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### Summary

Spain to boost defence spending and send more troops abroad.

New Catalan parliament's pro-independence speaker calls for deposed Puigdemont to be re-elected the region's Premier.

Catalan electoral success propels Ciudadanos towards national victory.

Madrid fails to fully implement any of the Council of Europe's anti-corruption measures.

Spanish-built high-speed train in Saudi Arabia successfully completes first test run.

### Foreign Policy

#### Spain to boost defence spending and send more troops abroad

The government told NATO it would increase defence spending by more than 80% over the next seven years to around €18 billion, but it would still be below the guideline of 2% of GDP that NATO's 28 members agreed for 2024 at their 2014 summit in Wales.

Spain's current military spending of 0.92% of GDP is among the lowest (see Figure 1). Only five countries meet the 2% target: the US, UK, Greece, Estonia and Poland.

**Figure 1. Defence expenditure as a share of GDP (%) (1)**

	% of GDP
US	3.58
UK	2.14
NATO guideline	2.00
France	1.79
Germany	1.22
Italy	1.13
<b>Spain</b>	<b>0.92</b>
Luxembourg	0.44

(1) Estimates for 2017.

Source: NATO.

María Dolores de Cospedal, the Defence Minister, said more troops would be sent abroad to participate in international missions. The number in Mali will rise by 152, those in Afghanistan by 95 and in Iraq by 30.

Spain is involved in 20 missions with close to 3,000 soldiers and civil guards (see Figure 2). The largest presence is in Lebanon (618 troops).

**Figure 2. Spain's ongoing international military missions**

Place	Mission	Started	Mandate
Afghanistan	Resolute Support	December 2001	NATO
Baltic	Air police	March 2004	NATO
Lebanon	FINUL	September 2006	NATO
Indian Ocean	Atalanta	September 2008	EU
Somalia	EUTM-Somalia	January 2010	EU
Colombia	UN Peace Agreement	August 2012	NATO
Mali	EUTM-Mali	January 2013	EU
Senegal	Ivory detachment	January 2013	EU
Gulf of Guinea	Defence diplomacy	September 2014	Spain
Turkey	Support	September 2014	NATO
Iraq	Support	October 2014	NATO
Mediterranean	EUNAVFORMED Shopia	June 2015	EU
Mauritania	Cooperative security	September 2015	Spain
Senegal	Cooperative security	September 2015	Spain
Central African Republic	EUTM RCA	December 2013	NATO
Various zones	Sea Guardian	November 2016	NATO
Various zones	NATO permanent naval groups	January 2017	NATO
Tunis	Cooperative security	March 2017	Spain
Latvia	Advanced and reinforced presence	June 2017	NATO

Source: Ministry of Defence.

### Spaniards overwhelmingly feel they are EU citizens

Close to 90% of Spaniards say they feel they are citizens of the EU, compared with 55% in the UK and 54% in Italy, according to the latest Eurobarometer (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3. You feel you are a citizen of the EU (% saying ‘yes’)**

	%
Luxembourg	90
Spain	88
Germany	82
Portugal	81
France	63
UK	55
Italy	54
Greece	48

Source: Eurobarometer.

A large majority (70%) of Spaniards are also in favour of increasing the EU’s powers, up from 57% a year ago, according to the latest Elcano barometer.

### Only one-quarter of Spaniards approve Trump’s performance

Spaniards’ approval of US leadership plummeted in the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency – from 53% to 26%, according to Gallup (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of the US?**

	Approve (%)	Approval difference from 2016 to 2017 (pp)
Kosovo	79	-7
Poland	56	+8
Italy	45	-14
UK	33	-26
<b>Spain</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>-27</b>
France	25	-28
Germany	22	-21
Russia	8	+6

Source: Gallup World Poll, 2017.

Trump was rated lower than Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russia's Vladimir Putin in the latest Elcano barometer of Spaniards' feelings toward international leaders.

Anti-US sentiment has long been stronger in Spain than in most European countries for historical reasons and has cut across political parties, but it has sunk to a new low since the arrival of Trump and for very different reasons than in the past.

