

## Port authority moves forward start date for container terminal

*New terminal to be ready 1 year earlier but with higher debts*

**EVA GARCIA PAGÁN**

Barcelona's Port Authority has decided to move forward the construction date of the third large international terminal for shipping containers at Barcelona port so that it can begin operation one year before the originally established date. The stated objective of the move is to avoid losing a competitive edge to other ports such as the one in Valencia. Starting construction earlier will cause the amount of debt to increase from an original estimate of 275 million euros to 342 million euros.

Port Authority president Joaquim Coello explained that the higher debt level will not pose any additional risk, since the Port Authority has enough assets to back up an increased debt. He said the Authority will also try to secure the necessary loans through the European Investment Bank (EIB).

According to Coello, the highest debt level will occur in 2008, "but it will be well below 100 million euros by 2012". On 31 March the board of directors approved plans for the new international container terminal which would cost 69.5 million euros and announced a contest for construction proposals which would begin taking bids at the end of the year.

The new terminal will occupy 60 hectares of the dock area to be known as *Moll Prat*, which is yet to be built. The Port Authority will complete these new facilities with a new terminal for short-sea shipping



Estimated debt for the terminal project has risen substantially / GABRIEL MASSANA

vessels that transport containers but which do not need cranes for loading and unloading since trucks can access them directly.

Short sea shipping is widely used in Europe. In the 1990s it was the only shipping mode that grew just as quickly as road transport. It also considered to be more sustainable than other systems because it cuts

down on vehicular traffic. It also meets the objectives of the European Transport Policy. This system also allows for easy transfer to railway transport as an alternative to road transport. Coello came out very much in favour of promoting the use of railway transport for shipping merchandise from the port in all cases where it was feasible.

## Study shows that laser treatment may not be a cure for snoring

**RICHARD MCCRANN**

A study by the sleep unit at Barcelona's Hospital Clinic questions the results of laser surgery to treat the problem of snoring. This technique is used extensively at present, but the results of a study say it cannot guarantee that it is more effective than treatment using a placebo. In Spain it is estimated that 35% of adults are regular snorers, and over the past 10 years laser surgery has been seen as an effective cure for this problem. Treatment involves removing part of the uvula and some of the palate in the throat using a laser treatment.

The head of the hospital's lung centre, Eugenio Ballester has published a study on snoring in the "European Respiratory Journal". He said that they had studied 25 cases of people between the age of 30 and 60 and were split into two groups.

12 of the patients were given underwerent placebo treatment which simulated the operation, while the

remainder had the laser operation. After three months all the patients were tested and there snoring recorded over four days. Some of the patients had also been tested before the treatment, to assess the level of their snoring problem. Doctor Ballester concluded after a valuation of the patients that there no difference between their snoring levels. According to Ballester the results of this study are different to other international work into snoring "because they have always used variable objectives when they used this technique."

The study by the hospital shows that if one does not take into account the thoughts of the patient who snores or the person who sleeps in the same bedroom as the patient, and one evaluates objectively then the result is objective and very distinct. For the doctors who have participated in this work, laser surgery should only be carried out in specific cases when the snoring becomes a

social problem and should not be used for general cases as is happening at the moment. The doctors have proposed that they will do further study in more centres with a larger number of patients to confirm these results.

Snoring occurs when there is an obstruction to the free flow of air through the passages at the back of the mouth and nose. 45% of normal adults snore sometimes and 25% are habitual snorers. The problem is more frequent in males and overweight persons. Often snoring can be brought about by poor muscle tone in the tongue and throat. When muscles are relaxed, either from alcohol or drugs, the tongue falls backwards into the airway or the throat muscles draw in from the sides into the airway. Also, children with large tonsils and adenoids often snore. A long palate narrows the opening from the nose into the throat and long uvula makes matters worse.



Ojos de Brujo heads Friday's line-up, Cheikh Lô joins Junquera on Saturday / ARCHIVE

## Kepa Junquera to headline at this year's Pyrene festival

**REBECCA WARDEN**

Pyrene 2004, billed by its organisers as the festival of the Pyrenees, hopes to attract 10,000 people to this year's event in la Seu d'Urgell on 9-11 July. Since the first edition was held in Navarra, this event has become a reference for people looking to enjoy music in beautiful mountain surroundings.

Friday's musical line-up features Catalan groups Aisha and flamenco-fusion specialists Ojos de Brujo. Saturday gives the chance to see Basque accordionist Kepa Junquera and Senegalese singer Cheikh Lô. Other offerings include el Pont d'Arcalis, Les violines, Eskamot, Tamarro, Jabier Muguruza and Ttu-

kunak.

Festival-goers can also join in other activities such as walking tours of the Cadí-Moixeró nature park, visits to historic Seu, fun and games for children or an arts and crafts market.

This will be the third time Pyrene happens in Catalonia, after 10,000 attended last year's event in Pont de Suert. At the presentation for this year's Pyrene, festival organiser Sergi Ramis praised the good relations with the local authorities of La Seu d'Urgell. The mayor of la Seu d'Urgell Jordi Ausàs expressed the hope attendance will equal that of 2003 and that the town will host the festival once more in 2005.

## More than 12 per cent of Spanish on holiday are choosing Catalan cities for their getaway

**NEIL STOKES**

Catalonia was the preferred holiday destination of more than 12 per cent of Spanish holidaymakers last summer according to a recent survey. More than half of all Spaniards who took holidays in 2003 chose to stay in Spain over trips abroad. Andalusia and Valencia were the only autonomous regions to attract more native tourists than Catalonia, while La Rioja and the Basque Country were left at the foot of the ranking. Cities came out as the top choice of

destination for a holiday, closely followed by the beach and to a lesser extent mountain areas and the countryside. The reasons given by the 2000 surveyed for choosing one place over another was mainly to visit friends or family, because of the weather or due to historical or cultural interest. Questions of price, distance, meeting new people or trying new food were much lower on the typical Spaniard's list of priorities. One notable trend is that trips are shorter than before.