THE RIVA DEL GARDA TRADE FAIR CLOSES WITH OVER 9,000 VISITORS, GROWTH FROM LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE, ESPECIALLY GERMANY AND ITALY

**VOICES FROM THE 101ST EDITION OF EXPO RIVA SCHUH & GARDABAGS: SATISFACTION AND FURTHER INTERNATIONALISATION**

“Entering the US market requires huge investments. Our business model makes doing business in the US easy and risk-free.”

*Joe Trybulec - Integra (USA)*

“The Business Scout service allowed me to focus on finding suitable partners for my needs, which also meant I avoided wasting other exhibitors’ time.”

*Andrew Wood - Steve Madden (Hong Kong - China)*

“The flood in Rio Grande do Sul devastated countless businesses and put many people in dire straits. But all the Brazilian brands wanted to be here at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags regardless, because this fair is crucial for orders, kick-starting work and giving hope to the workers.”

*Letícia Sperb Masselli - Abicalcados*

“Our startup offers the market a solution making it very simple and efficient to manage sustainability issues, crucial in light of new regulations adopted by the European Union.”

*Juanjo Mestre - Dcycle (Spain)*

“I've got no roots but my home was never on the ground.”

*Alice Merton*

“Following the huge success of e-commerce during the pandemic, the situation has now stabilised, but we are at the fair looking for new partners and suppliers able to stimulate the market with fashionable and well-priced offerings.”

*Beate Anna Rehm - La Colibrì (Germany)*

“The footwear market in Uganda is faced with numerous challenges, yet it represents a vast potential export market for many manufacturers.”

*Marion Among - Foot Candy (Uganda)*

“Transparency is a stylistic detail that will undoubtedly shift from the catwalks to next seasons' best-sellers, from ballerinas to boots.”

*MariaCristina Rossi - Arsutoria (Italy)*

“I never thought I would find such a varied range of collections and suppliers from literally all over the world. This was my first time at Riva del Garda, but I will do everything I can to return.”

*Viona Maulidia - Matahari (Indonesia)*

There are numerous voices flowing through the aisles that catch our attention at trade fairs. Those mentioned above are just a taste of what went on during **the 101st edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags held in Riva del Garda from 15 to 18 June 2024**.

Voices recounting an event that solidifies its status as a global hub for the mass-produced footwear and accessories market and the ideal venue for showcasing the brilliance of Made in Italy. An event serving as the perfect channel for gaining insights on industry trends, the most stimulating markets to approach and the most interesting innovations certain to raise businesses to new heights.

The voices also include a verse from a record-setting hit, symbolising the festive atmosphere where industry players forge new connections and strengthen existing ones in a uniquely relaxed setting. Herein lies the strength and uniqueness of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags: not just a business event but also a fair that celebrates the beauty of its distinctive territory, with exhibitors at hotels too and plenty of evening events to promote networking that transcends the confines of the Exhibition Centre.

**HOW MANY VOICES?**

So how many voices rang out across the aisles? Because numbers always provide a clearer indication of an event’s success.

**More than 9,000 people attended the fair**, marking significant growth compared to both January 2024 and last year’s June edition.

The return of several countries to Riva del Garda following the pandemic was also notable: Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Falkland Island, Eritrea, Suriname, completing an ever-widening global representation **(100 countries**).

“Over the past few days, we have seen a widespread and overall sense of satisfaction," says **Roberto Pellegrini**, President of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi. “In particular, I think it is important to highlight the **increase in visitors from Latin America and Europe**, and especially the **significant return of buyers from Germany and Italy**, up from June 2023.”

Buyers whose voices met those of **1,300 exhibitors, brands and companies representing** **40 countries**, including the world's major producers (80% international, 20% Italian) spread across a total exhibition area of **50,000** square metres, **11** fully occupied hallsand **4 participating hotels**. The **Gardabags** area dedicated to bags, luggage and accessories was hosted by **47 companies** from Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Taiwan and Turkey.

**MUCH MORE THAN A “SIMPLE” FAIR**

The voices spoke not only of the **new collections** for the upcoming **Spring Summer 2025** season, but also echoed throughout the **19 events** that animated the 4-day fair. All aimed at offering a complete overview of the footwear, bags and fashion accessories market: from the analysis of consumer trends to the showcasing of several exhibitors' models, carefully selected for the **Highlights Area**; from the in-depth analysis of markets in different countries through the **Market Focuses** to the celebration of the event's 50th anniversary with the highly successful **Summer Celebration Nights** .

“The enthusiastic participation in all the events we offered at this edition has validated our vision: to innovate the trade fair format and provide an event that enhances business opportunities well beyond the traditional stand space. We recognised the importance of going beyond the ‘mere’ organisation of a trade fair and the value of encouraging strong relationships among industry players. We are already seeing the results of these efforts with the emergence of a genuine community that conducts business at Riva del Garda in a totally unique atmosphere and style," says the General Manager of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, **Alessandra Albarelli**.

At the 101st edition too, there was a high focus on innovation dedicated to distribution, thanks to the presence of **10 startups from 7 countries**: The renewed interest in **Innovation Village Retail** further underscores the invaluable role of innovation in the fashion industry, of which the industry itself has proven to be keenly aware.

In particular, the presentation by **Tymely**, which integrates process mining, automation tools, AI and LLM to model customer service processes in the retail sector, caught the attention of the 18 jurors tasked with selecting the winner of the **Startup Competition**. A solution enabling up to 80% automation of customer service tasks and the handling of even the most complex tickets. While existing “chatbot” solutions mainly address frequently asked questions, Tymely also deals with requests requiring deep system access, with ticket coverage reaching an unprecedented 80%, including partial order exchanges, changed shipping addresses, returns and more.

Tymely and the other two finalist startups (Fibble and YouAddict), will accompany the fair organisers to Copenhagen during the next stage of **Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World**, where innovation dedicated to distribution will be promoted in collaboration with the Danish Retailers Association.

And if a voice often tells more than words, the tone of this edition undoubtedly resounds with optimism: “This year of record growth, in which we also celebrated 50 years of business and 100 editions, motivates us to further pursue internationalisation, ensuring the best possible matching of supply and demand. So, we will continue to visit industry players all around the world with the Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World project. We will head to China, India and Turkey in the coming months seeking to further expand the diversity of collections available at the **next edition from 11 to 14 January 2025**," concludes **GianPaola Pedretti**, Exhibition Manager.