

Chile: Innovation, Sustainability and Strategic Partnership

In recent years, Chile has established itself as one of the most dynamic and attractive economies in Latin America. This process has not been coincidental but rather the result of a strategy focused on innovation, sustainability, and the attraction of foreign investment. The **Global Innovation Index**, one of the leading international indicators of competitiveness, ranks Chile in 2025 as the most innovative country in the region. This recognition can be explained by advances in areas such as institutional quality, human capital, infrastructure, and market sophistication—factors that are essential to sustaining stable growth.



Sunrise in Santiago from San Cristóbal Hill // Author: María José Pedraza // Fundación Imagen de Chile

This leadership in innovation not only impacts Chile's domestic economy but also positions the country as a strategic partner for Europe, and particularly for Spain. Moreover, Chile is one of the nations with the highest number of free trade agreements worldwide, making it an excellent and attractive platform for internationalization and business development with the Asia-Pacific region, the Americas, and Europe. Among these agreements, the **EU–Chile Advanced Framework Agreement** and its **Interim Trade Agreement (ITA)** are particularly noteworthy, as they eliminate most tariffs on goods between the EU and Chile, thus promoting greater competition and market access.

In the **construction sector**, Chile presents one of the most significant industries within this equation. Currently, it represents around **6.5% of the national GDP** and accounts for about **8% of national employment**, making it a driving force of economic and social development. The performance of this sector often serves as a barometer for overall economic activity: when construction grows, so does the country's wealth. Furthermore, the sector has undergone a profound transformation in recent years through the adoption of digital technologies, sustainable building methods, and new management models aimed at improving efficiency and reducing environmental impact.



Drone view of the Biobío River and railway bridge // Author: Los Contra // Fundación Imagen de Chile

Within the European context, **Spain** occupies a privileged position in its relationship with Chile. Beyond cultural closeness and linguistic ties, this connection is reflected in tangible figures: Spanish companies have already generated more than **140,000 jobs in Chile**, with a presence in key sectors such as energy, water, agriculture, construction, and financial services. This level of engagement demonstrates that Spain has become one of the most relevant international players in the Chilean economy. Spanish investment, particularly in engineering, spans the entire Chilean territory—from **Arica and Parinacota to Magallanes and the Chilean Antarctic Region**—through the construction of roads, bridges, railways, hospitals, airports, and other infrastructure. Moreover, Spanish companies have contributed technological and innovative developments to project management, enabling Chile to benefit from specialized knowledge transfer.

This commitment by foreign companies aligns with Chile's national strategy. The country has assumed a leading role in the fight against climate change, implementing state policies to ensure a more sustainable future. Thanks to its privileged geography—home to the **Atacama Desert**, one of the sunniest places on Earth—Chile has become a major exporter of clean energy and a strategic partner for Europe in the global energy transition.

The Energy 2050 Plan serves as a roadmap toward a diversified and environmentally responsible energy system. Among its most ambitious goals is the elimination of all coal-fired power plants by **2040**, placing Chile at the forefront of the region's energy transition.



Solar panels in Cerro Dominador // Fundación Imagen de Chile

In terms of **engineering and civil infrastructure projects**, the **National Circular Economy Strategy in Construction in Chile** stands out. Its objective is to coordinate efforts across the construction sector's value chain through a participatory and collaborative process to define circular economy initiatives aligned with related public policies and implementable in the short term by the industry.

Equally important is the **Circular Economy Roadmap for Construction 2035**, a project led by the Ministries of Environment, Public Works, and Housing, along with Corfo and the Construye2025 program, which actively promotes circular economy practices in construction and waste management aligned with sustainability principles. It establishes five strategic pillars focused on sustainable material and waste management, regulatory compliance, and impact reduction.

Another significant initiative is the **Circular Construction Network**, one of the most relevant projects of 2024, managed by Construye2025, Corfo, the Government of Santiago, the Technological Development Corporation (CDT), and the Chilean Chamber of Construction (CChC). Its goal is to promote circularity in construction materials and foster more sustainable practices, such as the implementation of the BIM methodology (Building Information Modeling). The objective is for at least 70% of construction projects in the country to adopt BIM by 2028, enabling greater efficiency, resource savings, and digitalization of construction processes.



Airport and aircraft under bright spotlights on the tarmac // Author: Los Contra // Fundación Imagen de Chile

Furthermore, Chile's importance on the international stage—especially in its relationship with Spain—is clearly reflected in the work and projects carried out by the Chile–Spain Foundation (Fundación Chile-España, FCE), a private business institution established in Madrid in 2011. Its main objective is to increase economic, cultural, academic-scientific, and social exchange between Chile and Spain through activities that promote cooperation, the exchange of experiences, investment and business opportunities, entrepreneurship, and technological innovation.

Its patrons and partners include major Spanish companies investing in Chile and developing large-scale projects across key economic sectors, as well as academic institutions with long-standing experience in fostering knowledge. All are committed to promoting bilateral relations, contributing to sustained growth, and strengthening their corporate image in both countries.

The Foundation's strong commitment to the construction sector and Spanish investment has been reflected in several recent initiatives. Over the past year, it organized a breakfast-colloquium in Madrid with Chile's Minister of Public Works, the Director General of Concessions, and the Director of InvestChile (May), a networking event with the Technological Center for Innovation in Construction (CTEC), Corfo, and the Spanish Construction Technology Platform (PTEC) (April), a seminar on Circular Economy and Construction held in Santiago de Chile (September), and collaborated on Chile Day, where Chile's main financial sectors were presented, showcasing the country as a reliable and attractive destination for Spanish investment, and analyzing potential sectors for investment where FCE's patron companies play a crucial role.



San Antonio // Author: Guy Wenborne // Fundación Imagen de Chile

Thus, the Chile–Spain Foundation creates significant networking opportunities and has consolidated itself as a key player in building a shared future—one in which Chile and Spain move forward together toward greater development, sustainability, and innovation in the field of construction.