Among the factors in the past that moulded Spaniards' feeling towards the US were: the Spanish-American War of 1898 in which Spain lost the last of its colonies; Washington's support for Franco after the 1936-39 Civil War; the 1953 Pact of Madrid, which established US bases in Spain; the lukewarm support for Spain's transition to democracy after Franco; the Reagan Administration's backing of military dictatorships in Latin America in the 1980s; and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

## Domestic scene

### New Catalan parliament's pro-independence speaker calls for deposed Puigdemont to be re-elected the region's Premier

The new speaker of the Catalan parliament, convened following December's snap election after Madrid imposed direct rule on the region as a result of parliament's unilateral declaration of independence, formally proposed Carles Puigdemont, Catalonia's deposed President, to hold office again.

The decision of Roger Torrent from the Catalan Republican Left party (ERC), one of the three pro-independence parties that together retained their majority in the regional parliament, increased the prospect that Puigdemont, the leader of Together for Catalonia (JxCat), who fled Spain at the end of October, will seek to be re-elected by videolink at

the first official investiture vote on 31 January, although legally he is required to be physically present. Torrent said Puigdemont's candidacy was 'absolutely legitimate'.

Puigdemont, who is living in Belgium, faces charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds for pushing independence and would be arrested as soon as he set foot in Spain. The ERC leader, Oriol Junqueras, Puigdemont's former deputy, has been in prison since last November.

Spain's Supreme Court rejected a request from prosecutors to reactivate the European arrest warrant for Puigdemont after he flew to Denmark on 22 January to speak at a conference. Judge Pablo Llarena said it was important to wait until 'constitutional order' had returned to Catalonia.

He accused Puigdemont of travelling to Denmark 'to provoke his arrest abroad', as it would 'equip him with a justification that his absence is not a free decision as a fugitive, but the consequence of a situation that has been imposed on him'.

A warrant for Puigdemont's arrest in Belgium was dropped in December after it became clear that it could limit the charges under which Puigdemont could be extradited, and hence be charged with on his return, because of discrepancies between Spanish and Belgian law.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said the government would continue to run the Catalan government if Puigdemont was re-elected while remaining in self-imposed exile. 'There is no margin to be president from afar, neither by delegation nor by another type of trick', he said. 'If someone wants to take charge, they have to be physically present... If not, Article 155 [of the Constitution] will stay in place. And that's not because I say so, the Senate said it would remain until a new president is sworn in'.

Puigdemont's party JxCat, ERC and the far-left Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) won 70 of the 135 seats (two less than in the 2015 election) on 47.5% of the vote and a record turnout of more than 80% (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Results of 2017 Catalan election (seats and % of votes) (1)**

	Seats	% of votes
<b>Pro-independence parties</b>		
Together for Catalonia (1)	34	21.7
Catalan Republican Left (1)	32	21.4
Popular Unity Candidacy	4	4.4
<b>Unionist parties</b>		
Ciudadanos	36	25.4
Catalan Socialists	17	13.9
Popular Party	4	4.2
<b>Not aligned</b>		
Cec-Podem	8	7.4

(1) In 2015, Catalan Republican Left and Together for Catalonia (essentially PDeCAT) went on a joint ticket under Together for Yes and Cec-Podem went by the name Catalunya Sí que es Pot.

Source: Metrocopia.

The anti-independence parties mustered 57 seats, five more than in 2015, of which 36 were won by the centrist Ciudadanos in a stunning victory (up from 25) for Inés Arramidas, a rising star of Spanish politics.

This was the first time a non-nationalist party had won a Catalan regional election, but with not enough seats to govern on its own or in coalition. Rajoy's Popular Party was relegated to a marginal position as it only won four seats, seven fewer. The non-aligned Cec-Podem dropped from 11 to eight seats. Even if that left-wing alliance were to support the anti-independence parties, which is highly unlikely, they would still not have a majority to form a government.

The two camps are back in the same situation as they were in 2015. The snap election, following October's illegal referendum on independence (92% of the 2.2 million votes were in favour of secession on a 43% turnout), did not yield victory for the anti-independence parties, as Madrid had hoped. And only part of the renewed victory by the pro-independence parties was due to an electoral system that favours rural areas where secession is strongest.

