build agreements based on consensus. Collaboration between countries is crucial for a successful fight against security threats. The threat of a nuclear war still exists and cannot be ignored. Any use of nuclear weapons would be a humanitarian and ecological catastrophe and cause irreparable damage to communities and livelihoods. Nuclear disarmament is, therefore, one of the UN's top priorities. When it comes to terrorism, what affects one country affects all. There is a need for all states to adopt and stringently implement counter-terrorism laws at a national level. Furthermore, implementation should not end at countering terrorism, but should place high emphasis on prevention. The impact of new technologies has a security dimension that must be seriously considered to mitigate risks and prevent conflicts. I have in mind the issue of cybersecurity. “Do no harm” should be the first and foremost principle governing the internet. To make it a reality, all states and stakeholders in the digital world must refrain from any malicious activity contrary to international law. ✖

bound by FRIENDSHIP

As southern European states and close partners in the EU, Cyprus and Spain are tackling common challenges such as rising sea pollution, climate change, and growing migratory flows.

Nikos Christodoulides
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS



Diplomatic relations between Cyprus and Spain were established in 1967. How do you evaluate relations between the two nations today?

In 2018, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first exchange of ambassadors between Cyprus and Spain. We have come a long way since then. The two countries are bound by traditional friendship, as well as European and Mediterranean solidarity. We share the same values of democracy, rule of law, freedom, and respect for human rights, and cooperate within the EU and in international fora. As southern European states and close partners in the EU, we share the same goals and aspirations. At the same time, we are faced with the same special challenges, such as increased levels of sea pollution, climate change, and growing migratory flows, to name a few. This makes our cooperation all the more meaningful, in terms of not only addressing challenges within the EU, but also to reach collective solutions with our neighbors in the Middle East and North Africa. I note with satisfaction that our bilateral cooperation has developed to an excellent degree, in various fields, and I am confident we can continue to elevate our ties to even higher levels, especially in areas such as trade, investment, tourism, and education.

In 2018, almost 4 million tourists visited Cyprus, a 7.8% increase YoY. What is Cyprus doing to further boost tourism?

In 2018, tourist arrivals reached a new all-time record of 3.94 million. Given the importance we attach to the development of the tourism industry, we have created the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in order to facilitate the implementation of necessary horizontal policies,

the planning of tourism development, and the overall political supervision of the tourism sector. Over the past decade, Cyprus has established the sun and sea model, which can now serve as the backbone that allows us to go for the more detailed and special forms of tourism. In this respect, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism is in the process of finalizing the National Strategy for Tourism for the 2020-2030 period. The opening of new markets and upgrading of the quality of the Cyprus tourist product that could boost tourist arrivals to 5 million by 2030 are the main targets of the 10-year strategic plan. On the other hand, the private sector is collaborating with Greece, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan to sell joint holiday packages. In the short term, the primary target is to develop new markets, enhance Cyprus' presence abroad, and improve and upgrade Cyprus' tourist products by promoting specialized forms of tourism, such as cycling, gastronomy, sports, religious pilgrimage, health, and wellness. Making Cyprus an all-year round destination will create jobs and boost regions that may have been left behind, such as mountainous and rural areas. Cyprus is fully ready in terms of infrastructure to welcome more tourists, as it has renovated hotels, new marinas, and the integrated casino resort that will open in 2021.

In recent years, Cyprus has been ranked among the top destinations for attracting FDI, which totaled USD224 million in 2018. What makes Cyprus an attractive destination for FDI?

Following the recession of 2013, Cyprus surpassed international expectations with regards to its growth performance.

The successive credit rating upgrades since 2015 and the country's return to investment-grade rating in 2018 have attracted significant FDI flows from the US, Asia, Russia, and the Middle East. The sectors recording the highest FDI volumes are banking, shipping, retail, tourism, pharmaceuticals, and energy. The main reasons behind this are positive economic outlook, access to the EU, an attractive and transparent tax regime, low cost of doing business, strong business support services, and a highly skilled workforce. Last but not least, the government is committed to a continuous reform effort, modernizing legislation, introducing incentives, and simplifying licensing procedures for investors. ✕

BIO

Nikos Christodoulides is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus. He was a career diplomat between 1999 and 2013. During this time, he served as director of the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, spokesperson of the Cyprus Presidency, deputy chief of mission at the embassy of Cyprus in Greece, director of the office of the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and consul general at the high commission of the Republic of Cyprus in the UK. He holds a bachelor of arts in political science, economics, Byzantine and modern Greek studies from City University of New York and a postgraduate degree in political science from New York University.

