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**SERVICES OF THE SPANISH CHAMBERS
OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND SHIPPING
TO THEIR MEMBERS ^{1/}**

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CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. Historic Background and Legal Status of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce and Industry	1
II. Functions of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping	2
III. Activities of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping in the Industrial Field	3
1. Economic Surveys	3
2. Information	3
3. Participation in the Industrial Policy of the Country	3
4. Subcontracting Agencies	4
5. Industrial Communities	6
6. Professional Training	6
7. Trade Fairs and Exhibitions	7
8. Trade Missions	7
9. Bilateral Committees of Businessmen	8

I. HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND LEGAL STATUS OF THE SPANISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Official Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping in Spain are institutions that throughout the economic history of the country have always performed their role of promoting the common economic interests. Their existence depends on their independent nature, and for that reason they are nationally and internationally recognized, under any economical or political system.

First of all, it is necessary to point out that these Organizations were created for the representation and defence of the general interest of Commerce, Industry and Shipping, and they have nothing to do with private interests, which are represented by Employers' Associations, Trade Unions, etc.

The remote beginnings of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry go back to the Associations of Traders that since the XIII Century appear in Europe, and whose purpose was the protection of the "general interest of Commerce", whereas the Guilds and the Confederations of Guilds, were set up to protect the private interests of the traders. These Corporations, known by the generic name of "Consulates", have from the first moment had legal and administrative powers.

In 1829, the old Consulates were transformed into the "Boards of Trade", and in 1886, the actual name of Chambers of Commerce, appears for the first time.

Finally, the present definition of the concept and legal status of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping was set up by the Law of 1911.

Under this law, the Spanish Chambers are considered as Official Organizations dependent on the Ministry of Commerce, acting as consultative and advisory corps of the public Administration. Their main activity is to promote the interest of Commerce, Industry and Shipping in their general and abstract sense.

II. FUNCTIONS OF THE SPANISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND SHIPPING

The functions of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping are as follows:

1. To act as consultant to the Ministry of Commerce.
2. To be a consultative organization of the public Administration, for instance they give their opinion regarding matters concerning:
 - Projects of Agreement of Trade and Shipping.
 - Reform of the Customs Tariffs and Customs Laws.
 - Modification and establishment of tariffs of rail and sea transport sponsored by the Government.
 - Taxes that directly affect commerce, industry and shipping.
 - The setting up of monopolies.
 - Projects of public works concerning commerce and industry in their territory.
 - Establishment of Stock Exchanges.
 - Reform of the Commercial code and the laws concerning trade, industry and shipping.
3. To promote the general interest of Commerce, Industry and Shipping.
4. To propose to the Government all the reforms that the Chambers consider necessary or convenient for the progress and regulation of the economic activities of the country.
5. To carry out on their own initiative the works and the services that they consider necessary and useful to the general interests of the different economic sectors.
6. To act as arbiters between their members.
7. To create Stock Exchanges and govern them.
8. To create Employment Bureaux and work agencies.
9. To promote the organization of national and international trade fairs and exhibitions.
10. To promote the economic expansion of Spain in foreign countries.
11. To set up and run schools for teaching commercial, industrial and shipping matters.
12. To have a census of all the economic firms in their territory.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE SPANISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND SHIPPING IN THE INDUSTRIAL FIELD

1. Economic surveys

The majority of the Spanish Chambers carry out extensive surveys, on matters connected with industry which they consider interesting. These surveys are then distributed to all interested parties.

First of all due to their intrinsic importance, mention should be made of the surveys on the industrial conjuncture. These periodical surveys are usually made every month, by means of inquiries addressed to the most important enterprises in their territory. The questionnaires sent to the enterprises are prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Industry, with the collaboration of the Chambers of Commerce.

In these surveys, the most important points of industrial activities, for instance, volume of sales, orders, stock level, productive capacity, etc., are considered. For the moment, this type of survey is a very useful element in order to know the industrial situation of the country and its different provinces; and in many cases they have been used several times by the Administration in order to adopt new measures of industrial policy.

Besides these surveys of conjuncture, the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping make and publish many surveys on other industrial subjects such as industrial location, industrial infrastructure, legal aspects, etc.