Interior Minister Juan Ignacio Zoido said the cost of sending 4,500 policemen to Catalonia to try to prevent the referendum was €87 million. He said 1,066 people were injured, five of them seriously.

The pro-independence parties are still set on their unconstitutional path to secession. Puigdemont ratcheted up his attacks on the Spanish authorities, tweeting a video linking

Rajoy and Hitler. 'They understand only fear, violence and imposition', he tweeted. 'We will teach them that there is nothing that can bend the spirit of a free, peaceful and democratic people. We are restoring our institutions. We are fighting for the country. We are exercising dignity. Long live the land, and long live free Catalonia!'

Cracks, however, are appearing in the independence ranks. For example, Joaquim Forn, the former Interior Minister in the Catalan government, Jordi Sànchez, President of the Catalan National Assembly, and Jordi Cuixart, President of Omnium Cultural, prime movers in the push for independence and all of them jailed, told a court in a bid to be released that they had committed illegal acts and would no longer pursue unilateral independence.

Independence fatigue is also setting in, including among the pro-independence parties. Only one-third of ERC voters and 46% of JxCat voters are in favour of continuing the secessionist route, according to a Metroscopia poll.

There seems to be no way out of the quandary satisfactory to both sides. Positions in Catalonia have hardened. And at the national level, 79% of respondents in the latest Elcano poll said Catalonia should remain part of Spain.

Constitutional reform is on the cards that might give Catalonia more powers, but this is unlikely to assuage those in favour of independence. Moreover, any extra powers, particularly in the fiscal sphere, perceived as benefiting Catalonia and undermining 'solidarity', would be opposed in the poorer regions (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Per capita GDP of Spain's 17 regions**

	€, 2016
Madrid	32,815
Basque Country	31,784
Navarra	30,006
EU-28	29,148
Catalonia	28,825
Aragón	26,097
La Rioja	25,317
Balearics	25,063
Spain	24,080
Castilla y León	22,723
Cantabria	21,574
Galicia	21,542
Valencia	21,232
Asturias	20,855
Murcia	19,865
Canary Islands	19,821
Castilla La Mancha	18,849
Andalusia	17,790
Extremadura	16,558

Source: INE.

While the pro-independence parties press on with their cause, opponents of independence, in an attempt at humour, proposed that Tarragona and Barcelona, the Catalan provinces where anti-independence sentiment is strongest and which generate most of the region's wealth, cede from Catalonia in a new and fictitious country called Tabàrnia (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Tabàrnia



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Tabàrnia has turned the secessionists' slogan 'Catalonia is not Spain' back on its supporters with its slogan, 'Barcelona is not Catalonia'. And, unlike Catalonia, which has yet to have a new Premier, Tabàrnia swore in Albert Boadella, a well-known Catalan theatre director, as its President. Furthermore, in a dig at Carles Puigdemont, it did so via video link from Boadella's 'exile' in Madrid.

Echoing the famous phrase of Josep Tarradellas, the last Catalan Premier in exile (following Spain's 1936-39 Civil War), who returned to Barcelona in 1977 after the death of General Franco – '*Ciutadans de Catalunya, ja sóc aquí!*' ('Citizens of Catalonia, here I am'), – Boadella proclaimed '*Ciutadans de Tabàrnia, no sóc aquí!*' ('Citizens of Tabàrnia, I'm not here').

Boadella left Barcelona for Madrid in 2007, claiming his work was being boycotted by nationalists.

### Court orders party of former Catalan Premier to repay €6.6 million for taking bribes

Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC), the dominant centre-right party in the CiU alliance led by Jordi Pujol who was the region's Premier for 23 years, was found guilty of running a kickbacks-for-contracts scheme and ordered to repay €6.6 million.

Twelve people were given prison sentences including Daniel Osàcar, the former CDC treasurer, and Félix Millet, the former President of Barcelona's Palau de la Música Catalana foundation, the body through which cash was channelled for the CDC.

The court found that €23.7 million of public money was embezzled between 1999 and 2009. Most of the contracts were awarded to the construction company Ferrovial.