FOCUS

Regional agencies

SOFT POWERS

BARCELONA, AND THE CATALAN REGION AS A WHOLE, USES ITS REGIONAL AGENCIES FOR A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING SOFT POWER, INNOVATION, AND INCREASING CULTURAL AWARENESS.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT independent organizations that are devoted to consolidating Barcelona's image as a global city across the Catalan region. These groups work both independently and collectively to coordinate their diplomatic efforts on national and regional levels, while also maximizing their reach. Given the political turmoil surrounding Catalonia's bid for independence, these diplomatic organizations have reinforced their commitment to differentiating the region from the rest of Spain. One such example is Diplocat, a public-private consortium that was first created in 2012 for the purpose of public diplomacy. The organization's history perfectly demonstrates its unique position as a body for diplomacy that does not function at a state level. Testament to this is the fact that the organization was shut down by the Spanish government in 2018, as a result of the latter invoking Article 155 to temporarily seize control of the region following the 2017 referendum held on Catalan independence.

Barcelona's recognition as an innovation capital comes from its major contributions to research in science and technology. In order to position itself as an important geopolitical player, it has shifted to channeling innovation and research into worldwide issues such as climate change. The resulting sense of shared responsibility evoked by these diplomatic actions frames Catalonia as a reliable partner in a global context. To emphasize this, Barcelona became the first city in the world to implement a science and technology diplomacy strategy. SiTech diploHub, for example, is a non-profit science and technology diplomacy hub in Barcelona, led by scientists, engineers, and public policy ex-

perts. By integrating efforts with start-ups, schools, and NGOs, they aim to open up dialogue among stakeholders, promote Barcelona as a think-tank, and create an international network of experts in the field. Operating on a global scene allows them to address and tackle pressing economic and social challenges, which require strong diplomatic solidarity.

In coordination with the city council's international activities, Barcelona's city diplomacy works to establish a democratic image that celebrates ethnic diversity, gender equality, and global justice. The diplomatic strategy to achieve these goals can be divided into two different areas. The first is partnering with global organizations to share knowledge and develop common policies, and the second focuses on reinforcing the region's role in international networks. Without relying on hard military force, Catalonia takes advantage of its rich culture to win the hearts and minds of everyone and boost the nation's image. This form of cultural diplomacy makes it increasingly hard to disentangle culture from diplomacy. Since the fall of Franco's regime, for example, "El Clásico" games between Real Madrid and Barcelona have represented much more than just a football game, but rather a conflict of interests and political history. It is no surprise that FC Barcelona is the crown jewel of the city's image both at home and abroad, reflecting both the region's identity and its desire to be seen independently of the rest of Spain. Hence, many in Catalonia display great loyalty and support for the Catalan movement both on and off the football pitch. Art and music in Catalonia, have also served in operating as soft power. Recently, an exhibition of Antoni Tàpies art was held in Barcelona. The artist's political work under Franco's reign evokes a consistent commitment to Catalonia's social justice, as a son of a Catalan nationalist. The Antoni Tàpies Foundation is one of many art and culture organizations in Barcelona to subtly address controversy on political autonomy. Nonetheless, the majority of these art movements struggle to overcome their financial dependency on Spanish governments, which limits their ability as a soft power. ✕





Mireia Ingla i Mas
MAYOR,
SANT CUGAT CITY COUNCIL



Mario Rubert
CITY PROMOTION DIRECTOR,
BARCELONA CITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC POLICY

Sant Cugat City Council and Barcelona City Council have introduced a host of initiatives to build the Catalonia brand and make the region a magnet for investment and talent.

In 2018, the Metropolitan Council of Barcelona approved a flat-rate tariff for public transportation for 18 municipalities, including Sant Cugat. What are your views on this measure?

MIREIA INGLA I MAS We are extremely pleased to be part of this program. This was a historic request from the people of Sant Cugat to be better connected to Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. In exchange for that flat-rate tariff, we contribute through a tax to the municipality of Barcelona that includes other services, like garbage collection. This tax is charged by the metropolitan council; thus, the Sant Cugat municipality does not participate in its collection.

What are the main responsibilities of your department?

