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43 THOUSAND PEOPLE AT XYLEXPO 2012: THE BIENNIAL EXHIBITION "HOLDS ON STRONG"

Figures are comfortable, and were actually up to expectations: **43,295 visitors**, 15.9 percent less than in 2010. These figures indicate a **substantial endurance** of the biennial international exhibition of wood and furniture technology and supplies, in face of an economic situation that is still very complicated, also for the **515 exhibitors**, including 177 foreign companies from 34 countries, who attended the Milan show.

The 23rd Xylexpo, held at FieraMilano-Rho from 8 to 12 May on a total surface of **32,178 net square meters**, was a truthful mirror of the current situation: the figures published by the Acimall Studies Office just before the exhibition indicated that, in the first quarter of this year, orders to the Italian industry decreased by 4.6 percent compared to the same period of 2011, whereby a minus 24.8 percent variation on the domestic market was partially balanced by orders from abroad (plus 4.25 percent).

Market situation was reflected also in the **different attraction power of each product category at the exhibition**: in halls 1 and 3, where panel processing technology was displayed, the atmosphere was more positive than in hall 2 (solid wood machining) and in hall 4 (primary processing technology). This clearly indicates that the furniture industry is healthier, while the conditions of solid wood and panel production equipment are worse: as a matter of fact, it is hard to make significant investments and long-term plans in periods of heavy stagnation like the current one. In this period, the drivers of our business, such as the construction industry, are virtually paralyzed in Europe. So, the problem was not the exhibition itself, but the impact of weak demand, with some differences that Xylexpo highlighted.

Back to the analysis of visitor flows, once again the share of **international visitors** was significant, at 47 percent of total attendance. The top countries of origin were France, Turkey, Switzerland, Russian Federation and neighboring countries, and Germany. The most significant increase in visitor figures was recorded by Turkey (plus 45.6 percent), China (plus 36.1 percent) and Russia, up by 33.5 percent compared to 2010.

The reduction of visitor figures was absolutely "inherent" to the critical economic situation and it was largely compensated by the excellent quality of visitors. According to exhibitors, such quality was instrumental to starting promising deals and establishing a good number of new contacts, that will ultimately translate into sales opportunities.

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