The shadow of corruption had dogged CDC for years: in 2005 Pasquall Maragall, the former Socialist Premier of Catalonia, popularised the term 'three per cent' in allusion to the fee the CDC charged in exchange for contracts.

Pujol was succeeded as the CiU leader by Artur Mas, who governed Catalonia between 2010 and 2015. In the September 2015 snap Catalan election, the CDC joined forces with Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) in Together for Yes (JxSi) on a pro-independence ticket, but it failed to secure an absolute majority. The far-left Popular Unit Candidacy (CUP), with 10 seats and thus the kingmaker, vetoed Mas as Premier and put in his place Carles Puigdemont.

CDC was re-founded in July 2016 as the Catalan Democratic Party (PDeCat) in a bid to disassociate itself from its corruption problems, in particular those of Pujol, the party's founder. PDeCat rebranded itself as Together for Catalonia in the December 2017 Catalan election, winning 34 seats, the largest number of the three pro-independence parties.

For the anti-independence interest, the court's judgement made a mockery of the slogan of the pro-independence camp that 'Spain robs us', as Catalonia's political leadership has been found to have siphoned off the region's wealth.

A key question yet to be answered is whether PDeCat, as the successor party to CDC, will be liable for the €6.6 million payment. In a statement, PDeCat said the corruption scandal had nothing to do with the party but 'with Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, a political group that has already taken on all political responsibility'.

### Catalan electoral success propels Ciudadanos toward national victory

If a general election were held today, the centrist Ciudadanos (C's), which won the most seats in the Catalan parliament in last December's regional election, would win, according to a Metroscopia poll.

The party would overtake the conservative Popular Party (PP) and take 27.1% of votes, more than double the 13% it won in the June 2016 election (see Figure 8). This would give C's around 95 of the 350 seats in the national parliament (32 at the moment).

**Figure 8. Voter intention (% of valid votes)**

	<b>26/VI/16 election</b>	<b>11/XI/16</b>	<b>9/III/17</b>	<b>4/VI/17</b>	<b>12/XI/17</b>	<b>12/I/18</b>
PP	33.0	35.7	31.2	25.9	26.1	23.2
Socialists	22.7	17.9	19.0	22.8	22.7	21.6
Unidos Podemos	21.1	23.1	21.5	19.2	14.7	15.1
Ciudadanos	13.0	13.0	16.5	18.7	22.7	27.1

(1) Unidos Podemos as of the June 2016 election.

Source: Metroscopia.

The PP lost seven seats in the Catalan election and with just four became a marginal party in the region. It is now losing support nationally.

C's began as a Catalan-based party in 2006 whose main platform was opposing independence for the region. Since then it has spread around Spain, gaining support among all age groups except for those over the age of 65. The party backs in the national parliament the minority PP government.

Metroscopia said 54% of voters currently guaranteed they would continue to vote for the PP, down from 68% last November.

The party's hypothetical victory would represent a significant shift in the right-left balance of the electorate, from 46.1%/43.8% in 2016 to 50.3%/36.7%, towards the centre.

The main loser in a general election would be the far-left Unidos Podemos, with 15% of the vote, down from 23% in 2016.

There is no sign, however, of an election on the horizon. The next one is due by June 2020.

### Spain in 7th place in Freedom in the World ranking

Spain is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> along with Germany and the UK in the latest Freedom in the World Ranking by the US Freedom House (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Freedom in the World, 2018**

	<b>Aggregate score</b>
Finland	100
Netherlands	99
Luxembourg	98
Portugal	97
Japan	96
Iceland	95
<b>Spain</b>	<b>94</b>
Italy	89
US	86
North Korea	3

For information on the methodology employed see <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018/methodology>.

Source: Freedom House.

### Madrid fails to fully implement any of the Council of Europe's anti-corruption measures

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) rebuked Spain for failing to fully implement any of the 11 anti-corruption and transparency measures contained in its 2013 report.

Corruption in the political system is constantly rated as one of Spaniards' main concerns and a major cause of a loss of trust in politicians.

Government officials said the progress in implementing GRECO's recommendations had been held up by the political deadlock during most of 2016, following two inconclusive elections in December 2015 and June. The Popular Party (PP) did not take office until November 2016. This delayed reforms, particularly in the key area of justice.

