

Colombia will be the destination of the Port of Barcelona's next Trade Mission

In the light of recent events in Asia and ongoing uncertainty, the Port of Barcelona, along with the Port Community, has decided to change the destination of this mission

The Port of Barcelona has begun preparations for this year's Trade Mission, which will take place in Colombia. The Port has decided with the Port Community to change the destination of this mission, which was initially going to Thailand, in the light of the latest events in Asia regarding the Coronavirus and the ongoing uncertainty regarding how the companies, logistics and port operators and importers / exporters will respond to the situation.

The Trade Mission will coincide with the first edition of the SIL Americas International Logistics Fair to be held in Barranquilla (Colombia) from 21 to 23 October. SIL Americas is organised by the Zona Franca Consortium of Barcelona in conjunction with Corferias and FITAC, the Colombian Federation of Logistics Agents in International Trade, and aims to become the main platform for generating business in the Andean region, Central America and the Caribbean, just as SIL Barcelona is in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean.

Holding the Port of Barcelona Trade Mission at the same time as the SIL Americas will undoubtedly help to generate significant logistical and business synergies between the companies going on this mission and those participating in the fair. It will also help to boost the participation of the Catalan logistics sector in the SIL event. Furthermore, the Port of Barcelona will be providing significant support to the Consortium in the holding of this event, since it has been working in conjunction to make SIL Barcelona a success right from the beginning.

The Port of Barcelona has carefully analysed the current situation in Asia and is sorry to have to take this decision, but the ongoing alarm regarding the development and expansion of the Coronavirus and the related uncertainty on Asian markets suggest that it is wise to postpone the trip *sine die* and to concentrate our efforts on the mission to Colombia. We have received a great many inquiries from some businesspeople who took part in previous missions that are concerned about the advisability of travelling to Asia, while the Port of Barcelona acknowledges the work being done in Thailand to contain the spread of this virus.

This has not been an easy decision, since Thailand is a very interesting market both for the Port of Barcelona and for the companies in the Port Community. However, the Port's main priority is to avoid any unnecessary risk to the participants in these trade missions.

The Port of Barcelona would like to thank the Thai associations and institutions, with which it had begun to organise the travel arrangements, for their helpfulness, and to extend its thanks to the

Spanish Embassy in Thailand, and trusts that these contacts and the Trade Mission project can be resumed in the future.

Colombia, a strong business partner

This will not be the Port of Barcelona's first Trade Mission to Colombia. The first business trip to the country took place in 2013, with very satisfactory results. It was attended by 12 import-export companies and 15 firms from the logistics community. The business days were attended by about 250 entrepreneurs in Bogotá and 120 in Cartagena de Indias. A total of 334 bilateral contacts were established, with an average of nine meetings per company. Key cooperation agreements were signed between institutions and associations.

Colombia is one of the most important trading partners for the Port of Barcelona and is an expanding market. This is evidenced by the traffic figures of recent years. In 2019, container traffic with Colombian ports exceeded 23,000 TEU. Exports grew 10% and imports grew 32%. In terms of total traffic, over 392,000 tonnes of goods flowed between the Port of Barcelona and Colombia over the last year, marking a year-on-year increase of 8.3%.

Further information will be provided on the Trade Mission 2020 which the Port of Barcelona and its Port Community will be taking to Colombia in October.