



The Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs presides over the official presentation of *Pirena* in Barcelona

- Minister Huguet pointed to the importance of this environment-friendly race as a **“means of projecting the Catalanian Pyrenees worldwide”**
- The Catalanian Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs invested 56,000 euros in this year’s edition of the Pyrenean white route

Monday, 9 January 2006.— Josep Huguet, the Catalanian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, presided over the official presentation of *Pirena* today, the dog-pulled sled crossing that reaches its 16th edition this year. After sixteen years, the Minister remarked on the consolidation of *Pirena* as the leading European sled dog race and renewed the support of the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs to the race, participating in it with an investment of 56,000 euros. Similarly, he pointed out that this race is an exemplary event, used as an important stimulus in such different spheres as mountain tourism, sporting tourism and cultural tourism, and **“it contributes with an added value to the snow tourism offer and to the Brand Pyrenees”**.

According to Minister Huguet, **“*Pirena is a very important means to project the image of Catalonia at the international level*”**. **“The international repercussion of *Pirena* cannot be denied”** –last year it generated more than one hundred million impacts in the communications media–, and for this reason **“to collaborate with this race is an asset to promote the Catalanian Pyrenees worldwide”**.

Pirena is the most prestigious race of its kind in Europe. It seeks to promote and foment snow sports – *mushing* in particular – and to promote the Pyrenees in an integral way, in its firm conviction about ecology and the protection of the natural environment. In this sense, the titular of Tourism recalled that this race **“not only distinguishes the fastest, but also the team that is most respectful with the environment, and the one that looks best after its animals, apart from prizes to companionship, fair play and respect for nature”**. **“This is also part of the objectives of the government of Catalonia”**, Minister Huguet concluded.



■ **Comunicat** de premsa ■

On the other hand, Minister Huguet reiterated the strong belief of *Turisme de Catalunya* in snow tourism, which translated itself into a 700,000-euro investment destined to promote the offer of the Catalanian ski resorts.

The official presentation of the crossing took place in Barcelona's Cathedral square and counted on the presence of Pep Pagès, the Head of *Pirena*; Joan Antoni Samaranch, the Honorary President of the IOC; Rafael Niubó, Catalonia's Secretary-General of Sports; Isabel Galobardes, the Catalanian Director-General of Tourism; Pere Alcober, the Councillor of Sports of Barcelona Town Hall; and Carles Argenté, the CEO of Affinity Advance.

Six stages in the Catalanian Pyrenees and the traditional finish line at La Molina

The 16th edition of *Pirena* will run from 21st January to 4th February, across 500 kilometres of mountain snow. A total of 220 people and 700 athlete dogs from more than 15 countries will take part in this year's edition. The following are among the countries participating: Spain, Portugal, Andorra, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Canada, United States and Argentina.

Six of the stages will take place within the Catalanian Pyrenees, namely:

- 25 January. Vaquèira-Beret (10 a.m.) 25 km.
- 25 January. Beret-Montgarri (5.30 p.m.) 20 km.
- 26 January. Montgarri-Bonabe-Beret (8.30 a.m.) 48 km.
- 28 January. Portainé (10 a.m.) 32 km.
- 29 January. Portainé (10 a.m.) 22 km.
- 4 February. La Molina (11 a.m.) 18 km.