'That period is now well passed', said GRECO, 'and determined action must follow not only in words and plans, but also in actual deeds'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The report is available at <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-evaluation-round-corruption-prevention-in-respect-of-members-of/1680779c4d>.

The recommendations not implemented at all are:

- Adopting codes of conduct in parliament and the senate and ensuring effective supervision of the existing and yet-to-be established declaration requirements and other rules of conduct of members of parliament.
- Laying down objective criteria and evaluation requirements for appointing the higher ranks of the judiciary (ie, presidents of Provincial Courts, High Courts, the National Court and Supreme Court judges), in order to ensure that the appointments do not cast any doubt on the independence, impartiality and transparency of the process.
- Extending the limitation period for disciplinary procedures.

The recommendations partly implemented are:

- Introducing rules on how members of parliament engage with lobbyists and other third parties who seek to influence the legislative process.
- Reviewing the current disclosure requirements applicable to members of both chambers of parliament in order to increase the categories and the level of detail to be reported.
- Evaluating the legislative framework governing the General Council of the Judiciary (the governing body) and its effects on the real and perceived independence of this body from any undue influence, in order to remedy any shortcomings.
- Adopting a code of conduct for judges and making it easily accessible to the public and complementing it with advisory services on conflicts of interest and other integrity-related matters.
- Reconsidering the method of selection and the term of tenure of the Prosecutor General and establishing clear requirements and procedures in law to increase transparency of communication between the Prosecutor General and the government.
- Adopting a code of conduct for prosecutors and making it easily available to the public and complementing it with dedicated guidance on conflicts of interest and other integrity-related matters.
- Developing a specific regulatory framework for disciplinary matters in the prosecution service, which is vested with appropriate guarantees of fairness and effectiveness and subject to independent and impartial review.

The PP and the centrist Ciudadanos (C's) signed an anti-graft pact in 2016 that enabled the PP to return to power, but this time as a minority government, supported by C's in parliament. The pact covers 150 different matters, some of them included among GRECO's recommendations, but they have yet to be designed and implemented.

## The Economy

### Economy revives, but growth could be stymied by Catalan independence crisis

The EU's fourth-largest economy strengthened in 2017, notching up records in exports and tourists, but growth this year could be held back by the Catalan independence crisis.

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said the 'only factor of uncertainty is political' and 'if things are sorted out sensibly in Catalonia, Spain could grow by more than 3%'.

The latest OECD forecast puts Spain's GDP growth at 2.3% in 2018, down from 3.1% in 2017. The IMF downgraded its growth forecast to 2.4%. As well as the impact of lower oil prices dissipating, consumer and business confidence in Catalonia, the main engine of the Spanish economy (one-fifth of output) has declined. More than 3,200 companies in Catalonia have re-located their legal domicile and around 1,000 of them have also moved their fiscal headquarters.

Luis de Guindos, the Economy Minister, put the cost of the Catalan crisis at €1 billion so far. 'Catalonia used to have growth above that of Spain, it was one of the drivers of the Spanish economy', he told Spanish radio. 'However, in the fourth quarter, it became a burden'.

The year 2017 (see Figure 10) saw the arrival of:

- More than 82 million tourists (75.3 million in 2016). Spain replaced the US as the number-2 tourism destination after France, according to the World Tourism Organisation. This industry generated 11.5% of GDP.
- Exports that exceeded the €245.5 billion in 2016.
- The current account was in surplus for the third year running (around 1.7% of GDP).
- Sales of new cars (1.23 million, +7.6%) reached their highest level since 2008.
- The number of registered unemployed, as opposed to the stated number (based on household surveys), stood at 3.4 million at the end of 2017, down from 3.7 million a year earlier.
- The highest number of social security contributors since 2008 (611,146 more at 18.46 million).
- The biggest rise (+5%) in the price of new homes since 2007.
- The first increase (+7.4%) in the Ibex-35, the benchmark index of the Madrid stock market, in three years. The index ended the year at 10,043, but was still far from its high of 15,945 in 2007.

