



The Bilbao Exhibition Centre: a landmark project for Euskadi

Betidanik izan da Bilbo azoka eta komertzioarekin zerikusia duen gaitan aintzaindari. Lehen mailako postu hori indartzera dator orain Barakaldon eraikitzen ari den Bilbao Exhibition Center berria, Bilboko Nazioarteko Azokari testigua hartuko diona.

Bilbao's new international trade fair facility, which began construction in 2001, opened its doors for business in April this year. The Bilbao Exhibition Centre is the name of the trade fair's new premises – and the most innovative center in Europe. The first event scheduled to kick off the newly inaugurated building was Construlan, a Construction and Equipment Exhibition held from April 21st through the 24th.

Construction of the building moved at lightning speed. Meanwhile, on March 31st, the Bilbao International Trade Fair, once a city landmark, officially disappeared to become part of the BEC.

The idea of creating a new trade fair facility responded to the need for larger exhibition space, giving it greater international appeal and making it possible to further reinforce the quality of service the center has been known for all these years. The facility, equipped with the most advanced instruments available today for providing exhibitors and visitors with high-quality service, will move the trade fair to a more competitive position, particularly with regard to its stellar events, the Machine Tool Biennial and Ferroforma.

This project is both necessary and emblematic for the Basque Country due to its role as a driving force in the economy, its design and technology. Located in Ansio, Barakaldo, the BEC is divided into six pavilions, four of which cover 15,000 square meters of space and two, 21,000 sq. meters, the latter of the two having special features that give it multipurpose-room flexibility. The total exhibition area amounts to 120,000 square meters. The building also has a 18,000 sq. meter conference center, a shopping arcade, a hotel, an intermodal station, and parking for 4,000 vehicles.

The goal of this new facility, which involved a total investment of nearly 440 million euros, is to promote, build and manage the operations of the new Bilbao trade fair. The idea of building this new facility, the most modern in Europe, came from the need to create more exhibition space, which would in turn enhance international participation and the service quality for which the Bilbao trade fair is known for. The Bilbao International Trade Fair, with its 76,000 square meters of space, had become too small some time ago. The need to expand the trade fair facility, mainly to accommodate the venue's most important events, the Machine Tool Biennial and Ferroforma, has resulted in an ambitious and avant-garde project.



TRADE FAIR MILESTONES

- 1882:** First Provincial Fair of Bizkaia
- 1932:** First Motor, Accessories and Radio Trade Fair
- 1956:** VIII Bilbao Exhibition and opening of new facility
- 1960:** Spain's first monographic exhibition dedicated to machine tools
- 1980:** Bilbao becomes a reference in Europe for trade fair activity

BEC MILESTONES

- 2001:** BEC is designed in March and construction begins in June
- 2004:** BEC opens its doors

A FEW CURIOUS FIGURES

- ▶ If laid out in a straight line, the walkways at BEC would run from Bilbao's Plaza Moyúa to Plaza Circular.
- ▶ All the electrical wiring tied end to end would stretch from Bilbao to Berlin.
- ▶ If all the rebar used in the building's framework was laid out end to end it would cover an expanse of 11,500 kilometers – the same distance from Bilbao to Moscow to Vladivostok on the coast of Siberia.
- ▶ Four Eiffer towers could be built with all the steel sections used in the metal structure of the BEC.
- ▶ All of the earth dug up to build the BEC would enough fill four soccer stadiums the size of Bilbao's San Mamés from the field to the highest bleacher.
- ▶ 270 apartment buildings with four units on each floor could be roofed with the materials used to cover the BEC.