2. Information

Most of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping have a service of industrial information for the firms in their territory. This information refers to those aspects of general interest to the different industrial sectors, such as technical advances, organization of work, etc.

This service also answers all the enquiries made by the firms which are members of the Chambers in the industrial and economic fields.

3. Participation in the industrial policy of the country

The Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping participate in this sector of the economic policy of the country in several forms, such as:

- Submitting recommendations to the competent authorities on those matters considered of general interest for industry.

- Giving their opinions on those measures of industrial policy on which it is compulsory that the Administration be advised of the views of the Chambers.
- Participating in the working committees created in the Ministry of Planning and Development, in which the Chambers have two representatives in each committee.

4. Subcontracting Agencies

For the moment four Spanish Chambers have this service for their members, and due to the good results and the real interest of this idea we think that it will be useful to explain the main characteristics.

The main object of the Subcontracting Agency is the increasing of productivity and efficiency of the labour and capital goods, available to the industry of a certain region or zone, in order to obtain maximum yield.

Their function is based mainly on facilitating contact between, on the one hand, firms who are interested in the performance of a certain job of work (these firms are called by the Agency CONTRACTORS or GIVERS of work) and, on the other hand, firms who are in a position to carry out this particular job at the precise time it is needed (these firms are referred to by the Agency as SUBCONTRACTORS or AUXILIARY factories).

The principal services provided by the Agency are the following:

1. It helps the Contractor enterprises in the search for the Subcontractor firms which are in a position to do the desired work.
2. It increases the possibilities of work of the Subcontractor enterprises, and therefore the yield of their industrial capacity is improved at a particular moment.
3. For the enterprises that are not able to use their installations at full capacity, it permits them to be occasional subcontractors and pay off in a more rapid way those installations.
4. It informs any firm that may consult it regarding which enterprise can do a determined piece of work.
5. It issues periodical lists of surplus products and raw materials, held by enterprises desiring to sell them. These lists are sent to a great number of firms in order to facilitate these sales.

The operating system is, to sum up, as follows:

- a) The Agency has an index system with data supplied by the subcontracting enterprises concerning their activities, characteristics of the machinery, quality of production and types of special jobs they are able to perform.
- b) The Contractor enterprises approach the Agency looking for Subcontractor firms, indicating the technical characteristics, quantity, minimum required specifications, etc. of the work that they desire to subcontract.
- c) The Agency, after consulting the enterprises that according to its data are able to do the work, provide the Contractor firm with a list of the enterprises that have stated their interest, in order that they may contact them directly and then, without the intervention of the Agency, contract the desired work. The Agency does not intervene in matters of prices or any other conditions of supply.

The information of the index system is amplified and completed by means of personal contacts between the enterprises and the staff of the Chamber responsible for that service, usually headed by an industrial engineer.

The reasons that can determine the need of an enterprise to use the services of a Subcontracting Agency are, among others, the following:

- When it cannot cover by its own means the total demand due to the fact that it is unable to increase its productive capacity.
- When it is highly specialized in some work and it would not be practical to engage its labour and machinery in a different type of work.
- When the firm needs a subcontractor in order to manufacture small or large series of components parts of a larger assembly manufactured by them.
- When its financial efforts may be directed toward investments of prior interest such as the buying of new machinery.

The Agency is not only an information service, but in addition in each case it studies the requested work, advises on the best way of doing it and looks for the most appropriate Subcontractor firms.

Other programmes of operation of the Subcontracting Agency are aimed at the technical assistance and the organization of its members, by means of the collaboration of other organizations, gradually becoming, in this way, a valuable element of information, co-ordination and training.

5. Industrial Communities

Due to the fact that some industrial areas, for example that of Madrid, need a certain type of industry, with sufficient dimensions and an adequate location, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Madrid began a programme of concentration and location of a certain sector of industrial enterprises.

Under the sponsorship of this Chamber, eighty-three industrial enterprises made a joint purchase of an area of nearly 400.000 square metres in a place near Madrid, and they have established certain common services such as electricity and water supply, telephone, etc.

