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TecniRail: Can you explain what are the functions of MAFEX?

Pedro Fortea: The Spanish Railway Association, MAFEX, is a private non-profit organization whose main objective is to serve the Spanish railway sector in everything related to internationalization, as well as the defense of the general interests of their companies associated.

The association belongs to GRUPO AGEX, which has existed for over 35 years, consisting of three associations of many other industrial sectors, all national and with strong support for internationalization.

Since its inception in 2004, MAFEX has become a benchmark organization in the sector nationally, and is also increasingly recognized internationally.

In all this time, MAFEX has tried to support the Spanish railway industry by launching all kinds of promotional activities abroad. With the participation in major exhibitions, conferences and international meetings in the industry to conducting overseas business delegations along with Spanish companies or the organization of visits of foreign delegations to our country.

But also, MAFEX performs other activities that perhaps without much visibility, do provide, as appropriate, added value to our partners, as is the contribution of international contacts, the provision of a wide sector documentary, the contact between foreign and domestic firms channeling specific inquiries we receive or which we hear, or even communication between associated companies themselves, thus fostering a better understanding between them.

All actions are complemented by an institutional work that aims to promote the highest commitment to our industry by the Public Administration, both from the standpoint of national and regional, and even international. Therefore, we work closely with ADIF, RENFE, the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (mainly in collaboration with ICEX), the Ministry of Development, the Association of the European Rail Industry (UNIFE), the International Union of Railways (UIC), etc..

TecniRail What does MAFEX want the rest of the world to know about Spanish companies?

Pedro Fortea: At a time like the present, marked by a complex economic situation, the ability of internationalization of companies is itself a large weight differential value and will improve competitiveness abroad.

In this context, it is noteworthy that, in the railway sector, the Spanish railway industry figures in a privileged position of leadership with innovative technological developments, high qualified professionals, as well as the extensive experience gained as result of their participation in existing railway infrastructure existing today in our country.

These data confirms that Spanish companies are increasingly present in international markets.

In fact, the export figures of the industry are increasing year after year and its weight, with respect to the representativeness of the national market activity, also increases with each new exercise. In this way many companies are failing to alleviate the effects of the economic situation we suffer nationally by a clear strategy of internationalization, without forgetting, in all cases, the enormous difficulties and risks that entails an external action for any organization.

Given this scenario of crisis, characterized by its long duration, from MAFEX we try to help to move potential foreign customers an image of a sector which we believe is a world reference mirror in which you look at many countries, and whose industry can be competitive with any project that it faces.

Spanish companies are present in more than 90 countries on five continents, with references in all projects of varying size. In projects related to passenger transport in all areas (metros, light rail, high speed, commuter, etc..) or freight transport.

Spanish companies have a high experience at national and international planning,



Meeting with Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu.

design, construction and management of railway infrastructure. We have leading construction companies worldwide. Highly competitive firms in the field of engineering and consulting, experts in a complex topography as the one in Spain. Manufacturers of all types of equipment and materials, either intended for integration infrastructure or rolling stock, at the forefront from the technological point of view in energy efficiency, accessibility and respect for the environment. Spain has leading manufacturers of rolling stock, in all its types and also the highest level of technological development. Similarly, we reference from the point of view of companies in Spain working for the development and implementation of systems for railway traffic management, signalling, security, etc..

All this, moreover, is supplemented with data that reflects the great potential of the sector and that it also wants to be known abroad thanks to MAFEX. Spain is the fifth largest railway network in the European Union, with the second largest network after China's High Speed along which more than 300 trains serve nearly 100,000 passengers per day, with an on-time of 99 %, with maximum safety. In addition, a large number of Spanish cities have the most modern rail infrastructure, metros or light rail, supplemented, in many cases, by a functional commuter network that favors a model public transport system in most cases.

In short, being knowledgeable about all we have at our disposal in Spain, our goal is to try to get this message out there wherever there is the commissioning of a railway project, in order to take account of experience of our industry, which obviously has much to do with the reality that surrounds us here in Spain.

From a broader perspective, and in a situation like the present, we are equally aware that everything we can do to support better dissemination of our country's image is also important and affects the medium and long term, even in the support to other companies of different sectors.

TecniRail: What countries can be of interest to the Spanish engineering companies today?

Pedro Fortea: Currently there are business opportunities in many countries and subsectors. A growth outlook to be seized to continue increasing presence abroad.

