



The Household goods industry in the Verbano Cusio Ossola Province

Back at the beginning of the twentieth century a number of entrepreneurs turned the Cusio area into a lively industrial centre and today, in this territory, including neighbouring Valsesia, there is a concentration of production of steel household goods. The household goods district represents one of the major industrial poles in Italy for the production of cookware, cutlery, white household appliances, steel and wooden tools and implements for the kitchen, the table and for restaurants. The Verbano Cusio Ossola companies detain 26.9% of the domestic production of steel pots and pans.

Numerous historic companies in the Italian household goods industry have their registered office or their Headquarters in Omegna; amongst them we may list: Alessi, Bialetti, Lagostina, Calderoni e Piazza.

At present there appears to be a dichotomy in the industrial structure, since there are a few global companies, renown throughout the world, coexisting with numerous small enterprises, many of whom are suppliers or sub-suppliers of the large industries.

Despite the high level of parcelization in the sector, there are nearly 1000 jobs in small enterprises (approximately 60% of total employment in the industry in the area).

The compartment is however highly concentrated in terms of revenues: the leading five companies detain over 70% of the revenues of the sector but only employ 35% of the workers.

Exports represent an important item in the revenues. The destination countries are mainly European.

Enterprises	1
Revenues (millio	3
Export/ Revenue	4
Employment	2

The importance and the liveliness of this industry led the Chamber of Commerce to take a number of actions. In particular, an “Area Committee for the Household Goods District” has been established in the premises of the Chamber of Commerce. A household goods portal too has been created; the project was by the Chamber of Commerce, The Province, The Industrialist’s Union and the Verbano Cusio Ossola Confartigianato (Artisan’s Confederation), to revalue this sector.

The district’s geographic structure has been stable along in time. With the attempt of generalising some of the trends which have emerged, we may say that the more distant the micro artisan companies – usually jobshoppers – are from Omegna, the less specialized they are in the household goods industry. As to the jobshoppers, it is difficult if not quite impossible to find ones working in a single sector.

Many of them supply tap manufacturers, the production of which the Verbano Cusio Ossola Province is highly specialised in.

In examining strengths and weaknesses of the district structure, what appears is a positive situation, where industrial and market competitive factors prevail over structural and evolutionary constraints. Strengths derive from the presence of internationally renowned historic brands, high quality productions (both in terms of materials and of design), a sound industrial structure and tight collaborative relations between the local ancillary firms (which are highly specialised and qualified) and the larger companies.

Weaknesses are due to the lack of cross-collaboration between companies (competition tends to prevail over collaboration) however the situation, in this respect, is improving; the district not having a unique image and the fact that innovation, albeit a fundamental competitive lever for the

survival of a mature industry, is not a formal activity and is not uniformly spread throughout the district.

Amongst the activities carried out to promote the district, there are positive examples as the “Sistema Casa Ungheria” (The Hungarian House system) and the “Portale dei casalinghi” (The Household goods Portal): two projects which, if well managed and promoted so as to grow in terms of adhesions, may turn out to be important investments in image.

Last but not least, the creation of the “Household goods District Brand Name” presented at the Frankfurt Environmental Exhibition for medium-small enterprises in the sector, in line with the growing need for cooperation and collaboration.

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