

Press release  
21 October 2016

**NETCOMM SUISSE ASSOCIATION**  
**AND THE NEED FOR DIGITAL SKILLS IN TICINO**

Just six months after the launch of the Fashion Digital Lab initiative, the event headlined **"Digital entrepreneurship in fashion: student collaboration for the Ticino Fashion Valley"** took place on 20 and 21 October in Sorengo and Manno, organised by the NetComm Suisse Association (a project partner). Thanks to collaboration with the Franklin University Switzerland (FUS), this two-day seminar saw the participation of institutional figures and representatives from the fields of digital entrepreneurship and fashion. University lecturers from FUS, USI (Università della Svizzera Italiana) and SUPSI (the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland) and investors active at an international level all convened under the same roof to support the digital and entrepreneurial future of the Canton of Ticino.

By launching this event, NetComm Suisse, Switzerland's first and only association of e-commerce and digital communication operators, has moved further towards establishing the NetComm Suisse Digital Academy&Lab, a project that aims to:

1. act as an intermediary between young university graduates, training institutions in the area and the 185 companies associated with NetComm Suisse, which are continuously looking for higher-qualified professional figures, difficult to procure on the labour market.
2. develop digital skills that focus on and support small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in Ticino, with training seminars and workshops held in collaboration with the relevant associations and universities;
3. create bridges and opportunities for young entrepreneurs to meet with more than 250 digital professionals from large international businesses in the area, whom the NetComm Suisse Association aims to recruit in the coming year and offer as volunteer Lab coaches and mentors, thanks to the "Donate 1 day for a Digital Ticino" initiative.

**Alessandro Marrarosa**, president of NetComm Suisse Association, said *"the NetComm Suisse Digital Academy&Lab will operate across various sectors such as media, food, tourism,*

*ICT, banking and fashion, in close collaboration with the relevant institutions and associations active across Ticino's economic and social fabric. Particularly in the last year, an increasing number of operators in the fashion and ICT sectors have been knocking on our door, looking for professional figures who specialise in digital as they are unable to find sufficient talent to hire”.*

On Thursday, it was also announced that Joseph Ribkoff will open in Ticino. In becoming part of the renowned Ticino Fashion Valley (with over 50 major brands present in the canton), the Canadian fashion company will need to manage international growth in an extremely competitive market, with clients who are ever-more demanding when it comes to the customer experience. The brand's vice president of European Sales, **Catia D'Ascenzo** commented, *“Joseph Ribkoff is a Canadian fashion company with more than 60 years of experience in developing products: a successful brand that is already very well-known in Europe. As Vice President of Sales for the company, every day I face the challenges that digital poses for fashion companies' management teams in terms of multichannel marketing, communication and the innovation of processes and products. So, I believe that the Fashion Digital Lab and the NetComm Suisse Digital Academy are important resources for companies in Ticino, and should be supported through the teamwork of all stakeholders in the region”.*

Across the Canton of Ticino, many vertical skillsets in the ICT and fashion sectors are still very difficult to find. **Xia Feng**, vice president of Digital&Strategy for the EMEA region at VF, explains that *“at VF International, we are continuously looking for specialised profiles in the digital area to insert into teams across the different brands that belong to our group. We need individuals who are prepared and able to manage and develop innovative digital and e-commerce projects that support the company's growth. The creation of a NetComm Suisse Digital Academy&Lab can be significant in terms of accelerating the availability of suitable professional figures, to respond to the growing needs of companies in Ticino”.*

On this subject, **Guido Jarach**, CEO at QUANTA Ressources Humaines SA, a staff recruitment agency based in Bioggio and active in Ticino for over 15 years, commented, *“Some of our client companies, many already associated with NetComm Suisse Association, have open positions in the digital, ICT and e-commerce fields that have remained unfilled for several months. It is also difficult for us to find enough profiles to select and introduce into the*

*companies, given the lack of qualified professionals and new graduates. For this very reason, we welcome the NetComm Suisse Digital Academy&Lab and are delighted to support this important project to the fullest extent”.*

It is also increasingly important for start-ups and SMBs to understand the challenges and opportunities that e-commerce presents to business. *“It is essential to support the various businesses and their entrepreneurs”*, explains **Alcide Barberis**, executive director of the Fondazione AGIRE, *“to allow them to be more competitive and to stimulate economic development in the Ticino area. We would suggest that NetComm Suisse Association supports companies by acting on two fronts: on the one side, by providing local SMBs with information about new digital and e-commerce technologies, creating networks with local operators and, on the other side, by supporting the development of new companies and encouraging bridge building between start-ups and the associated companies who are clearly interested in investing in innovation.”*

One of Thursday’s speakers, a young Ticino-based entrepreneur, confirms this. **Yari Copt** is CEO and founder of the Swiss shirt brand Old Captain Co. *“Launching a young fashion company in Ticino seems to be a mission impossible today, and yet initial feedback after our recent sales campaign is very positive. Just six months after starting this business, I have exceeded my most optimistic sales projections for the first year, working with a great deal of commitment and determination. I have 15 years of experience in traditional retail behind me and this has helped a great deal in allowing me to create a brand, manage production and carry out commercial activity. The real challenge for me was trying to estimate the potential online market and understand how best to harness the opportunities that the internet offers. Thanks to a study by NetComm Suisse Association, pointed out to me by Michele Merazzi from the Fondazione AGIRE, I was able to see, practically-speaking, how to get the most out of the “Made in Switzerland” epithet online to the push the international growth of Old Captain Co. To have free support over these 6 months, as well as the chance to meet with sector professionals has been a unique opportunity that I’m sure will help me to develop a lot more quickly than I could have on my own. I owe the students of Franklin University Switzerland a big THANK-YOU for having helped to develop online marketing and sales strategies for the Old Captain Co. and for giving me so many interesting ideas for the future!”*

In response to this lack of employable figures and the needs of SMBs to better understand digital phenomena, NetComm Suisse Association has asked the Ticino Department of Finance and Economics to support the Digital Academy&Lab section. **Carlo Terreni**, general manager of NetComm Suisse Association explains that *“this initiative will serve as a bridge between universities in the area, our 185 associated companies, small and medium sized Ticino businesses and the area’s large international firms. The professional laboratories, internships and certification on offer will really help in stimulating the hiring of new graduates by large international firms, and in providing coaching and mentoring to the area’s SMBs that lack know-how, by teaming up with all of the success stories in the area, some of which are still hidden”*.

