**“50 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS, RELATIONSHIPS AND BUSINESS”. THE 101st EDITION OF EXPO RIVA SCHUH & GARDABAGS OPENS**

**From 15 to 18 June, 1,300 exhibitors, brands and companies representing 40 nations will liven up the exhibition halls at the 101st edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags. 50,000 square metres of total exhibition area, 11 fully occupied halls and 4 participating hotels. The area dedicated to bags, luggage and accessories hosts 47 companies from Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Taiwan and Türkiye. An impressive 19 events are scheduled, with market focuses, fashion and trend talks, appointments with innovation and celebrations for the 101st edition.**

Just a couple of years ago, some predicted the end of in-person exhibitions in favour of virtual events. Never has a prediction been so wrong. Recent studies by Prometeia demonstrate that companies participating in trade fair events experience growth rates nearly double the average and how, over the next three years, these companies could contribute an additional growth of almost one percentage point to their industries. The research also shows that more than 50% of Italian exports originate from contacts made during exhibitions.

This data also applies on a global level, as shown by the success of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags, which just this morning celebrated the opening of its **101st edition** in Riva del Garda. The most important international trade fair dedicated to mass-produced footwear, leather goods and accessories, scheduled from **June 15 to 18** is not only a sell-out but also has a lengthy waiting list of companies eager to showcase their products.

In remembering the passing of Friedrich Karl Eichholz, one of the founders of the event and a great friend of Riva del Garda, the **President of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, Roberto Pellegrini**, revealed the secret to the success of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags: “It all comes down to the vision of those who believed they could do business in a beautiful and relaxing location, and in recent years, the expansion towards international markets and the consistent effort to involve all major manufacturing countries worldwide.”

**Alessandra Albarelli**, Director of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, reiterated the same concept: “Thanks to our close cooperation with the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), we have welcomed 150 new hosted buyers and journalists from 43 countries to the fair today. This impressive turnout is also the result of the diligent efforts of our staff, who in recent years have visited all the main manufacturing districts and met with key buyers across the globe, from China to the United States, and from India to Latin America. Every day, we strive to increase the number of visitors at the fair through our network of 15 international delegates representing 80 countries worldwide, working to expand the global footwear community at Riva del Garda.”

Albarelli also reveals another important factor in the success of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags: “We are not just focused on numbers; we are committed to being careful custodians of our community. To this end, we have developed demand and supply matching services such as the Market Focuses, Business Scout and an Artificial Intelligence-assisted Digital Platform. All tools that make it easier for buyers to find the products they are looking for by identifying their type, price range and style.”

**THE NUMBERS AT THE FAIR**

Now, we take a look at the numbers for this edition, which will feature **1,300 exhibitors, with brands and companies** from **40 countries**, including the world's largest manufacturing nations. 37% of the exhibitors come from geographical Europe (of which 20% Italy) and the remaining 63% from non-European countries.

Which nations are most represented? China leads the ranks, accounting for almost 35% of the attendance, followed by Italy (20%) and Türkiye and India with 11%. Notably, there are also several producers from Brazil (around 3%) and, in particular, companies from the flood-affected districts of Rio Grande do Sul. These companies have gone to great lengths to participate in the fair despite the enormous challenges they are facing.

Visitors at the 101st edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags will enjoy the usual variety of offerings in terms of both product types and manufacturers with either their own brands or open to private labelling. The price ranges are also varied, spanning from 8 euros to 60 euros, with a solid representation reaching up to 100 euros and above. Sustainability is also a key focus: 18% of exhibitors offer certified products.

Impressive figures that are further enhanced by a gross exhibition area of **50,000 square metres, 11 fully occupied halls,** **4 participating hotels** and no less than **19 organised** **events**. **47 companies** from Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Taiwan and Türkiye animate the **Gardabags** area dedicated to bags, luggage and accessories.

**THE INSTITUTIONS**

The opening was also attended by numerous national and local institutions.

**Maurizio Fugatti, President of the Autonomous Province of Trento**, stated, "Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is an important event for the Riva del Garda community and the entire Trentino region. Our system has successfully developed this event into a must-attend international appointment for industry professionals. Despite the challenging years of Covid, the event has managed to overcome objective difficulties and project itself into the future. In wishing everyone a successful edition, I want to assure you all that the Province is ready to provide the necessary support in order that this important trade fair can take up and win – I am sure – the future challenges awaiting it.”

