

Innovative, craft textile companies have gone glocal

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✖ Despite the loss of companies and the fall in employment, due to the crisis that began in 2008, **the textile sector is still one that characterises Varese's economic system**. This is the conclusion of an analysis made by the **Chamber of Commerce**, and is confirmed by the numbers: if we just consider the production of textiles and yarns, without clothing and fashion, there is a very high **specialisation index** in Varese Province, with respect to the whole of Lombardy, of **245**. This means that, if 100 is the regional average, then, in Varese Province, there are **245 employees in the textile industry**. This demonstrates the high concentration, in our province, of an industry that is surviving the crisis with force and determination.

"The data from the Company Register of the Chamber of Commerce highlight the difficulties of a sector in which businesses have been battling and resisting the crisis for years, particularly those that have been able to count on their ability to be part of an international supply chain, and on innovation, thanks also to top research facilities such as the **Cotton Textile Centre in Busto Arsizio**," said the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, **Renato Scapolan**. "Although the sector is undergoing great transformation, and struggling with significant difficulties, it has not lost importance, thanks to the people who work in it."

From the file published on **OsserVa**, the statistics website of the Chamber of Commerce, we can see that the **882 companies in the sector** have **8828 employees**, which is equivalent to almost **10% of the total number of people employed in Varese's manufacturing industry**. A significant portion of the textile industry in Varese Province is accounted for by craftsmen and women, with **44.5%** of local companies.

A GLOBALISED SECTOR – This sector is struggling with very significant changes, due to competition from emerging countries, and to delocalisation phenomena that have had considerable repercussions on the businesses (-21% between 2008 and 2013) and on the workforce (-25% in the same five years). These falls have not affected the competitiveness of Varese businesses in international markets. Since a drop in 2009, **exports** have started to rise again: **for every €100 imported, €205 is exported**. This generates a very positive effect on the balance of trade; considering the information for the most recent year available (2013), the Varese textile sector **imported goods to the value of €239 million, and exported goods to the value of €490 million**. However, these sums are expected to improve further, in light of the provisional figures for 2014, which indicate an increase of **7.5%** in January to September, compared to the same period of the previous year. This result is even more significant if we consider the fall, albeit moderate, in overall Varese exports during those quarters.

PRODUCTS THAT ARE POPULAR ABROAD

– In first place, there are **knitted fabrics** (exports of €81 million in 2013), followed by **household linen** (€37 million) and by non-woven fabrics (€35 million), for example, products for the building industry, for preparing or covering ceilings and false ceilings, as well as for the health sector, for example, special, sterile surgical gowns, and

agriculture, such as films to protect plants.

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redazione@varesenews.it