- The health of the banking sector, parts of which had to be rescued by a euro-zone bailout in 2012 after they became overexposed to the property sector, was much improved apart from the ailing Banco Popular. It was sold to Santander for a symbolic €1 after a run on its deposits.
- The fiscal deficit is likely to hit the 3.1% of GDP target, down from 4.5% in 2016.

**Figure 10. Spain's recovery 2009-17**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tourists (mn)	52.2	52.5	56.7	57.5	60.7	65.0	68.2	75.3	82.0
Exports (€ bn)	159.9	186.8	215.2	226.1	235.8	240.6	249.8	254.5	229.8 <sup>1</sup>
New car sales (000)	953	982	808	670	723	855	1,034	1,147	1,236
Registered jobless (mn)	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.8	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.7	3.4
Social security contrib. (mn)	17.8	17.5	17.2	16.4	16.3	16.7	17.3	17.8	18.4

(1) First 10 months.

Source: INE, Economy Ministry, Anfac, Employment Ministry.

The Fitch ratings agency endorsed the improvements and upgraded Spain's long-term sovereign debt rating one notch on 19 January to 'A-' with a stable outlook. This decision put Spain in 'A' grade territory for the first time since 2012 when the country was mired in recession and a severe housing slump. S&P and Moody's will probably follow suit. The yield advantage on Spanish 10-year bonds over German bunds was at its lowest level this month since 2010.

Emboldened by the progress, Rajoy said the government wanted to raise the minimum monthly wage from €736 (14 payments) to €850 in 2020, provided the economy grows by at least 2.5% a year and 450,000 jobs are created annually.

Although unemployment is lower at 16.4%, job precariousness remains very high. More than 90% of the 21.5 million contracts signed in 2017 were temporary, the largest number ever.

Spain's temporary employment rate was 27.5% in the third quarter of 2017, almost double the EU average, according to the latest comparative figures from Eurostat.

As a result of the still big pool of unemployed and the fast ageing population, the number of social security contributors per pensioner dropped to 2.23 in 2017, the lowest figure since 1999. The number of contributors is still 1.3 million below the peak of 19.5 million in 2007 at the height of the economic boom.

These factors are putting the social security system under considerable pressure. The reserve created in 2006 to help pay pensions in times of straitened circumstances dropped to €8 billion at the end of 2017 from €66.8 billion in 2011. The government will have to borrow more this year in order to meet pension commitments.

Pedro Sánchez, the Socialist leader, proposed a tax on banks that he said would raise €1 billion a year and would go toward reducing the social security deficit (estimated at €15.5 billion this year). He justified the tax on the grounds that some savings banks (not commercial banks) had been saved by taxpayers money as of 2012.

### Spain loses appeal to EU court for deficit manipulation fine

The Court of Justice threw out an appeal presented by Madrid against a fine imposed by the European Commission in 2015 for misreporting the deficit figures of the region of Valencia.

Spain became the first casualty of stronger rules on EU statistics in 2015 when the Commission fined the country €18.93 million for not recording Valencia's health expenses or accounting transactions.

An EU investigation found that the Valencia government had 'systematically sent incorrect information to the national statistical authorities over many years'. The fine covered only 2011 and 2012 as until then the European Commission did not have the powers to carry out the inspection.

The Court ruled Wednesday that Spain would not only have to pay the full fine, but also the costs of the trial. The Spanish Supreme Court said Valencia would have to pay the sanction.

## Corporate scene

### Spanish built high-speed train in Saudi Arabia successfully completes first test run

The high-speed train between Mecca and Medina, a distance of 453km and built by a consortium of 12 Spanish companies in the desert, made its first test run smoothly.

The train did not stop as the stations have yet to be built.

The €6.7 billion initial budget included supplying 35 trains and operating the line for 12 years. The original completion deadline was December 2016, but the companies faced technical headaches.

The project involving Renfe, Adif, Ineco, OHL, Indra, Talgo, Copasa, Consultrans, Imathia, Cibra, Abengoa and Domotronic-Siemens, is an international showcase of Spain's mastery of high-speed rail infrastructure. Spain has one of the world's longest high-speed rail networks.



Spain's construction companies won more than €44 billion of international contracts last year.