MARIO RUBERT We basically do three things. We work to promote Barcelona abroad to attract foreign economic activity. We do more than 30 activities a year in concrete markets to promote the main economic sectors. Second, we make things easier for foreign workers coming to Barcelona through a 360-degree plan. We hold an annual fair called International Community Day where we offer public and private services to expats. In 2019, we organized more than

80 activities during this community day, had nearly 100 exhibitors, and attracted more than 5,000 people. Our third area of activities relates to supporting the Barcelona brand and its reputation, which we have worked hard to develop.

What other initiatives are in place to further integrate Sant Cugat in the metropolitan area of Barcelona?

MIIM Due to our geographical location, we have closer ties with Barcelona than the rest of the Vallès Occidental region, which we belong to. Our connection with Barcelona is evident because we have grown significantly over the last few years, in part because we have received many people coming from Barcelona. The quality of life and all the opportunities that Sant Cugat offers are attractive. The socioeconomic profile of our population is high, and the businesses located in Sant Cugat are of great relevance. The environment is diverse, and we have large companies located here. We are home to several scientific parks, including biotech and pharma companies like Boehringer Ingelheim, Roche, Ferrer, and Grifols.

What are the pillars on which Barcelona must build its brand and identity?

MR We have six main pillars: connection, initiative, soul, contrast, talent, and commitment. The city has been able to reinvent itself several times and is always looking for new challenges. Soul and contrast are two unique pillars. We have a strong tradition of welcoming people from abroad. Some 20 years ago, around 3-4% of the city's population was foreign, while today that number is around 18%. Our ability to integrate these people into the city is great compared to other cities. We have an equalizing social fabric. The work-life balance we are famous for is crucial for attracting talent. If we are able to generate an ecosystem that welcomes people and makes them feel comfortable, more companies will choose Barcelona over other cities.

Sant Cugat, Rubí, and Cerdanyola created the Catalonia Investment Triangle (CIT). What is the aim of this alliance?

MIIM We created CIT to strengthen collaboration with the neighboring towns of Rubí and Cerdanyola. Through CIT, we promote investment in the area by creating stronger alliances between municipalities. The CIT area has 11 business centers and 21 industrial areas. Seven of those industrial parks are in Sant Cugat. We have, for example, come up with a joint signaling system for geolocalization that can be used by all logistics companies in the area.

How can an equilibrium be achieved between international success and quality of life for locals?

MR This is the million-dollar question that every major urban area in the world must face. We must combine our efforts and recognize that solutions must be developed with a sense of common responsibility. For example, local governments are taking initiatives aimed at regulating rental price increases. We are also trying to increase the number of locals that can live and work in the city.

The Financial Times Group chose Catalonia as the best region to invest in for two years in a row. What are the reasons behind this?

MIIM Barcelona and Catalonia have the capacity to attract people with an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset. Catalonia has a great deal of talent thanks to schools and universities that foster innovation. We aim to further promote and support female entrepreneurs. We have many startups and coworking spaces, but we want to have an entrepreneurial center to facilitate the ease of doing business in Sant Cugat. ✖



Anwar Zibaoui
COORDINATOR,
ASSOCIATION OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN
CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE (ASCAME)

ASCAME represents more than 300 chambers of commerce and the private sector of the Mediterranean. How did it begin, and how has it evolved?

ASCAME has grown into an extensive network and has consolidated itself as an entity that represents the interests of the Mediterranean private sector. This consolidation is nothing more than a step forward in our mission, which every day has new challenges, considering the reality of the region. ASCAME is the voice of the economy and the private sector before major institutional and economic actors, helping the chambers to promote and participate in the key areas of Mediterranean development and offer a coordinated and synergistic response. Through ASCAME, the chambers influence and participate in the key issues that drive and condition development and growth, offering a perspective clearly focused on the Mediterranean region. ASCAME represents the business interests of the Mediterranean chambers and companies by working closely with policymakers, stakeholders, and opinion leaders. ASCAME's work as an interlocutor is recognized by relevant regional and international institutions through numerous collaboration agreements and joint participation in a large number of cooperation projects. ASCAME occupies a prominent place in the field of cooperation between chambers of commerce, cities, and companies in the Mediterranean region.



Laura Foraster i Lloret
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY COUNCIL OF
CATALONIA (DIPLOCAT)

How are you working to raise greater awareness of the benefits of Barcelona?

Promoting Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia to the world, with its many values and assets, is our way of attracting not only more foreign investment, but also more Erasmus students, tourists, and top researchers. Of course, we are not alone in this mission. We work closely with Catalonia Trade and Investment in the business field, with Institute Ramon Llull when we do cultural diplomacy, and with the Catalan Tourism Board in matters related to tourism. We look for partners so we can provide them with the tools of public diplomacy and our expertise in terms of international contacts, and in return, they can provide us expertise of their specific field.

