



Puertos del Estado and the Port Authorities mark 25 years since their creation

The Minister of Public Works highlighted the ports' contribution to territorial cohesion

- 2017 ended with a new record for goods moved through the ports, with a total of almost 530 million tons.
- Investments in the ports are focused particularly on ensuring their full connectivity with the transport networks.

01-12-2017 (Ministry of Public Works). Iñigo de la Serna, Minister of Public Works, accompanied by José Llorca, President of Puertos del Estado, the representatives of the Port Authorities and a large delegation from the port community, presided the event to mark the 25th anniversary of the creation of the public agency Puertos del Estado and the Port Authorities held yesterday 30 November at the Albeniz Foundation in Madrid.

Before his talk, De la Serna recalled the close bonds of friendship between himself and Paloma O' Shea, President of the Albeniz Foundation, named adoptive daughter of the city of Santander in 2006, and with whom the Minister has taken part in numerous events and social projects.

In his talk, the Minister of Public Works highlighted the important step represented by the 1992 Ports Act, which brought to an end almost 100 years of the previous system of the "Juntas de Obras del Puerto", or local port management bodies, and created the public agency and the port authorities. Thanks to the new Ports Act and its successive amendments, Spain now has a ports system in which the competences are shared between the central government and the autonomous regions, where the Spanish ports manage themselves thanks to their financial self-sufficiency.



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According to the Minister, the data from traffic records in recent years –with over 509 million tons moved in 2016– and the 15 billion euros in public investment have confirmed the important role of Spain's ports for the economy. These investments have been supported by the collaboration between the private business sector, which invested almost 13 billion euros in the same period. De la Serna took the opportunity to announce that all forecasts point to a new all-time high for port traffic in 2017, possibly up to 530 million tons.

However, with changes in demand and the needs of the global economy, these investments have moved from the sea to the land, so today the greatest challenge in our ports is to achieve the total connectivity with all the other transport modes, and particularly with railways. Instruments such as the Port Land Accessibility Financial Fund have been created to cover these needs, and will go a considerable way towards meeting the connection needs of our ports.

De la Serna concluded his talk by noting the challenges we are facing in the future, with particular emphasis on the fight against climate change –an undertaking to which the ports are already contributing actively–, the integration of ports and cities, and the enhancement of compatibility in the use of shared spaces. These goals should be understood as part of a more general policy of maximum respect and guarantee of the environmental and safety conditions in which the port operations take place.

Prior to the Minister's talk, José Llorca, president of Puertos del Estado, addressed the participants to thank the whole of the port community for their work during these years, which has made it possible for our ports to contribute decisively to the country's economy. According to Llorca, Spanish ports now occupy an outstanding position worldwide, as evidenced by the fact that a quarter of the goods handled in our ports are in transit, with a total of 122 million tons in 2016.

Llorca then went on to talk about investments, and the shift in the investment effort towards the "land side", which must be seen as a firm commitment to developing the intermodal and logistical function of our ports. Improvements in the quality of user services cannot be conceived without promoting the

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integration of the transport chain (intermodality) and its permanent orientation towards the logistical needs of the goods. As is only natural, these two objectives are part of a clear strategy designed by Puertos del Estado, and by extension by the Ministry of Public Works, to promote the logistical and intermodal function of our transport system.

This strategy underlies the recent creation of the Port Land Accessibility Financial Fund, a tool that paves the way to obtaining resources for the purpose of improving the operating conditions of our transport system, seen as a global network in which the ports play a key role and in which they themselves will be the prime beneficiaries. In spite of its relative recentness, this mechanism has already succeeded in moving resources for an estimated value of over 900 million euros for the 2014-2022 horizon, and will be a critical element in the competitiveness of the ports system in coming years.

The President of Puertos del Estado concluded by highlighting the immediate challenges lying ahead. The 4.0 economy will bring a change in our energy model (decarbonisation) which will have a decisive impact on port traffic, as will the increasing robotisation of a large part of the activities and the digitisation of the processes.