

Lleida to host new trade fair for construction and property firms

The "Saló Immobiliari i de la Construcció" is to take place between 25 and 27 February 2005

RICHARD MCCRANN

The Fira de Lleida is expanding to include for the first time a trade fair for property and building sectors in a bid to highlight their growth in the region of Ponent. The new fair is seen as a major development for the Fira de Lleida and is a bid to improve its results and avoid losses for the organisers. The expansion of the trade show is the result of a study, led by Xavier Roca, to see how it could incorporate new stands. The property section will promote new and older homes, second residencies, industrial factories and land and offices. The organisers of the trade show want to obtain the maximum involvement from private companies, public bodies and professionals from the construction sector to guarantee its success.

The manager of the trade show explained that the idea to create a fair of this kind came from the decoration stand, which had a construction part, along with the vitality that the building sector has been enjoying in Lleida. Most of the companies to participate in the trade show are local-owned, but in many instances they work in other regions, Roca points out. The property and building fair will take place in the pavillions 3 and 4 of the Fira de



Lleida has undergone considerable growth in the property sector, especially due to demand for second homes / ARCHIVE

Lleida. The show manager has confirmed that the first requests starting arriving the day it was announced. It is believed that this type of show could attract a mixed crowd, including private individual buyers and real estate agents seeking property.

Along with the Fira de Lleida, the event is being organised by Big Exhibitions and Caixa Terrassa and Massanagrup. The mayor of Lleida Àngel Ros and the president of the Chamber of Commerce Joan Simó attended the presentation of the

trade show, expressing their certainty that it would be a success. Roca did not wish to reveal any specifics on the event, as they have not yet been confirmed. Fira de Lleida is currently hosting Sant Miquel, Denúvis, Firantic and Cucalòcumn.



Consolidation of supermarkets

The chains Carrefour, Caprabo and Candis represent nearly half of all supermarket retail trade, according to a report on corporate consolidation in the retail sector in Catalonia. The findings were based on a study made in 2002 but only now made available to the public. Consolidation occurs more in other places including the Basque Country (71%), Valencia (62%) and Madrid (51%). However, the first major commercial food providers in the Basque Country and Valencia, such as Eroski and Mercadona, are locally-owned. Carrefour is French-owned, a cause for concern for Catalan minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, Pere Esteve. / M.B.

Government to open 17 trade offices abroad

MICHAEL BUNN

Speaking yesterday at Reus, Pere Esteve, the Catalan government minister for Trade and Tourism, announced the government's new business plan, which is called *Plataformas Empresariales de Catalunya* and involves the creation of 17 offices around the world for the use of Catalan businesses interested in breaking into markets outside the EU. Esteve said that these offices will be opened between 2004 and 2006.

The aim of this project is to facilitate the process of internationalisation for Catalan companies though, as Esteve pointed out, "it will not only be for the purposes of export but also to help Catalan businesses establish themselves abroad, to develop and gain importance in these new markets. To date, the Catalan government has set up offices in Mexico, Miami and Casablanca, and by the end of this year, Beijing,



Pere Esteve / ARCHIVE

Tokyo, New Delhi, Sao Paulo, Prague and Warsaw will also have branches. The *Plataformes* offices are currently being used by over 100 companies in Catalonia.

Saudi prince encourages growth of tourism

Saudi Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz took advantage of his visit to Barcelona's forum to promote his country as a first-class destination for cultural tourism. The prince, speaking at the dialogue "Tourism, cultural diversity and sustainable development", played down the problems created by Islamic Terrorism and spoke of a project that the Saudi government is undertaking to boost tourism in the Arabian Peninsula, which has a similar land area to that of Western Europe. "We are restructuring the tourism industry since it is one that can make a significant contribution to our economy," he said, adding that it is vitally important for Saudi Arabia to make the country's cultural diversity known to the rest of the world. He emphasised the warmth and hospitality that Saudis show to foreign visitors "in spite of the reputation that it has in the mass media". The prince stressed that his country is modern and the "the most developed country in the region".

Travel agencies claim up to 5 per cent increase in summer travel

Package holiday sales have gone up this summer between four and five per cent compared to last year, according to Spanish travel agencies association head Jesús Martínez Millán. However, it is difficult to predict exactly how the season will close, considering the growing trend in last-minute travel, he added. More and more travel packages are popping up, Martínez points out, and there may even be an excess of them. This has occurred in tourist destinations such as the Caribbean, where deals have grown in abundance by 40 and 50 per cent compared to last year, despite all the last-minute planning.



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