The 98th edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags opened on Saturday, 14 January 2023 **A REAL EXPO RIVA SCHUH & GARDABAGS**

**WITH GROWING NUMBERS OF EXHIBITORS, BUYERS FROM MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES AND THE PRESENCE OF IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE FOOTWEAR AND LEATHER GOODS SECTOR, THE RIVA DEL GARDA SHOW OPENED AMID GREAT POSITIVITY AND OPTIMISM, AND CONFIRMS ITS ROLE AS THE LEADING INTERNATIONAL HUB FOR THE VOLUME FOOTWEAR BUSINESS AND BEYOND.**

*Riva del Garda, 14 January 2023*

China, Brazil, Canada and Italy, as well as India, Germany, France, Portugal, Turkey, Poland, the UK, the USA, Pakistan, Peru and El Salvador. This short list alone of some of the countries present at the 98th edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags, which opens today, Saturday, 14 January 2023, says it all about the international nature of the event, which is once again proving to be an essential business catalyst for the international footwear and leather goods sector.

“There is a clear perception that we are now emerging from the long tunnel into which the pandemic threw us. If in the last edition we had already caught a glimpse of the light, today we can say that **the footwear and leather goods market is now accelerating fully** and we have the feeling that it could return to its highs by 2024", said **Chairman of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, Roberto Pellegrini.**

These positive market forecasts are reflected in the numbers being registered by the Riva del Garda event: 1,108 exhibitors (+10% compared to June 2022) from over 40 countries (44% from Europe, 56% from outside the EU). Cambodia, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire and New Zealand are the countries represented in the halls for the first time. These figures, together with those relating to the buyers, who come from more than 100 countries, are a clear demonstration of the important role played by Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags in bringing together supply and demand in the global footwear industry.

An environment able to generate concrete business activities as well as a fundamental exchange of ideas and information, in addition to enhancing Italian production and providing the more than 250 Italian companies present with both consolidated and new trade outlets.

Pellegrini continues: “It’s not just individual manufacturers who believe in Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags, but also international institutions, who see the show as a tool to develop their industry”.

For **Alessandra Albarelli, Director of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags**, this success “is the result of the continuous commitment that the entire trade show organisation puts into developing an ever-widening international network of contacts (11 delegates representing 30 countries). This network brought to the show 119 new buyers and journalists from 25 countries who were visiting the Riva del Garda exhibition halls for the first time”. This effort is combined with a determination to provide visitors with increasingly advanced tools that enable them to easily find the products and partners they are looking for: for example, the advanced digital catalogue with its wealth of information, new exhibitors that increase the variety of the offer in terms of price ranges and products, and the focus on sustainability issues promoted through dedicated seminars. Without forgetting Innovation Village Retail, which suggests innovative solutions to the distribution sector through the proposals of the start-ups attending the show.

Many important officials attended the opening of the event and the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the brand new Business Club: the Mayor of Riva del Garda, Cristina Santi; the Councillor for Crafts, Commerce, Promotion, Sport and Tourism of the Autonomous Province of Trento, Roberto Failoni; the First Consul and Director General for Country Promotion, Damiano Francovigh; and Director of the Consumer Goods Office of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), Maria Maddalena Del Grosso. They all stressed the importance of bringing so many national and international exhibitors and buyers to Italy, as well as the importance of the event both for the local region and for the entire national and international footwear industry.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS**

“The uncertainty we have experienced in the last two years, caused by the pandemic, will also be with us for the next two years, but it will have a different origin and will bring new problems that the footwear sector will have to deal with”, commented **Enrico Cietta, Chairman of the Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Scientific Committee**, who explained how international production chains are evolving.

Cietta’s analysis starts with the data registered by the international market over the last three years. Global production in volume terms was 22,211 million pairs in 2021, after having fallen to 20,475 million pairs during Covid, still far from the 24,279 million reported in 2019.

This snapshot of the sector not only reflects changes in the figures, but also in certain balances. While remaining the international leader, China recorded a loss in production of 1.5 billion pairs and a loss in exports of 1.8 billion pairs. This downward trend began even before the pandemic and reveals a tendency in which some parts of production are delocalised and a large part of it is channelled to the domestic market.

This movement allowed other Asian countries to improve their performance. Vietnam now has a 6.1% share of global production in volume terms (versus 4.7% in 2017); Pakistan has 2.3% (1.7% in 2017); the Philippines 0.8% (0.2% in 2017). Other countries showing growth were India, which recorded +191 million pairs, taking an 11.7% market share, and Turkey +147 million pairs (2.5%), which benefited enormously from its proximity to the European market and its ability to provide a viable alternative to overcome logistics problems.

This new international landscape will be beset by uncertainty over the next two years. The critical points, says Cietta, could be the discontinuity of the Chinese production chain, as well as the low global economic growth that all international agencies now expect.

Signs of optimism, but still of uncertainty, can instead be found in the strong company recruitment we have seen in recent years, which now provides a more solid and stable production environment, as well as the now consolidated differentiation of supply sources.

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