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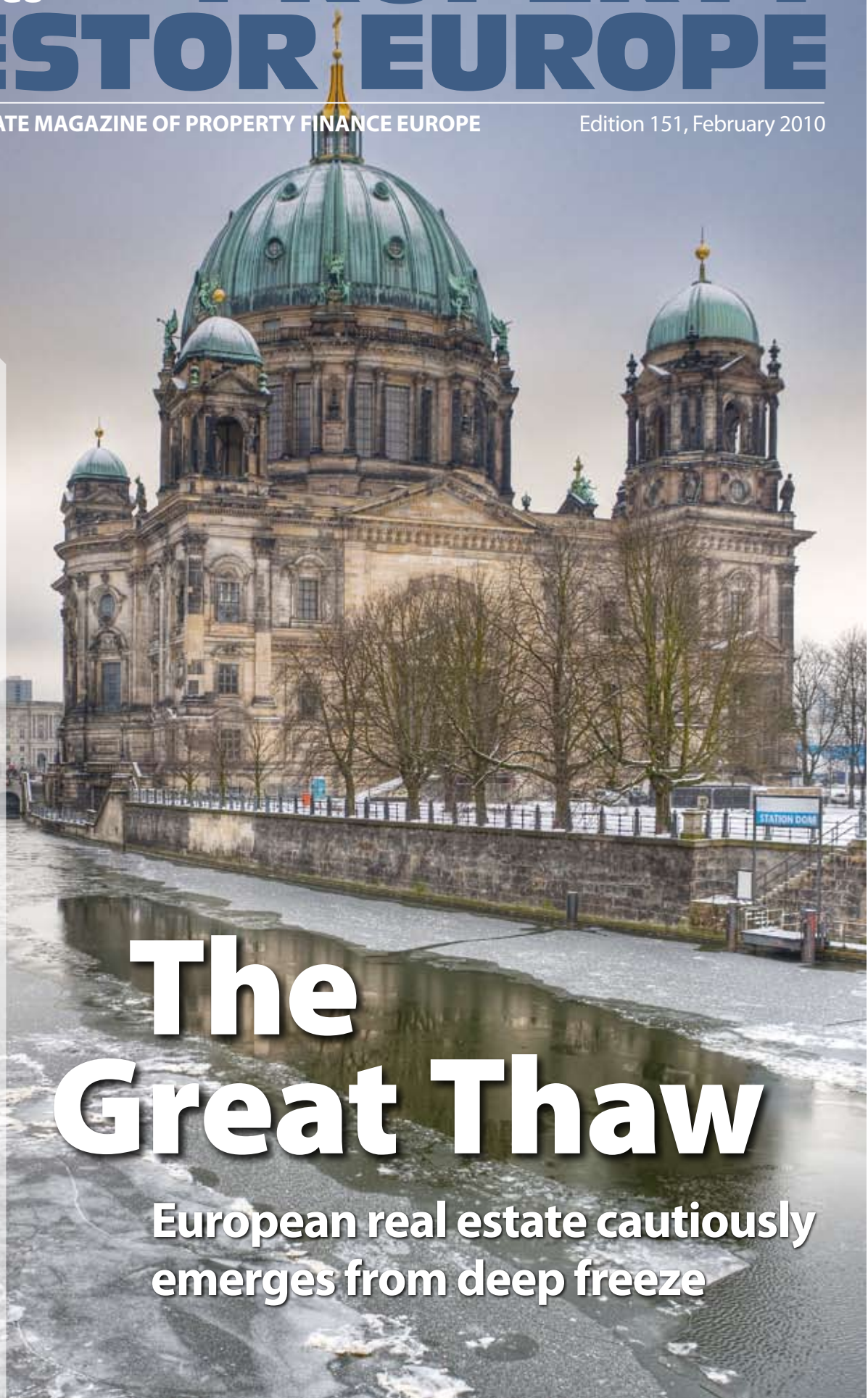
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The Great Thaw

European real estate cautiously
emerges from deep freeze





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This regular monthly section of PIE takes the European investment challenge further upstream – into major real estate development projects that are literally changing the face of the built environment on the European continent. The section is designed to provide an interface between developers and project managers wishing to reach a global investor audience, and institutions seeking to track the most interesting development-related investment opportunities. Developers, owners and managers are encouraged to contact us via news@pfeurope.eu or through the website at www.pfeurope.eu.



Major transformation can be found in the Barcelona Metropolitan Region, including three strategic areas that are becoming motors of economic activity, and in turn form a large geographical triangle.

Barcelona Economic Triangle offers model of innovation and creativity

The Barcelona Economic Triangle, committed to a new model of growth based on innovation and creativity, is fully rooted in the knowledge economy. It provides scientific research and development facilities that signal massive inward investment.

