

Job-security agreements and Swedish production bring 300 workers back to Whirlpool

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✖ **The trade unions representing the metalworkers', FIM CISL, FIOM and UILM,** have met the management of **Whirlpool** and signed **job-security agreements**, which will allow about **300 workers**, who were made redundant after the closure of the side by side department (two-door refrigerators) to return to the company.

On the question of transferring the **Swedish production from the factory in Norrkoeping**, which currently employs **323 workers**, to the plant in **Cassinetta di Biandronno**, the trade union remained **cautious**; they were possibly experiencing the same contrasting feelings they had when **the factory in Trento** closed. "Of course, it's **positive**, locally, because we have all the conditions for investments, thanks also to the competition agreement we've signed," **Mario Ballante**, the FIM CISL secretary, explained. "The real problem is making a general evaluation of the electrical appliance sector in Europe, which continues to suffer a lot, as the cases of Indesit and Electrolux demonstrate. So, there must be good reasons for transferring and maintaining the production in the factory in Cassinetta di Biandronno. This news highlights the contrast between the local and the more general European level. Let's hope that it doesn't come crashing down on us, above all at a time of difficulty in the economy, like the one we're going through. It's certainly good for employment, considering that the side by side workers will be reemployed."

According to **Stefania Filetti**, the provincial secretary of **FIOM-CGIL**, the job-security agreements are healthy and very important if future redundancies are to be avoided. "Considering the volumes and the orders coming in, these won't be sufficient to cover the whole workforce in Whirlpool," she said.

On the closure of the Swedish factory, **Filetti** suggested a broader consideration. "We mustn't be short-sighted. The fact that work is coming is positive, but our duty is to a global view, because the electrical appliance sector is going through a crisis, as is confirmed by Whirlpool, who are closing in Sweden. Now the Swedish trade union has to do what we did when **Trento** closed. In the next few days the trade unions are going to ratify the agreement with the ministry over extraordinary redundancies for two years, and the plan to reindustrialise the area and requalify the workers."

The trade union is convinced that, among the reasons that influenced **Whirlpool's** decision, **Varese's long tradition in this sector** and the presence of qualified and professional **satellite activities**, which would be difficult to repeat in other regions in **Europe**, were important. "The history of this factory is so important that we are still benefiting from it in 2014," the FIOM secretary said. "Moreover, although the satellite

activities are suffering greatly, they're high quality. These are factors that in some way can attract new investors. And maybe, what is going on is proving wrong one of the most misused clichés in the Italian system: the cost of labour is too high. If this were true, why bring that production back to Varese?"

From the trade union point of view, this historic presence had an important role in both company and national bargaining. "Bargaining here has always worked," Filetti explained, "because the company respects the trade union's positions with the right times and without impositions. Throughout this process, the workers have taken part, and their opinion is always very important in every decision."

"This is certainly **positive news**," concluded **Antonio Scozzafava**, the provincial secretary of **UILM**, "because after years of seeing continuous delocalisation, there is an important company that is bringing work back to Italy. This means that our country is still attractive to foreign investors, even in a sector, like electrical appliances, which is in great difficulty. Another positive aspect is that, for once, it's not just a question of higher or lower labour costs, but of ability and professionalism. This shows that the multinationals will never choose the worst option."

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