Saving made by these enterprises by means of this joint venture can be calculated at almost 200 million pesetas. The control of the Chamber over this venture assures a rapid occupation of the land by the interested firms and avoids the possibilities of land speculation.

This action avoids:

- That the industry moves in an anarchistic way, and sometimes in contravention of the ordinance of the land.
- That the enterprises establish themselves without the adequate services.

In addition to the initial benefits such as a certain saving, a better co-ordination, etc., the fundamental thing is that with this system the enterprises increase their productivity without increasing their investment.

Other Chambers in Spain are at present carrying out the necessary steps to develop a similar venture.

6. Professional training

The participation of the Spanish Chambers in this sector is very large. In most of the provinces the Chambers co-operate financially in the commercial and industrial training schools.

Several Chambers in Spain have their own professional training centres, in which a large number of people can study economic and technical matters, completely free of charge.

Many Chambers also organize intensive lectures in specialized subjects concerning commercial and industrial activities for the staff of their member enterprises.

7. Trade Fairs and Exhibitions

We can say that almost all the national and international Fairs and Exhibitions that every year are held in Spain are sponsored by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Their active participation is not only concerned with the organization but also with the financing as well as the promotion of the articles exhibited in them.

As for the exhibition of Spanish industrial products abroad, the Spanish Chambers organize the participation of their member firms in the most important international Fairs all over the world, in order that they may promote their industrial products in foreign countries.

The assistance of the Spanish Chambers to the firms participating in international fairs abroad, not only comprises the organization of such participation, but also includes economic aid to the interested enterprises, in order to promote the exports of industrial products.

8. Trade Missions

The Spanish Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping attach great importance to trade missions, both of the Spanish firms abroad and of foreign enterprises to Spain.

The trade missions of Spanish firms are carefully proposed by the Spanish Chambers in order to obtain the highest benefits, not only for the enterprises participating in them, but also for the whole industry of the country.

The Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping in Spain prepare every year a programme of trade missions abroad which is submitted to the Ministry of Commerce and to the High Council of Chambers of Commerce, in order to co-ordinate the effort and the organization of each one.

Before organizing a trade mission, the expert staff of the Chambers make an economic survey of the markets in the countries to be visited in order to ascertain which Spanish products seem to be competitive.

Once having decided the foreign countries which are to be visited by the mission, the Chambers select the more representative firms in the sector concerned according to their export capacity, production, competitive prices abroad, etc.

When not only the firms, but also the persons representing them have been designated, the future members of the mission hold meetings in order to co-ordinate their action and get acquainted with the programme of visits and trade contacts that the Chambers have prepared for them abroad.

At the end of the mission every member must make a survey regarding their experiences and also their opinions concerning the possibilities of their products in the markets of the countries visited, in order that the Chamber may be made aware of the results of each mission.

The collaboration of the Chambers with the enterprises participating in these missions refers not only to the organization, but also is extended to include economic aid concerning the travel expenses, hotel accomodation, etc.

As for the foreign trade missions that visit Spain, the Chambers are in charge of preparing the adequate contacts for their members with the Spanish firms that belong to the industrial sectors represented.

9. Bilateral Committees of businessmen

In order to improve the exchanges and the industrial co-operation with some countries, in which there is no Spanish Chamber of Commerce, the High Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping has created Bilateral Committees of businessmen in agreement with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of each country.

At present we have such Committees with South Korea, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

These Committees are operating on the basis of two Sections, one in Spain and the other in the partner country, in which the interested firms are represented, and they hold once or twice a year plenary meetings of both Sections in order to promote joint programmes for the development of commercial, industrial and technical co-operation in the two countries.

