Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World

**VOICES FROM SPAIN: ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL MARKETS FOR THE PRODUCTION AND SALE OF FOOTWEAR AND LEATHER GOODS**

**The expanding growth of the Spanish footwear and leather goods market bodes well for export-oriented local manufacturing businesses that year after year, attract the interest of international buyers at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags. The focus is increasingly on sustainability and medium/high quality. The main difficulties encountered include a labour shortage and concern for the German market, which seems to be in retreat.**

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The aim of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has never been to simply sell exhibition space, but rather to build, edition after edition (number 99 will be held at Riva del Garda from 17th to 20th June 2023) a **business platform capable of growing the footwear and leather goods industry** and providing the market with key opportunities to expand its boundaries.

To do so, however, it’s important to know the market. Based on this premise comes **Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World**, a series of initiatives bringing the Riva event into close contact with the industry's institutions, manufacturers and distributors all throughout the world with numerous targeted events, company visits and personal meetings. **Spain** was the initiative’s most recent focus.

**WHY SPAIN?**

Spain has long been regarded as one of the most important international production poles. Suffice it to quote a few figures (source FICE) to clarify the concept: in **2022, Spanish footwear exports reached EUR 3,056 million and 159 million pairs** (+22% in value and +6% in volume compared to 2021. And +14.2% in value and +2% in volume compared to 2019).

The European Union is the main buyer of Spanish footwear, accounting for 77% of total exports in volume and 71% in value. **France, Italy, Germany, Portugal and Poland** top the list of destinations. Exports to the EU reached EUR 2,168 million and 122 million pairs, an increase of 28% in value and 8% in pairs compared to last year, while the average price increased by 19%.

The **United States**, on the other hand, is the top non-EU destination, with 28.7% growth, exceeding the pre-pandemic figures by 5 percentage points. The **UK**, post-Brexit, emerges as the second largest market with a 17% increase, albeit 28% lower than in 2019. **Turkey** shows the most striking growth: +45%, which becomes +95% if one considers the pre-pandemic figures. The opposite is true in the case of **China**, which remains the fourth most important market outside the EU, but whose import figures from Spain show a marked decline: -38%.

This is also a crucial market for **Italy**, which enjoys considerable inbound and outbound trade with Spain. Exports from Italy to Spain are now worth EUR 32 million, while inbound trade is worth EUR 30.5 million (according to data processed by ICE based on ISTAT data).

This makes Spain a major player in the fashion accessories market with a strong propensity for exports, and similarly for **leather goods** – as demonstrated by the figures – a segment characterised by medium/high-quality collections and competitive prices, with **45% of production directed to foreign countries**.

These figures clearly demonstrate Spain’s considerable role within the Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags offering, and how important it was for the event’s organisers to meet with Imanol Martinez, Marketing Director of **FICE** (the business organisation representing 90% of Spanish footwear production, distribution and exports); Fernando Gutiérrez, Secretary General of **ASEFMA** (the Spanish association of manufacturers of leather goods, travel goods and related items); Pablo Conde, Consumer Goods and Cultural Industries Director, and Veruska de Prado Poloni, Fashion Department, both from **ICEX Spain Trade and Investment** (the institution that promotes the internationalisation of Spanish companies). Not to mention the **ANCC** (the Association of Spanish Retailers) whose president Maria Labrador has confirmed the attendance of a delegation at the next edition of the fair at Riva del Garda in June.

The Spanish institutions highlighted a few key points in an expanding economic landscape, including the fact that Spain's market and procurement are undergoing significant change. It is a **positive historical period, particularly for medium-high-end and luxury products**.  
**Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia** are experiencing remarkable growth, making shoes at even lower prices than their Chinese counterpart.  
The **lack of specialised workers** in the footwear and leather goods market is emerging as a serious and increasingly pressing problem for European production, one that has been foreshadowed for years.

**THE VOICE OF PRODUCERS**

During its recent trip to Spain, Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags met a number of those who fill its trade fair pavilions with magnificent shoe and bag collections every year, finding the perfect mix of quality, carefully selected materials and details, attention to price, and innovative and sustainable contents.

Sustainability, in fact, is precisely the focus of **Pablosky** (a manufacturer from the Toledo area), which with its third generation of entrepreneurs at the helm, 300 employees and a turnover of EUR 40 million, makes sustainable and certified children's shoes.  
**Recykers** too speaks of sustainability, promoting vegan shoes made from certified materials derived from recycling activities: “Recykers was founded with a clear objective right from the start: to develop, through innovation, sustainable materials and production techniques to create better-performing and more efficient products. We are committed to recycling and reusing existing materials and to promoting the use of biodegradable ones,” states the company.

After more than 30 years in the business, the export-oriented company, **Bertuchi – Nex51**, has similarly embraced the demands of the market, choosing to offer a product line with sustainable contents, such as soles made from naturally sourced recycled materials.

Sandals, slippers and moccasins for men, women and children destined for large retail chains (Auchan, Intersport, Leclerc), on the other hand, are the core business of **Pro-Contact** from Alicante.  
A company that exports 90% of its production and has been exhibiting at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags for 35 years: “Buyers are tired of fast fashion and cheap products. They are now looking for truly sustainable offerings and reject those promoting operations that smack of greenwashing.”  
The company highlighted one particular concern: a significant drop in sales in the German market, causing many shops to close.

A finding that was underscored during the next leg of the trip.  
Founded in 2003, the company quickly became an important market player thanks to its substantial and clever investment in communication. We are speaking of **XTI**: more than 20 outlets in Spain and 70 franchises worldwide. Its brands XTI, XTI Kids, Carmela (leather line) and Refresh are produced in China (by factories with exclusive agreements), Turkey and Bangladesh, for an annual total of 7 million pairs, 60% of which are exported. A brand that has always been a key participant at the Riva event: "Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is crucial for testing new collections. The timing is perfect and allows us to directly engage with many international buyers.”

Also based in Alicante is **Pinoso's**, a brand that has managed to innovate in an unexpected product category: comfort shoes. Its men's leather models have conquered the US, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Europe, Korea and Canada (thanks also to contacts forged at Riva del Garda). Why do we speak of innovation when it comes to Pinoso’s? Because they produce shoes for diabetics that are certified in the US, which must have no inner seams, provide a snug and adaptable fit thanks to a special fastening system, and have a removable, anti-bacterial memory foam insole that perfectly adapts to the foot.

Then there are those who visit Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags to meet a specific target group of buyers, such as **Neox/Marila**, which is aiming for distribution in the southern hemisphere. Or **Sab Calzados**, which offers its production firepower (3 million pairs per year) to those in search of private labels. **Lola Canales/Pasoli**, which specialises in quality sandals, has been exhibiting at the fair for the past 14 years, while it’s been 35 years for **Bio Step**, which produces roughly a million pairs per year (EUR 40 million turnover) of sandals and slippers for men and women, in demand across the globe in Russia, the US, Sweden, Germany, France and Belgium.

A lengthy list of industrial businesses that could fill several more pages. A peek at a much broader picture where it is clear that Spain, like other European manufacturing countries, has a varied offering of fashion accessories, in terms of both models and price ranges. An offer guaranteed to benefit all those who will be sourcing at Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags.

**About Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags**

With visitors from all over the world and more than 40 countries represented among exhibiting companies, Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags – organized by Riva del Garda Fierecongressi SpA – is the leading international trade show dedicated to volume footwear, leather goods and accessories.

The next edition will be held from 17 to 20 June 2023, at the Riva del Garda Exhibition Centre.

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