What do you do to promote tourism?

Tourists flood to Barcelona and Catalonia, so little promotion needs to be done. Moreover, the Catalan Tourism Board does a wonderful job. We do try to go beyond Barcelona when we organize our programs. For example, we have been promoting tourism in cities such as Sitges, Manresa, and Arenys de Mar. We want to show the country as a whole, and this is important because more than 30% of our board comprises Catalan municipalities.

Vinton Cerf
VICE PRESIDENT &
CHIEF INTERNET EVANGELIST,
GOOGLE



Barcelona has been gaining much international recognition for being an innovation hub, particularly in terms of new technologies. What makes Barcelona unique in this regard?

I have many friends in Barcelona and Catalonia, and they share an entrepreneurial spirit driven by curiosity and a desire to explore new ideas. One of the earliest municipal internet services, TINET, was born in Tarragona, and technology start-ups have followed, driven in part by a highly educated workforce that is willing to take risks. I recall an innovative motion capture studio I visited that used real-time technology to capture the motion of actors and translate it into computer-generated images.

Since 2013, you have been on the Council of the Cybersecurity Board of Advisors. What ought to be the strategic plan to address cybersecurity?

We need to develop operating systems that are much more resistant to hacking. We need to introduce high-quality, two-factor authentication to protect users from hackers. We need to use cryptography to protect confidentiality. Social media is proving to be a powerful megaphone for voices that might not otherwise be heard, but this amplification is also being abused by actors with harmful intent. We need to establish cooperative agreements at the international level to apprehend people engaged in behaviors harmful to the general public and institutions.



Andreu Mas-Colell
EMERITUS PROFESSOR
OF ECONOMICS,
UNIVERSITAT POMPEU
FABRA & PRESIDENT,
BARCELONA INSTITUTE
OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY (BIST)

The Financial Times has voted Catalonia the best region for foreign investment for two consecutive years with a focus on R&D, technological innovation, and competent human talent. What conditions does this city offer that make it such a hub?

Investors find in Barcelona a metropolitan area where it is comparatively easy to recruit the required talent, be it groomed by excellent local universities and business schools or attracted directly from abroad. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city with an airport well-connected to the world is one of its main competitive edges. Good schools and a first-rate public health system also help. By now, the scientific and technological sectors have reached critical mass and are in a phase of sustained growth. At the same time, costs remain contained.

As former regional minister of universities, research, and information society, what are the strengths of the Catalan university system? And what should be incentivized or improved?

Catalan universities do a good job at training students and, therefore, at providing excellent professionals. This is a recurring observation of the multinationals that have invested, or plan to invest, in Catalonia. That said, we should strive to sharpen their effectiveness.



02

Economy

ALL-ROUND
PERFECTION

It is common knowledge that Catalonia has a tradition of industrial activity that dates back to the 19th century. It has kept its reputation since, building an economy that thrives on sectors such as retail, food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and health. Industry continues to dominate the region's economy, making up around 21% of GDP, with tourism, another major source of income in the region, accounting for about 12%. The success of these industries has been perpetuated in recent years by the region's commitment to innovation and Industry 4.0 technologies, ensuring both competitiveness and flexibility.

Catalonia's economy has become all the more diversified in recent years. A case in point is Barcelona's start-up scene, which continues to mature and stabilize by the day. According to Barcelona Activa's 2019 Start-up Ecosystem review, Barcelona is now home to approximately 1,197 start-ups. Some of the most successful start-ups that started their journey in Barcelona are Glovo, Wallapop, Reby, and Cooltra. Although SMEs make up the vast majority of the economy, well-established multinationals are also moving their southern European headquarters to the city. These developments not only bode well for the ecosystem, which is increasingly becoming rich and varied, but also for the city and region's future in terms of its transition to Industry 4.0.

The region's economic interests are well represented through organizations like Barcelona Activa, Barcelona Global, and Catalonia Trade and Investment, all working to highlight's Barcelona's

key sectors on the international stage and generate wealth outside of Barcelona.

A notable figure we interviewed for this chapter was Joan Canadell, the President of Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, who underscored the importance of collaboration between different private- and public-sector players to better distribute wealth across the region, rather than exclusively focusing on Barcelona. To this end, Barcelona Chamber of Commerce has designed a roadmap for the economy and joined forces with 13 other chambers to execute a strategic plan that includes promoting the internationalization of companies through exports and mergers and acquisitions. Equally important, the plan focuses on promoting Barcelona's potential as an innovative tech hub and pushing companies to prioritize corporate social responsibility.