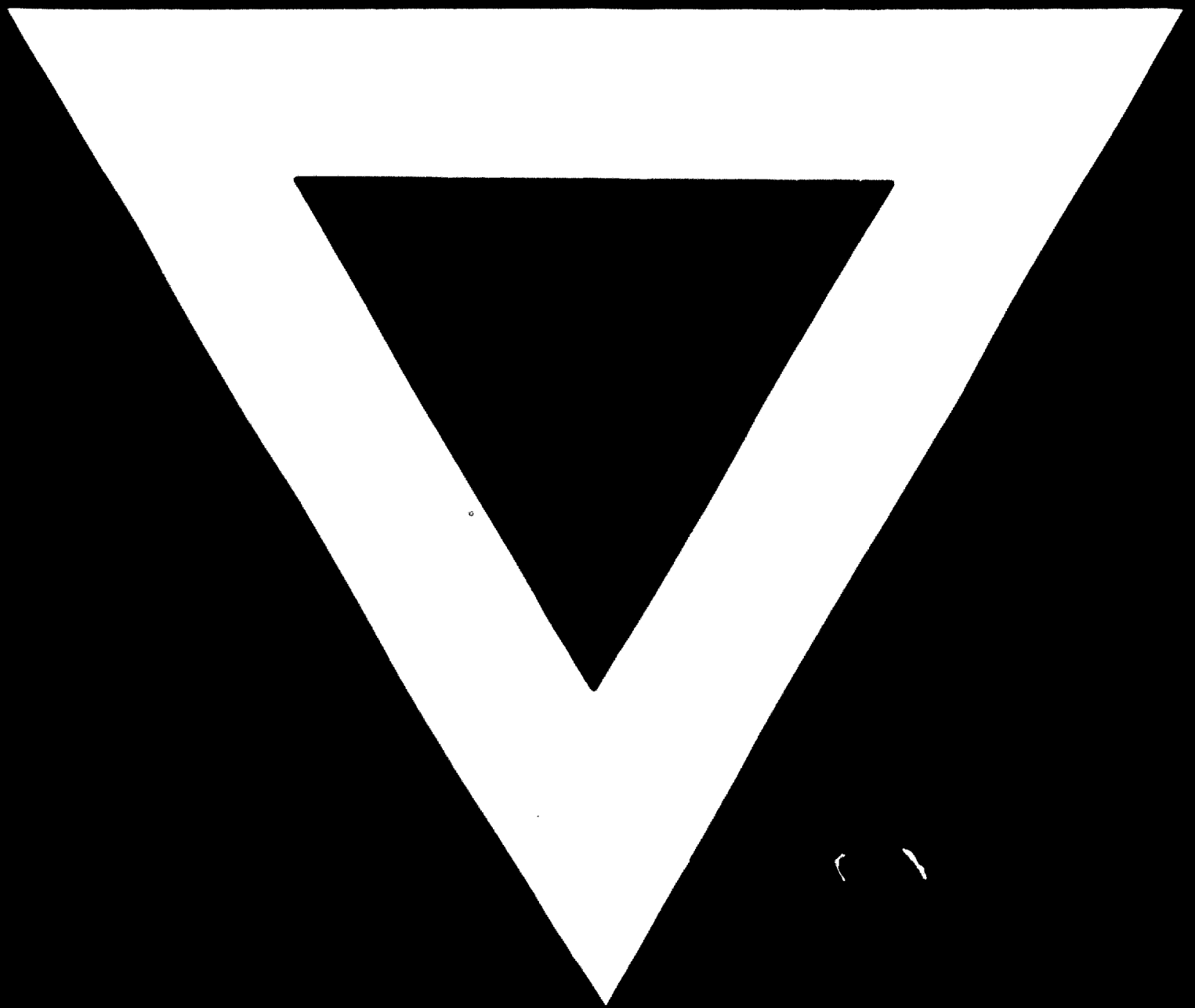
The principal services that such Committees can offer to their members, are the following:

- Periodical information concerning trade, industry and finance legislation.
- Information on opportunities of trade or industrial co-operation.
- Organization of trade missions, round tables, technical meetings, etc. between representatives of both countries,
- Preparation of economic surveys of the partner country.
- Information on transport conditions between both countries.

At the present moment we can say that the work of these Committees has been of great help in the solution of many problems that have arisen in the economic relationship between firms of Spain and such countries.

Finally, we should like to point out that in 1962 an Agreement was signed in Madrid between the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries and the High Council of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Shipping, creating the Spanish Section in the General Union of Arab Chambers and the Arab Section in the High Council of Spanish Chambers which will be an excellent means of setting up the basis of a further industrial co-operation between the Arab world and Spain.





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