Among them, regions like the Arab countries, where there are significant projects as the Doha Metro, the Riyadh in Saudi Arabia or the railway project that aims to unite the various emirates that are grouped under the Cooperation Council of the Gulf Countries. Also countries like India, Russia jointly with the former

Soviet republics, South Africa, United States and Turkey have opportunities for the sector, or the traditional destination of Spanish exports that is Latin America. Here, not only the planned investments in Brazil, but other countries such as Peru, for example, or Mexico. Perhaps the case of Asia, leaving aside the already cited India as well as the case of Africa, are destinations usually more complex and less explored and where we have to increase the presence. We cannot forget Europe, both in its Western and Eastern sectors. In fact, the first of them has traditionally been the main destination of Spanish exports, not only from the rail point of view.

In general, any country, whether developed, undeveloped or in the process, if it has some planning in terms of infrastructure, will have to look in almost all cases the implementation of a railway network to transport both of passengers and freight. This will depend on many variables, higher or lower interests, experience, knowledge, budgetary capacity, etc..

Therefore, in many cases, addressing the external promotion of the sector from the point of view of country or continent may not be the most suitable, but the key would be to identify those places, whether regions, countries and cities, in which the implementation of the railway infrastructure, or even maintaining or improving existing ones, is itself a priority for politicians, business, social, etc.. And if this preference is still latent, is where we try to offer insight and solutions that both Spain and its industry is able to

offer, based on their own experience, to help defining it.

TecniRail: Why would you recommend to companies to get associated with MAFEX?

Pedro Fortea: It is clear that the current domestic situation is not good. On this basis, many companies if not all, plan to increase their sales abroad or, in some cases, start business beyond our borders. But doing business in a foreign environment to ours, with players from other countries, with increased competition, with different conditions and variables that must be considered and to be identified with time implies an overstrain very important for any organization. All companies working abroad are aware of it and sooner or later, have suffered major internal adaptation to work abroad. Therefore, the first recommendation for companies considering to be part of our organization is that internationalization should be a key part of its strategic future.

A second recommendation would be to maintain a smooth and regular contact with the association since a mutual understanding also enables MAFEX the provision of a better service, a more detailed understanding of their specific needs and better use by the partner of the activities and services that we offer.

In the current scenario, small, medium and large companies, whether or not very internationalized, always need, sooner or later and to a greater or lesser extent, support. In this section we start with a positive image concerning our industry, but still need to be disclosed. And



Visit of the Spanish Minister of Public Works to the stand of Mafex at InnoTrans 2012.



“Be present in one of the world’s main professional source of transportation is the opportunity to receive the visit of the main personalities of the railway sector in many countries of the world, organizing bilateral meetings with companies and exploring new opportunities”

here each company may choose to walk the path alone, or rely on tools that can help, as in our case.

And when we talk of international markets, we mean huge markets of great difficulty to get orders, contracts, information, knowledge in general. And this difficulty is important for all types of businesses.

Partnering with organizations like ours is a way of having a support tool when going outside, to promote themselves.

With the perspective gained and over eight years of existence of MAFEX, the reality is that much of the benefit that many companies can get by being member of the association depends to a large extent, in addition to our own work, of course, of the involvement and commitment of the company in question. Therefore, a third recommendation would be the active use of all the services offered by the association.

TecniRail: What do Spanish companies have that those in other countries lack of?

Pedro Fortea: The progress in the Spanish railway industry has allowed an important network of small, medium and large enterprises, which are the basis for placing a world leader and make it one of the largest employment generating sectors and investment in our country. During the construction and implementation of the national rail network, which has made great technological challenges, companies have acquired a unique experience, which has provided a unique ability to work against the proposals of other countries.

Note that it has created a string of exceptional talent, by combining different technologies, and provides significant value to each customer, as well as the most advantageous options in terms of an economic, technological and social point of view.

Currently, therefore, we have a key factor

when promoting us abroad: references. But it is true that they have a period of time during which they effectively serve as a matter of differentiation from others. Therefore, it is now, without doubt, the time to capitalize on this competitive advantage and not in a few years.

TecniRail: What do you expect of the next UITP Congress?

Pedro Fortea: First, I would emphasize that this is a global event. It offers two aspects, fair and exhibition, and the congress. Importantly, it is also organized by the International Union of Public Transport (UITP), the reference entity in this field.

Therefore we can say that it is a prime showcase to learn about the innovations in the field of public transport. The conference brings together the heads of this field around the world and, therefore, is a very interesting opportunity to listen, monitor and identify future needs. Similarly, it is an ideal place to show the progress that our companies can offer.

Be present in one of the world’s main professional source of transportation is the opportunity to receive the visit of the main personalities of the railway sector in many countries of the world, organizing bilateral meetings with companies and exploring new business opportunities.

MAFEX organizes the Spanish pavilion since 2005 and we believe it is an unavoidable meeting, whether attending as an exhibitor, a visitor or as a congressman, if you want to have an updated overview of everything related to public transport in the world. ■

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