“Over the years, the collaboration between the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) and Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags in foreign markets has become increasingly cohesive and effective, making the Riva event a cornerstone of our promotional program. That’s why, in addition to expressing great satisfaction with the results achieved thus far, we are already set to start working on the next year, made possible thanks to the resources already approved in ITA’s 2024/25 planning. We aim to continue supporting an event that has proven capable of attracting the most important operators from all over the world to Italy, facilitating connections with the Italian offerings showcased at the fair,” stated **Matteo Masini, Head of the Consumer Goods Office of ITA – Italian Trade Agency**.

**Fabrizio Lobasso, Deputy Director General for the Promotion of the Country System and Central Director for Economic Internationalisation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, highlighted the crucial role that an event like the one in Riva del Garda plays in the success of the entire national system: “If today, despite numerous geopolitical complexities, Italy is achieving international success – as evidenced by ISTAT data released yesterday, showing a 10.7% growth in exports compared to last year – it is thanks to the institutional network and close cooperation with non-governmental forces, such as those that organised this event. Working together with institutions and the business community, we are dedicated to promoting

the quintessential Italian values of beauty, creativity, imagination and adaptability that have made us famous worldwide.”

 **Roberto Luongo, Advisor to the Minister for Enterprises and Made in Italy**, closed the round table: “Over the past five years, Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has significantly expanded its influence, not only on an international scale but also within Italy. It has achieved this by effectively bringing the world together at Riva del Garda, but also promoting ‘Made in Italy’ by showcasing our national expertise. Italy's positioning as the fifth largest trade power in the world, on the brink of surpassing Japan, is owing to our entrepreneurs and events like Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags. These initiatives have facilitated a 2.3% growth in exports in the first four months of the year with a surplus nearing 18 billion euros. Italy must prioritise internationalisation, and therefore must prioritise events like the one in Riva del Garda, which has been focusing on the international sphere for some time. It must do so because our exports account for 32% of the national GDP and, if you add services and tourism, they exceed 50%. Considering that Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags brings with it exports, services and tourism, this fair must naturally be considered a strategic asset for our country.”

**THE INITIATIVES**

The **Innovation Village Retail**, developed in collaboration with Retail Hub, returns: the initiative will feature 10 international startups from 7 countries (Estonia, Italy, Israel, UK, Spain, Sweden, USA) focusing on tech innovation within the industry. The **Highlights Area**, in cooperation with Arsutoria, is also re-confirmed: workshops, talks with industry experts and 20 prototypes from the collections of 12 exhibitors, selected by a fashion committee and on display as trend references during the event.

Prominent at this edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is the emphasis on **sustainability**: soft mobility, recyclable carpeting and ever-greener stands are just some of the initiatives put in place in favour of the environment. Inclusiveness is yet another key focus, also brought to life together with the Charity Programme in cooperation with Soles4Souls, aiming to raise exhibitor awareness about the reuse and donation of unsold products, transforming them into opportunities.

The opening featured the presentation of **“A step in history, 50 years of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags**. **1974-2024, 100 successful editions”** (produced by Foto Shoe 30, with graphic design by Edizioni AF), a monograph celebrating 50 years of Expo Riva

Schuh & Gardabags. A book commemorating the birth and evolution of the first 100 editions of the event, spanning from 1974 to 2024; a retrospective aimed at creating momentum and directing our focus towards the future.

**Celebrations** for the milestone of these 101 editions will involve the entire community with **Summer Celebration Nights** after the fair. On Saturday 15, Sunday 16 and Monday 17 June, Olivi beach will open its doors, starting at 9.30 p.m., for three evenings of music dedicated to the footwear community, but also to citizens and tourists.

“These initiatives underscore the team's ability to innovate and the international stature of this trade fair. So much so that by year’s end, Riva del Garda Fierecongressi will invest 25 million euros to expand the exhibition centre, which needs to grow to accommodate the many new exhibitors who want to join the event," concludes Roberto Pellegrini.