

Opticians are urged to sell more sunglasses

Retail sales of sunglasses declined in Italy and Spain last year, but they generally performed better than prescription frames and other types of optical products, according to research conducted by Strategy With Vision (SWV) for the European Sunglass Association. The situation was much better in France and Germany, and slightly better in the U.K.

SWV laid out its figures at a joint meeting of board members of **ESA** and **Eurom 1**, organized during the Mido show in Milan earlier this month (more on this in the next article). SWV would have normally presented its key find-

To determine the trends in the market for plano sunglasses, last September SWV's researchers interviewed 300 retailers in all the five countries, also analyzing their price points, to help ESA members plan their own production. These retailers were not only opticians, but also sunglass stores and other types of retailers excluding online shops and street merchants

According to SWV's survey, only 16 percent of Italian retailers said that the market for plano sunglasses had improved compared with 2010, while 28 percent said that it had gone down. The balance indicated that it had remained the same. Similarly, 74 out of 100 retailers in Spain said that the situation had not changed, while 21 percent feared that it had gotten worse. The Spanish pessimists included various retailers who had invested in a new store.

In France, instead, 50 percent of retailers said that more sunglasses had been sold in their stores in 2011 than in 2010, compared with 28 percent estimating a negative trend. In Germany, 51 percent said that the situation had turned for the better, and only 5 percent reported a decline. Only 10 percent of British retailers indicated that their sunglass sales had declined, while 28 percent said that they had increased.

SWV also gave estimates of the shares taken up by plano sunglasses in the optical retailers' total purchases. According to SWV, whose estimates are constantly updated and are based on the sell-in from the suppliers, the value of purchases of sunglasses at the manufacturers' selling prices by opticians amounted to about €100 million last year in France and Italy, a country where much of the higher-priced volume goes through optical outlets. For Spanish opticians, the value of their purchases was €77 million. It was only €45 million in the U.K.

The ratios taken up by plano sunglasses in the opticians' purchases were 16 percent in Spain, 13 percent in Italy, 8 percent in France, 7 percent in Germany and 5 percent in the U.K. Looking at their offer in four price categories, SWV concluded that opticians in Germany and the U.K. would benefit from offering more styles of sunglasses in the medium and medium-high price segments as a shield against an economic downturn.

As in previous years, SWV's complete data from this research project are only available to members of ESA.