THE 99TH EDITION HAS A GLOBAL FEEL

**IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING MARKET, EXPO RIVA SCHUH & GARDABAGS REMAINS THE KEY POINT OF REFERENCE FOR THE FOOTWEAR AND ACCESSORIES INDUSTRY**

**The 99th edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags opened this morning with more than 1,300 companies and brands (up 30% compared to June 2022), of which 251 are Italian, in addition to a large number of delegations, buyers, journalists and operators. National and international institutions were also well represented.**

*Riva del Garda, 17 June 2023*

The 99th edition of Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags opened at the Riva del Garda exhibition centre with speeches by numerous prominent institutions. The latter took to the stage to highlight and praise the event’s place in the international trade fair scene, lauding the diversity of the collections for next spring-summer 2024, the distinguishing feature of this year’s edition.

A source of satisfaction clearly perceived in the words of **Roberto Pellegrini, Chairman of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi**: "Over the past few years, we have succeeded in maintaining contact with the international footwear and accessories industry, seeking to highlight the level of innovation and leading countries at the fair; today's results indicate that we're on the right track.”

For the 2024 season, in fact, 1300 manufacturers from 42 countries are exhibiting their collections, a participation rate up 30% compared to June 2022. European companies make up 43% of the participants, with non-European countries accounting for 57%.

So how was it possible to overcome the years during which international manufacturers were unable to participate? As Roberto Pellegrini states, “We invested in a network of delegates that kept in touch with as many as 47 crucial countries for the footwear and accessories industry, remaining true to our international vocation without neglecting the promotion of Italian production, which boasts 251 exhibitors at the Riva del Garda trade fair.”

**Alessandra Albarelli, General Manager of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi**, also emphasises the numerous initiatives that have been implemented over the years that are now yielding excellent results:
 "With the support of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), we increased the presence of international buyers and the press and forged a positive relationship with Italian businesses.

In our Innovation Village Retail, we have continued to invest in scouting innovative start-ups providing the retail industry with important business solutions, we have focused on developing a more sustainable event and invested in a digital platform that, thanks in part to artificial intelligence, allows suitably profiled exhibitors and buyers to meet, thereby facilitating business opportunities.

We have also succeeded in bringing the prestigious Asian Manufacturers and Buyers Summit to Italy to discuss ‘Matching supply and demand: post-pandemic challenges and opportunities between consumer trends and the supply chain. Footwear industry leaders discuss the future of sourcing’, scheduled on Sunday, 18 June.”

Albarelli also highlighted the significant growth of Gardabags, the part of the event dedicated to the world of bags and accessories, as one of the most successful initiatives: "We wanted to dedicate more space to this product category, so we invited 48 exhibitors of only bags, accessories, and small leather goods to the event, in addition to the 40 exhibitors offering a combination of products. China, Turkey, and India are the most represented nations, but there is also a substantial offering from other countries.”

The inauguration was attended by many prominent guests. **Carmen Arias Castellano, Secretary General of CEC - The European Confederation of the Footwear Industry** emphasised the importance of keeping abreast of the changes affecting the industry, renewing the invitation to attend the next World Footwear Congress to be held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 7 to 9 November, 2023.

Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has officially applied to host the future eighth edition of this important event with the full support of the Italian government, as expressed by **Roberto Luongo**. **The General Manager of Agenzia ICE (ITA - Italian Trade Agency)** emphasised that Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags is essential to Made in Italy promotion strategies for the footwear and accessories industry. The perfect opportunity to highlight the Italian production of shoes and bags, which are a real feather in the cap of Italian exports (totalling respectively 13 and 10 billion euros per year).

**Enrico Cietta, Chairman of the fair's Scientific Committee**, also spoke at the Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags inauguration ceremony, providing an accurate analysis titled "The footwear supply chain: regional versus global. How the footwear industry is responding to the post-globalisation era”.

**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 13 to 16 January 2024, at the Riva del Garda Exhibition Centre.

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