The biggest challenge for businesses and the economy as a whole is attracting and retaining the right talent—a resource in huge demand not only in Catalonia but worldwide. To counter this challenge, Barcelona Activa is bridging the skills gap through a number of projects including LIDERA for women and STEAM, which works to boost vocations through educational programs for children. Talking to TBY, Barcelona Activa's CEO, Felix Ortega, noted that all of the company's programs have two missions, one of which is promoting a culture of inclusion and innovation. Rest assured, initiatives of organizations like Barcelona Activa will go a long way in helping Barcelona maintain its competitive edge for decades to come. ✖

INTERVIEW

can't stop WON'T STOP

Joan Romero
CEO,
CATALONIA TRADE & INVESTMENT
(ACCIÓ)



Smart and nimble responses to the 2007 financial crisis have helped make Catalonia the number-one region in southern Europe for investment.

Working on cluster
policies for

26
years

How has the agency evolved since its creation?

ACCIÓ is the Catalan government agency in charge of FDI promotion. It helps Catalan companies internationalize and innovate, working from both its headquarters in Barcelona and the 40 offices around the world that collectively cover 115 markets. It is a dynamic organization that was created in 1985 and has evolved significantly since then, always trying to adapt to the needs of Catalan industry. The agency opened its first international offices in Tokyo and New York 30 years ago, and the office network has handled more than 20,000 company projects to date. The agency also works actively on promoting clusters; in fact, Catalonia was a pioneering region internationally when it began to put public promotion policies for clusters into practice a quarter century ago.

What have been some of ACCIÓ's recent projects?

As an agency, we have traditionally been firmly committed to internationalizing Catalan companies. In fact, for the last eight years Catalonia has been consistently breaking records in terms of exports. For example, we are working above all to minimize internationalization barriers via a specific team that helps SMEs export to the UK after Brexit or the US after its new agro-tariffs. But now is the time for innovation. Today, we have a clear strategy focused on digitalization and new ways to innovate both locally and worldwide with multiple cooperative programs in other regions including Israel, South Korea, Chile, Germany, France, Scotland, and more. In 2020, we have decided to go even further and have launched an initiative called Catalonia Exponential, through which we help the more disruptive companies contrast their projects in different international innovative environments, such as Silicon Valley.

Where is the urgency for innovation coming from?

The 2007 crisis was a crucial point for everyone.

It forced our companies to find their way in the international market. Furthermore, we are now facing on-going revolutions, like Industry 4.0, which involves challenges that we must face very differently to how we have in the past. We used to have many constants with only one value that was changing. Now, changes come from many directions, from consumers, the process, technology, the materials, and more. It is a huge revolution that evolves on a day-to-day basis, and imminent changes are harder to predict. If a company wants to continue exporting, it has to incorporate new technologies into its processes, products, and business models. In the automotive sector, for example, if we move toward electric vehicles, there will be a lot of companies producing parts for petrol-powered cars with no market. They need to change and take into consideration the new products they should be developing for a broader sector.

How important is FDI for Catalonia?

It is crucial for the economy: Catalonia has attracted EUR23 billion over the last five years, 45% more than the previous five-year period. We have 8,600 multinational companies that are the motor of our economy and that work with many local companies. We try to have as much foreign investment as possible, such as in R&D, where Barcelona and Catalonia are highly competitive. In this sense, our offices and strategy here are mainly focused on attracting technological projects, R&D centers, and industrial investments (both greenfield and reinvestments) through tailor-made projects. Our international offices work to get Catalonia on the shortlists of these projects. It is worth mentioning that the Financial Times Group recognized Catalonia as southern Europe's top region for investment in 2018-2019. It also gave an award to Catalonia for having the best FDI attraction strategy. ✕

BIO

Joan Romero holds a degree in economics from the University of Barcelona, a master's in operations management, and a DAF diploma in operations and innovation, both from ESADE. He taught Spanish and world economics as a professor at the University of Barcelona. He has participated in the preparation of several public policy plans: the Catalan Agreement on Industry; several research and innovation plans of Catalonia; the Catalan Agreement on Research and Innovation; and different CIDEM and ACCIÓ strategic plans. He has also conducted annual research and innovation reports on Catalonia as well as the annual innovation barometer.



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