THE SECRET OF 50 YEARS AND 100 SUCCESSFUL EDITIONS

**Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags ready to kick off its 100th edition**

**From 13 to 16 January 2024, 1,300 exhibitors and brands from 39 countries will animate the exhibition halls of Riva del Garda and celebrate this significant milestone of 100 editions with a Celebration Night, where historical stakeholders who have long been part of the event and contributed to its success for so many years, will be honoured. The celebrations will involve the trade fair's entire community, including the local territory. The brand-new Highlights Area dedicated to fashion and consumer trends for bags (and, starting from June, shoes too) will enrich the event’s role as a hub for international trade with the unique opportunity to gain a detailed insight on current industry trends. Visitors and exhibitors will also enjoy all the usual appointments with the Market Focus and Innovation Village Retail.**

The 100th edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags inevitably opens with a question: how could Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags, such a long-lasting and successful event, possibly have come to be in Riva del Garda, a small Italian town in Trentino? An event capable of attracting people from all over the world, of generating such an impressive turnover and becoming a touchstone for international trade in the footwear and, today, even the accessories market.

Over its first 100 editions, the fair has hosted roughly 70,000 footwear collections. An underestimation, no doubt, because this assumes that at every edition, each exhibitor presented only one collection, which we know not to be the case. The event has welcomed some 500 thousand visitors and, at each edition over the last 10 years, has persuaded industry operators from at least 100 different countries to come to Riva del Garda.

Today, about 80% of visitors come from Europe and a good 20% from non-European countries (a very high number compared to other events).

For its 100th edition, after 50 years of business and a pandemic in-between that led many international events to close up shop, the exhibition has confirmed itself as a global benchmark for the international trade of footwear and accessories among buyers looking for a broad range of styles, prices and quality. The exhibition offers products from all corners of the globe, from Italy to South America, with unrivalled visibility in Asian markets (China and India are in the lead, but not alone) and a keen eye for more or less emerging markets, for example, South-East Asia or Africa.
The first figures report 1,300 exhibitors and brands from 39 nations (+15% compared to the January 2023 edition), with Gardabags (bags and accessories) counting around 50 companies from Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey.

An offering that attracts buyers from literally everywhere, from the United States to Asia, involving the entire European market.

This is also thanks to the constant and fundamental **support of ITA-Italian Trade Agency**, which has developed an important incoming programme involving buyers and journalists from 26 countries. The many highlights of the program include participation – for the first time – by representatives from Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Venezuela and Costa Rica.

Buyers for whom Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has designed several services to make their experience at the fair the best possible: the **digitalisation of the Fair Catalogue**, now interactive and able to help operators filter the offer, or complete assistance for the **practical organisation of travel and accommodation** thanks to ON THE GO, the dedicated travel agency.

The question as to how these numbers were and still are possible was answered by the senior managers of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, the company that organises Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags. According to Chairman **Roberto Pellegrini,** “in 100 editions, Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has proven to be essential in preserving the competitiveness of Italian and European distribution channels. For Italy, the event is an opportunity to be and remain the platform of choice for worldwide distribution: Riva del Garda is where international trade happens.”

Pellegrini thus revealed the secret behind the event's success: “It has always been an event capable of interpreting changes in the market and accommodating them. It has added value to the territory thanks to the successful collaboration of the public and private sector, opened up to international markets, reorganised its management structure and forged close relationships with manufacturing and distribution chains.

It is precisely our internationality, superior to all other industry events, that makes us such an important crossroads for trade. On a global level, 2 out of every 3 pairs of shoes are bought in a country other than the one where they were made, and much of the trade encouraging this trend occurs precisely at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags.”

The event is a mix of successful ingredients, among which the decision to dedicate ample space and attention to Innovation and solutions that help the entire industry – especially distribution – renew itself and keep up with the challenges of the market. **Director Alessandra Albarelli** provides one example: "For us, innovation means implementing initiatives that leverage the many opportunities offered by new technologies today. Having ‘digitalised’ the event allows us to offer a more inclusive, immersive and functional trade fair experience. The **Innovation Village Retail**, launched several editions ago in collaboration with the Retail Hub, has offered the industry a way of getting in touch with and evaluating new avenues of development.” Like that proposed by two start-ups: the French Finds and the Spanish If Returns, exhibiting at the first edition of 2024 and which have developed two solutions to better manage overstock and e-commerce returns, thus promoting a more sustainable and, why not, more profitable circular economy. "This type of innovation," continues Albarelli, "can truly revolutionise the industry, while at the same time emphasising the theme of environmental and social sustainability, which is very dear to Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags. So much so that this year, we have announced a new **charity** initiative in support of **Sole4Souls**, an organisation that transforms unused shoes and clothing into opportunities, preventing them from going to waste and making good use of them instead, providing assistance, creating jobs and giving people a way out of poverty.”

But the novelties of the 100th edition don't end there, as **GianPaola Pedretti, Exhibition Manager** of the event points out: "In the **new** **Highlights Area**, developed in collaboration with Arsutoria, we will discuss emerging trends with an eye to the volume footwear, leather goods and accessories industry. The pilot project, which kicks off in the January edition focusing only on bags, will find its fullest expression in June and become a stable component of the event in 2025.”

What more could we possibly expect for the event’s 50-year celebration? "There’s a few other things in store," Pedretti continues, "such as the **Celebration Night\***, the party involving all those who have made Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags possible and have attended many of the 100 editions, not to mention the presentation of a **short film** and a **photo exhibition** tracing the event’s five decades of history.”

In 2024, Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is set to offer the market two unmissable editions that will not only celebrate an important milestone but above all, launch new initiatives in preparation for the event’s future as the go-to platform for all those interested in doing and furthering business in the footwear and accessories industry.

*\*The Celebration Night at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is supported by several partners. Main Partner ERI Expo Riva International, partners On The Go, China Leather Publisher Co. LTD., G&F Co., LTD., Xiamen L&C Int'l Exhibition Co., LTD, Guangzhou Newtop Exhibition Business Co.Ltd., Guangzhou Yaqite Industrial Co., Ltd., CLE- Council for leather exports, and contributors Tamaris and EIB - Aegean Leather And Leather Products.*

**About Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags**Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags, which welcomes visitors from all over the world and exhibitors from more than 40 countries, is organised by Riva del Garda Fierecongressi SpA and is the most important international trade fair dedicated to volume footwear, leather goods and accessories.
The next edition is scheduled from 15 to 18 June 2024 at the Riva del Garda Exhibition Centre.