**Silvia Invrea**, Career Service & Alumni Manager at the Università della Svizzera Italiana (USI) also hopes for a collaboration between as many local actors as possible so as to respond to the changing needs of national and international businesses in Ticino. *“Collaboration is fundamental in responding to a company’s growing need to find a sufficient number of local profiles able to manage the digital transformation of traditional business models in place across many sectors. From the start, we deemed it very useful to develop a synergistic collaboration with NetComm Suisse Association, to be able to fully understand the employment opportunities for our new graduates in such a dynamic and complex setting as that of e-commerce, a field in which there are many opportunities in our local area.”*

To be able to offer meetings and exchange opportunities between local universities such as USI, SUPSI and FUS and the 185 associated companies, NetComm Suisse Association has followed the creation of Fashion Digital Lab in Pura with great interest and is promoting the creation of a second pole in Lugano, which may serve as its main operating base, to offer the community a permanent meeting place: *“We were pleased to hear about the agreement between the Fashion Digital Lab and the Inno&Fashion Center SA in Pura – confirmed president **Alessandro Marrarosa** – as it means the effective birth of the Fashion Digital Lab (FDL), as announced in April during the “NetComm Suisse e-Commerce meets Fashion in the Ticino Fashion Valley” event.*

Serial entrepreneur **Marco Di Pietro**, CEO of Inno&Fashion Center SA, CEO of IWISHU and former VP of Operations at Yoox.com, echoes this, *“Inno&Fashion Center SA was founded in 2016, thanks to private investment of over 1.5 million Francs, with the aim of*

*accommodating talent and innovative digital start-ups operating in the fashion sector. It is our pleasure to support the birth of the Fashion Digital Lab in Pura and, together with a group of local entrepreneurs, we are planning to open another pole in Pazzallo, in early 2017, with an additional investment of 1.5 million Francs. The investment will be approved if NetComm Suisse Association confirms the opening of the Academy&Lab in Lugano, leading to the establishment of an important digital company in the Canton of Ticino”.*

The Swiss e-Commerce Association is also working to attract further important digital training and entrepreneurship initiatives to the Ticino area, such as “Education Digital” (the portal, co-financed by Google, to promote digital culture in Switzerland) and the “Kickstart Accelerator”, the Zurich-based business accelerator financed by the main companies involved in DigitalSwitzerland ([www.digitalswitzerland.com](http://www.digitalswitzerland.com)).

*“The aim of the agreement under discussion with DigitalSwitzerland is to develop the local territory, the fashion and digital industries in the Canton of Ticino, paying particular attention to the ICT sector and to innovative Ticino-based start-ups” explained **Alessandro Marrarosa**. “In supporting the NetComm Suisse Digital Academy&Lab”, continued **Carlo Terreni**, “we hope to be able to count on an internet giant such as Google, and are currently in negotiations to launch Google Booth Camps in Ticino in 2017”.*

Entrepreneurial opportunities also exist thanks to private institutions, and the Fondazione La Martina is just one example.

The Foundation was officially launched on Friday 21 October in the presence of Enrico Roselli, CEO of La Martina. As Roselli explains, *“the creation of a foundation that aims to support family businesses and, particularly, those businesses that are closest to us geographically-speaking was a natural choice for us. The values of the pole, in which La Martina plays an integral role, include respect, the sense of belonging to a community and sharing, each interpreted in its widest sense. In this way, with the Foundation, La Martina chooses to give back, to as many people as possible, all that it has received over the course of its first thirty years of activity. A form of respect towards our collaborators, partners, suppliers and, why not, our rivals too, who, like in sport, can benefit from the winning experience of the company, drawing ideas for their own activities and personal growth. An event like this, promoted by*

*NetComm Suisse Association, totally fits in with the aims of the Foundation; we are therefore pleased to offer our most precious asset, our testimony, to help train the managers of tomorrow".*

On Friday afternoon, participants were also able to visit three central areas of the Ticino Fashion Valley: the general district of VF in Stabio presented by Xia Feng – VF vice president of Digital&Strategy for the EMEA region, and the DSV Logistics / Navyboot logistical bases in Balerna.

For more information:  
Giulia Pastena  
Executive Assistant and Press  
NetComm Suisse - The Swiss e-commerce Association  
email: [executiveassistant@netcommsuisse.ch](mailto:executiveassistant@netcommsuisse.ch)  
T.: 0041 (0) 91 2104736

 **LUGANO**  
Via Cantonale 18  
6928 Manno CH  
T. +41 (0) 91 2104736

 **ZÜRICH**  
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50  
8050 Zürich CH  
T. +41 (0) 44 5002173

 **GENÈVE**  
Blue Box, Chemin du Pré-Fleuri 3  
1228 Plan-les-Ouates Genève CH  
T. +41 (0) 22 5107103