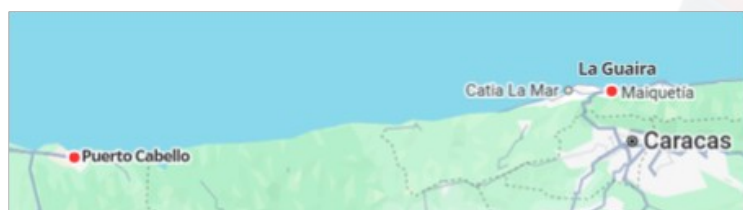


The costs of an earthquake: impact on port logistics

On 24 June 2026, Venezuela experienced a double earthquake that paralysed one of the country's main ports, the Port of La Guaira in La Guaira State, for 28 days, forcing all maritime cargo to be redirected to Puerto Cabello (PC), Carabobo State, and causing damage estimated at US\$ 300 million to logistics infrastructure, according to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.



The north coast of Venezuela

In addition, costs arose in relation to physical and administrative matters:

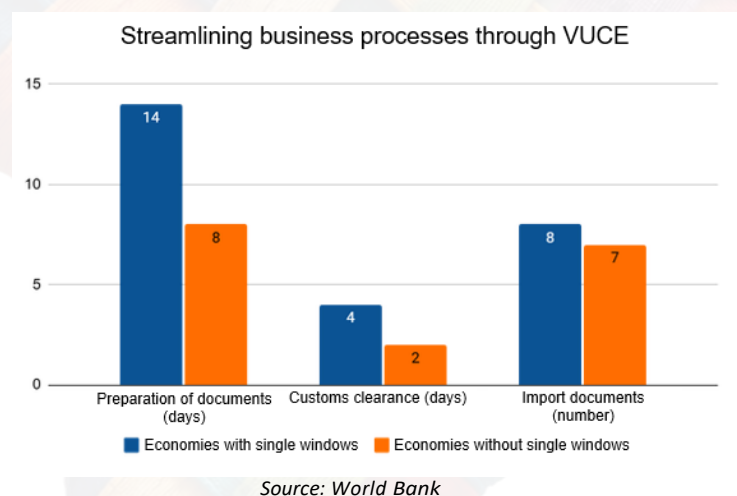
- **Operational delays and diverted cargo of up to ten days.** Initially, the installed capacity of the PC terminal was considered sufficient, with an estimated storage capacity of 184,000 TEUs (more than double that of La Guaira, according to the PC Chamber of Commerce); however, operational delays were recorded, due both to fuel shortages and to the lack of available cranes and electricity rationing.
- **Increase in freight costs** for the transport of goods to and from PC. In the case of goods arriving in Caracas, the invoice, which previously covered a journey of approximately 27 km, now covers a journey of approximately 210 km.
- **Delays in issuing invoices and acceptance certificates,** due to a lack of coordination between customs offices across the country. Although the digital document clearance process continued in La Guaira, unloading and inspection took place at PC.

Various computerised customs management systems are used in the region, such as Argentina's Computerised Customs Procedures System. In Venezuela, the Automated Customs System could not be used due to a lack of interoperability between customs authorities and differences in administrative processes.

This scenario highlights the need for standardisation and interoperability, providing a lesson for the country and the region on the benefits of streamlining trade and customs processes.

There are regional examples of best practices in similar scenarios, notably: the response by the **Chilean Government's National Customs Service** to the earthquake of 27 February 2010, when it issued guidelines to ensure the smooth running of customs operations at border crossings, ports and airports, facilitating the entry of people and goods. This, in turn, set a precedent for trade processes and the subsequent implementation of the Integrated Foreign Trade System (SICEX).

Similar measures can be taken with the aim of facilitating the movement of goods, encouraging the development and application of digital processes. Globally, it has been recognised that the proper design, dissemination and implementation of these digital mechanisms, such as **Foreign Trade Single Windows (VUCE)**, streamline trade processes and reduce the number of days required to prepare documents.



The chart shows how the implementation of VUCE reduces the number of days required to prepare documents by up to 40% and processing times by up to 50%. In this way, single windows increase speed, punctuality, information processing and reduce response times.

In the event of unforeseen events such as an earthquake, the continuity of business activity will depend, to a large extent, on the institutional capacity to anticipate risks, coordinate response mechanisms and assess their effectiveness, thereby ensuring a timely response and minimising their impact on the country's economic dynamics.

Ricardo Zarramera

Alixis Mariño

