

Catalonia's FDI on the rise

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The region and its capital Barcelona are showing strong growth, both nationally and in the context of Europe.

The Catalonia region of Spain experienced year-on-year growth from 2013 to 2015. During this period there 330 foreign direct investment projects were recorded, excluding retail, and \$11.18bn was invested. A total of 21,494 jobs were also created.

Data from greenfield investment monitor fDi Markets shows that Barcelona was by far the strongest city in the region during the three-year time frame. It secured 192 projects and took an outstanding 58.18% share of total FDI projects in Catalonia. The second strongest city was Tarragona with eight projects, holding a 2.42% share in the region, and third was Sant Cugat del Vallès with seven projects, representing a 2.12% market share.

The top source country in terms of project numbers, was the US with 53 projects, representing a 16.06% share. Germany followed with 52 projects and 15.76%, and France with 43 and 13.03%.

In terms of project numbers software and IT services was the biggest sector, creating a total of 56 new projects between 2013 and 2015. Business services came second, creating 36 projects, and transportation third with 25 projects.

Regional growth

During the three-year period, Catalonia was the strongest region in Spain. It had the greatest market share in terms of project numbers at 39.52%, capital investment at 36.53% and job creation at 35.75%.

During quarter one of 2016, Catalonia still managed to maintain its top ranking position in the country. In terms of project numbers, the region held a market share of 30.43%. Catalonia also held the highest market share in terms of capital investment, with 32.26%, as well as job creation with 35.15%

Although project numbers in the region fell by 12.5% in the first quarter of 2016 compared with the same quarter in 2015, Catalonia has a strong history of FDI activity and it is likely to rebound over the year.

The region and the city of Barcelona featured heavily throughout fDi's European cities and regions of the future 2016/17 ranking. Barcelona came first in Europe in terms of FDI strategy for all major cities, ahead of London and Stockholm. It has strong policies for attracting investors: the city council encourages staff training and it has a dedicated online presence. A new sustainable urban growth area is under construction, to include utilities, residential properties and a park. The city is also developing other infrastructure including the Metro Line 9.

Barcelona was awarded third place in terms of southern Europeans cities of the future, fifth in the major European cities of the future category in terms of business friendliness and 10th in terms of connectivity. Catalonia also made it to the top 25 overall European regions of the future, ranking 23rd.

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fDi Magazine
THE BUSINESS OF GLOBALISATION

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