

Clouds over Catalunya

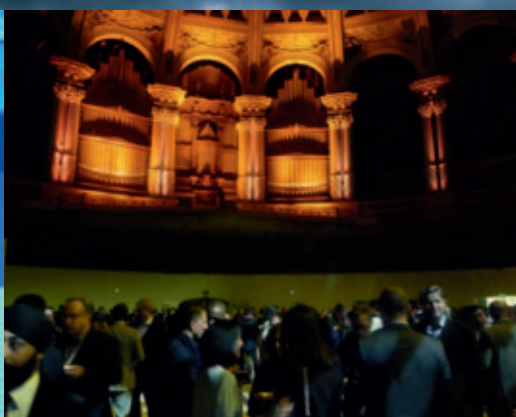
BIR meets in Barcelona



BIR's Autumn Convention at the Princesa Sofia Hotel in Barcelona was attended by some 950 people.



The Welcome Reception in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya featured a fascinating dance group.



BIR's Welcome Reception was widely appreciated by the delegates.



The city of Barcelona: home to one of the world's most stunning cathedrals; home to the football team – and indeed, the footballer – widely regarded as the best on the planet (unless you happen to be a Real Madrid supporter, that is); and for two days in late October, home to the latest Autumn Convention staged by the BIR world recycling body. Attended by approaching 950 delegates and 200 accompanying persons, the event at the Princesa Sofia Hotel served as an accurate barometer of sentiment within the various sectors that make up the recycling industry. Recycling International went along to take some readings.

The BIR world recycling organisation's 2012 Autumn Convention coincided with 'Superstorm' Sandy lashing the east coast of the USA and heavy rain too in the host city of Barcelona – an appropriate metaphor perhaps for the battering sustained by the recycling industry in recent months. Whereas a number of recycling sectors enjoyed a reasonable first half to the year, the climate has been considerably more oppressive in the third and fourth quarters, forcing many companies to batten down the hatches and look to ride out the storm. Most of BIR's member companies are experiencing 'tough times' and the widespread optimism evident at last year's Autumn Convention has 'disappeared'. World President Björn Grufman of Sweden-based Metallvärden AB commented immediately ahead of the two-day event in Barcelona. With over-capacity blighting a number of recycling sectors at a time when the world economy 'has slowed tremendously', many companies 'are having problems in covering their costs' and have responded with cuts across a number of areas, including the workforce. Rather than dwell on the abundance of negatives to be found at present, Mr Grufman highlighted the fact that the recycling industry 'is still growing, and more and more companies are taking part in it'. Indeed, BIR has continued to receive a pleasing flow of applications from prospective members, including 190 since the beginning of 2012 (although not all of them have been accepted, it was pointed out).

Free and fair trade

Furthermore, attendance has remained high at BIR Conventions in the four years since the economic turmoil of late-2008 – an indication perhaps that these gatherings provide a much-

needed marketplace in periods when sales are difficult to make, said Mr Grufman. Even before the commodity meetings got under way, more than 900 delegates had been registered. On issues affecting the global recycling industry, BIR Director General Francis Veys spoke of an increase in protectionist activity as a result of raw material shortages, with many countries 'trying to find a way around free trade' in order to benefit domestic consumers. He mentioned by way of example the recent decision by the government of Argentina to extend its ban on overseas shipments of ferrous scrap; as reported previously by Recycling International, the move is intended to relieve the pressure on supplies in the wake of a domestic scrap consumption increase averaging 5-6% per annum. Mr Veys warned against exaggerating the scale of raw material shortages, while Mr Grufman added: 'We will always fight for free and fair trade'.

End of waste

Recent experience has confirmed that there are few – if any – short-cuts within the process of elaborating and agreeing end-of-waste criteria for recyclables. First the good news: the European Commission's Technical Adaptation Committee meeting on July 9 this year was crowned by the adoption of end-of-waste criteria for glass. But on the downside, copper/copper alloys and recovered paper failed to clear the same hurdle, and so these sectors must continue their work towards this goal. Speaking at the Paper Round-Table meeting in Barcelona, the President of the European Recovered Paper Association – Merja Helander of Lassila & Tikanoja Plc in Finland – said the proposals for her sector foundered principally on the issue of multi-material papers. But while

recovered paper is now being forced to take 'the longer road' towards approval of end-of-waste criteria, she had the following unequivocal message for those doubters who believe product status may never be achieved: 'Personally, I am convinced that paper – as a very good and clean raw material – will finally achieve the status, hopefully by the beginning of 2014 at the latest.'

