

# Mobile World Capital

BARCELONA,  
SPAIN

Barcelona is the capital of the autonomous region of Catalonia, one of Spain's most prosperous and export-oriented regions. An attractive urban location, excellent accessibility and a favourable climate give Barcelona a competitive edge in hosting international meetings and events. The city has a history of using these events – such as the 1992 Olympic Games – to transform the urban fabric and economic structure of the city, with the Mobile World Capital the most recent example.

## Project overview

After hosting the Mobile World Congress for several years, Barcelona won the bid to host the Mobile World Capital for seven consecutive years (2012–2018). The seven year 'event' consists of four pillars; the congress, a festival, a permanent exhibition centre and the so called 'Mobile World Hub'. The Hub facilitates cross-sector innovation through a permanent meeting place for businesses in the recently redeveloped 22@ district (a 'bricks-and-mortar' platform), but also through several networks for cooperation (organisational platforms). The aim of initiatives such as mHealth, mWallet and m4all, is to use the city as a living laboratory for creating products that can be exported to the world. Mobile World Capital Barcelona (MWCB) is governed by a foundation which brings together the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism (State), the Catalan government, the City of Barcelona, Fira de Barcelona (the trade fair institution) and GSMA (the association that represents mobile operators worldwide). The foundation is financed by three levels of government and private sponsors such as telephone company Telefónica.

## Results and impact

Barcelona has been successful in winning the bid for hosting Mobile World Capital for seven consecutive years, which brings the city significant economic gains. More than 70,000 congress participants generate an

annual economic impact of €320 million for the region. The impact of the other three pillars has not yet been fully evaluated, but there are clear indications of a positive impact on the city's sustainable urban competitiveness. The permanent exhibition centre continues to help promote Barcelona and its mobile industries, attracting more than 350,000 visitors (consumers) a year and with the festival (still to be organised), the foundation hopes to target even more consumers. At the end of 2013, several platforms for innovation (part of the Mobile World Hub) were operational, while others are still under construction. To date, arguably the most significant impact of Mobile World Capital has been the enhanced reputation of Barcelona as a place to locate for companies in the ICT and mobile industries. Several companies indicate that they have established in Barcelona, in part, due to the favourable environment offered by the city's status as Mobile World Capital.

## Enablers

Three key enablers contributed to the successful implementation of the Mobile World Capital event. Firstly, broad and stable political support strengthened the bid for organising the event and made it easier to implement the comprehensive four-pillar strategy. Secondly, the role of Telefónica should not be underestimated. Although difficult to prove, it is very likely that the company (and its CEO) was pivotal in the selection of Barcelona as host of the event. Barcelona has been able to become the first Mobile World Capital without a strong concentration of companies in 'mobile industries' (apart from Telefónica), but with a relatively strong position in ICT and 22@ as an important hotspot. Thirdly, discussion partners refer to the strong infrastructural capital: the technical facilities needed to host the Mobile World Conference. Barcelona first managed to offer a larger venue for the event than Cannes and a few years later, the city succeeded in finding an even larger venue (Gran Via). Barcelona's strong technical offer undoubtedly played a role in fighting off competition from other candidate cities such as Munich and Milan.