The project links three areas in the Barcelona metropolitan area – Llobregat, Besos and Vallès. Each of the vertices consists of an area of consolidated economic activity, with important projects in progress and many opportunities for investment. Three established growth areas are involved: the highly acclaimed 22@ Barcelona project, which involves the transformation of 200ha of industrial urban land into an innovative production district for developing knowledge-intensive activities; Alba Park, home to the Alba Synchrotron that will provide research facilities for materials science, microelectronics and nanotechnology; and Delta Bcn, which will have a range of high-level research centres, services and infrastructure, including a wind tunnel for aerodynamic testing.

The project marks the first time that the Catalan government and the City of Barcelona have united in this way. In setting up the separate investment region,

the objective of Catalonia and the Barcelona Metropolitan Region, made up of over 160 municipalities, is to create an environment of human dimensions where residential uses, production activities and services live side by side. Barcelona is regarded by many as the Capital of the Mediterranean – and Catalonia, a region with over 7m inhabitants and 946 municipalities centred on Barcelona, is far more bullish about its future than many regions of Europe. The region shows that although Spain, alongside the UK, generally has languished at the bottom of the economic recovery stakes, tarring all of Spain with the same black economic brush is a mistake.

Catalan culture is a step away from the rest of Spain. Fiercely independent, Catalan people do not consider themselves as Spanish. They speak their own language, more like French than Spanish and they have a work ethic that is more similar to France also. There is little of the mañana attitude of Spain, Cata-

lans have an energy and enthusiasm that is infectious. In addition, Catalonia offers a lifestyle that is second to none, so it can attract and retain some of the most talented people in Europe. Fast moving and exciting, the Catalan region is ready and waiting for recovery and has put in place some innovative initiatives.

For Barcelona Economic Triangle, transport infrastructure is already in place – even though the arrival of more high-speed rail lines will improve things further.

The Barcelona Economic Triangle represents all that is best about Catalonia and Barcelona, say investors – land and property availability, development opportunities, superb and improving infrastructure, an educated and energetic workforce, renowned research and development centres backed up by a Mediterranean quality of life that is unparalleled in Europe. Many plaudits have been received in particular from investors and advisors working in 22@Barcelona, which is the already maturing anchor of the Triangle. “One of the best examples of urban transformation,” commented Andrés Escarpenter, CEO of Jones Lang La-Salle Spain recently; “Investor interest and locating companies are proof of confidence in 22@Barcelona,” said Reno Cardiff, Partner, Cushman & Wakefield; “Being located at the heart of the 22@Barcelona gives an added dimension” commented Ronan McGinley, Asset Manager, Quinlan Private; “We forecast good future capital appreciation of the location” according to Tim Nalder, General Manager, Invesco Real Estate.

Barcelona Economic Triangle exhibited at Expo Real, the international property show in Munich last October. Speaking of the reasons for Barcelona Economic Triangle’s attendance, Joan Lloret Ei Torbella, MD, Strategic Operations and Land Policy for Catalonia, commented: “Our aim was to communicate the strategic sites of 22@Barcelona, Alba Park and Delta Bcn by positioning them under one umbrella: The Barcelona Economic Triangle. The effect has been to position the whole of Catalonia as an area for investment. Key to our success is that the three sites are at different stages of development so we can offer opportunities for occupiers, developers and investors with short, medium and long term investment goals.”

Added Jordi Sacristan Acia, Marketing Manager for 22@Barcelona, added: “In spite of lower numbers at Expo Real, it was really worth being there. We estimate that we welcomed over 1,000 visitors to the stand, and from that we have generated 400 valuable enquiries that will be followed up when we return to Barcelona. One point we became aware of is that we

are faced with the outside world’s view of the Spanish economy, which is not good. But the Catalan economy is very different and our region is safer than rest of Spain. We are confident that people can invest in Barcelona and Catalonia and get a good return.”

And what of plans for the coming months? The project’s marketing consultant for exhibitions is renowned Barcelona-based design consultancy Story & Co. They plan to take the project to MIPIM in March. With the City of Barcelona just back from MIPIM’s retail sister MAPIC, they clearly have an appetite for networking and developing opportunities for their region. The key strategy for Barcelona Economic Triangle short term is for Catalonia to make itself distinct from the rest of Spain, with a view to seizing opportunities as investors begin to allocate capital again. Specialists say that it may not be long before mainland Spain begins its recovery – even if the vexed relationship of Catalonia with the rest of Spain means a united approach to inward investment are slim. ■ pie



The areas of Llobregat, Besos and Vallès form the Barcelona Economic Triangle. They encompass the 22@ Barcelona project to transform 200ha of land into a production district for knowledge-intensive activities; Alba Park, home to the Alba Synchrotron that will provide scientific research facilities; and Delta Bcn, aiming for high-level research centres, including a wind tunnel for aerodynamic testing.



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