

+++ ISO ANNUAL CONGRESS 2007 +++

Spirits are high amongst Europe's shopfitters

At the 50th annual congress of the International Shopfitting Organisation (ISO), which took place from 26 to 29 April 2007 in Rimini, Italy, the representatives of the national shopfitting associations reported continuous good business conditions. Shopfitting in Europe is benefiting from the generally positive economic situation with rising consumer spending and increasing turnover figures in retail.

As Hermann Jurrius, who is responsible for the shopfitting section of the Dutch association of furniture manufacturers, reported: "As far as the Dutch shopfitting industry is concerned, the years between 2002 and 2004 have been quite meagre, but in 2005 sales started to pick up and that positive trend continued into 2006." A decisive factor in the upswing have been a number of general economic indicators, in particular the rising consumer spending of the private households (+2.4 percent in 2006 compared to 2005) and the propensity to invest of the retail trade, which is increasingly investing in new shop concepts.

The status reports of the national shopfitting associations, as always a fixed plank in the platform of every ISO annual meeting, offer an informative insight into the business situation in the European shopfitting industry. Although over the past five years a rather recessive trend with declining order volumes and sales prevailed, the country representatives nevertheless came without exception to a positive conclusion at the ISO Congress at the end of April 2007. ISO President Carsten Schemberg confirmed the upward trend as far as the German shopfitting industry is concerned: in 2006 most companies witnessed a clear rise in turnover, which has been slowed down somewhat at the beginning of 2007 due to the expected increase of the VAT tariffs, but

should continue right through the remainder of the year. An even better outlook was reported by those countries that, contrary to Germany, recorded a rise of turnover in retail. Taking Sweden as an example, Preben Bailey, who heads the ISO secretariat from Torna Hällestad near Malmö, annual growth rates of on average five percent fully occupy the shopfitting firms. Bailey also reports a rising demand, primarily for high-quality shop furnishings, which should give the client an advantage in the field of shopping experience. In Denmark and Norway the situation is similar.

When the building and retail industries are doing well, the shopfitting industry can't complain either. In February the retail trade rose 4.7 percent above the same period of the previous year, Mark Edmonds reported for Great Britain. During 2006 as a whole, the retail sector gained 3.8 percent in turnover and the non-food business even 4.8 percent – the highest growth rates since 1986. It is therefore no wonder that, in a survey conducted by the association SDEA, almost half of the British shopfitting companies reported a rising turnover and that two thirds of them expect a further increase in the next 12 months.

The 50th annual congress of the international shopfitting federation gave the participants the opportunity to take part in a top-flight programme of company visits. The SCM Group, the world's leading manufacturer of wood processing machines, welcomed the ISO members on a plant visit, as did Cefla, Italy's leading manufacturer of shelving and checkouts. Pannelli Torianese, Morbidelli and Mobilificio Fogliense were among the other stops on the tour. It was an informative and varied professional programme with only one minus point: sadly there was no time for sunbathing on the beach of Rimini.

The next annual congress of ISO will take place in Barcelona in May 2008.

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▲ Factory visit at Pannelli Torianese's



▲ The acoustics room of the SCM Group



▲ Checkout systems production at Cefla's