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**Building in
Catalonia is
growing, but the
sector has yet to
recover**

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On Thursday, 14 July, at a meeting open to the media, the COAC took stock of the situation of the construction and building renovation sector in Catalonia over the first six months of 2016. This period ended with a total surface area of **1,662,812 m² authorized for construction, 15.68% more than the previous six-month period and 15.05% more than the same period last year.** The Architects' Association views this as a positive result, but underlined the fact that other considerations need to be taken into account to properly evaluate the state of the sector:

1. We are not witnessing sustained growth: the evolution of authorizations actually points to a slowdown. While between July 2014 and July 2015 there was an increase of 32% in the surface area authorized, between July 2015 and July 2016 this growth had dropped by almost half, to 15%.

2. The increase in authorized building land relates mainly to a few very large-scale projects (over 10,000 m²), representing 26% of the total.

3. The surface area authorized during the first six months of this year continues to be extremely low throughout Catalonia, and very much below the construction and building renovation levels in the rest of Europe.

This therefore continues to be an unsustainable situation for the sector, which needs policies and incentives to reactivate it from an economic point of view and in order to complete its modernization process.

ANALYSIS BY REGION

The province of Barcelona stands out for its continued growth (though not including the city of Barcelona). A total of 855,854 m² were authorized this year, 36.57% more than in the second half of 2015. However, of this total we need to bear in mind that 24.3% is for large-scale projects (over 10,000 m²). The city of Barcelona showed an increase of 20.26%, the bulk of which was for projects of between 3,000 m² and 10,000 m². With regard to the other provinces, there was slight growth in Girona (5.97%) and Lleida (1.26%), while Tarragona and Terres de l'Ebre showed drops of 37.8% and 32.02% respectively.

ANALYSIS BY TYPE OF BUILDING

In absolute terms, new build is continuing to show the most significant rise (22.56%), with around 1,083,329 m² of land authorized. The surface area authorized for renovation dropped by 1.34% compared to the previous six-month period, with around 491,373 m².

ANALYSIS BY USE

The current data show an increase in both housing and non-residential use, although figures are still very low. With regard to non-residential use, there were increases in health, education and office buildings which in previous periods had slowed down.

With regard to the number of homes authorized, there were a total of 4,044 in the first half of the year which represents an increase of 12% compared to the previous six-month period.

CONCLUSIONS

- The total volume of authorized surface area is still very much below the figure that would equate to the usual minimum.

- The sector is not yet experiencing a sufficiently strong structural recovery. Smaller projects of less than 3,000 m² have only risen by 5.6%, while large-scale ones of over 10,000 m² grew by 21.56%. Once again, the reactivation of the sector is failing to have an impact on either the majority of architects or other professionals and firms working in the sector.

- The increase in activity reflected in the amount of authorized surface area is primarily due to major projects in the province of Barcelona. In other provinces this figure has either fallen or remained stable.

- Once again, these figures underline something that the COAC has been demanding for some time: the need to implement measures of structural change to drive and steer the sector's recovery and, as a knock-on factor, the economy.

Consequently, the Association reiterates the need for a comprehensive Strategic Plan containing **MEASURES TO PROMOTE URBAN RENOVATION**.

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