'A good solution'

The end-of-waste debate also occupied delegates and speakers at the BIR International Environment Council (IEC) meeting in Barcelona. Alicia García-Franco Zúñiga, Director General of the Spanish Federation of Recovery and Recycling (FER), contended that achievement of product status represents 'a good solution for transboundary trade'. However, she also emphasised that 'not every scrap material will cease to be waste' and that, up to this point, consumers have not been prepared to pay more



Rick Dobkin (left) and Bruce Shapiro of US-based Shapiro Metals.



From left to right: Clifford Barnett, Daniel Barnett and Paul Solomons of SA Steel in South Africa.



President Robin Wiener and Chair Jerry Simms of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries.

Alexandre Delacoux BIR's new General Manager

Alexandre Delacoux joined the BIR secretariat as General Manager on a part-time basis at the start of October and has been working very closely with the recycling body's Director General Francis Veys, it was confirmed at the Autumn Convention in Barcelona by BIR World President Björn Grufman. Brought in to strengthen the BIR team in Brussels, Mr Delacoux will lead an internal fact-finding mission throughout the final quarter of this year before going full-time with BIR as of the beginning of January 2013.

Bringing to his new appointment more than 20 years' experience in European and international public affairs, Mr Delacoux was formerly Executive Director at European Biopharmaceutical Enterprises. Also based in Brussels and established in the year 2000, this trade association represents biopharmaceutical companies operating in Europe that are engaged in the research, development and manufacturing of innovative medicinal products using biotechnology. During his career, Mr Delacoux has also been Secretary General of Micropower Europe - a grouping of companies and organisations with an interest in the promotion of microgeneration.



Alexandre Delacoux joined the BIR secretariat as General Manager in early October.

This was set up to raise the profile of the EU microgeneration sector and to campaign for improvements in the legislative and regulatory framework to support the growth of the industry.

Forthcoming BIR events

2013 May 27-29
Spring Convention & Exhibition
Shanghai, China

2013 October 28-29
Autumn Round-Table Sessions
Warsaw, Poland

2014 June 2-4
Spring Convention & Exhibition
Miami, USA

BIR's 2013 Spring convention will take in the Pudong Shangri-La Hotel in Shanghai.

for material designated as a product than for a 'waste'. In this context, Ruggero Alocci of Aloci Rappresentanze Ind. in Italy said that obtaining product status constitutes a 'big opportunity' only if producers reward suppliers with a premium over the market price.

Pivotal to end-of-waste criteria are quality management systems, and the IEC meeting heard of concern within the French recycling industry at its government's decision to specify ISO 9000 as the end-of-waste benchmark; a potential compromise, suggested IEC Chairman Olivier François of NV Galloometal, would be to insist on the implementation of a quality management system 'compatible with ISO'.

Delegates' attention was drawn to the fact that the BIR has produced 'Tools for Quality Management' to help recyclers worldwide move towards the objective of an ISO-compliant quality management system. BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley explained that the document shows ISO in the context of end-of-waste procedures for iron/steel and aluminium - materials for which end-of-waste criteria have already been agreed.

Implementing a quality management system is not a major undertaking, according to Ms Zúñiga.

'Disparity in the hurdles'

A presentation from Mr Bartley switched the focus of the IEC meeting to progress at United Nations/Basel Convention level towards a framework for environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes. A Technical Expert Group, in which, among others, both BIR and ISRI are actively participating, is conducting work on a framework document for presentation to the next Basel Convention Conference of the Parties, to be held in the Swiss city of Geneva in late-April/early-May 2013.

At present, said Mr Bartley, the indications are that the United Nations will 'set the bar higher' than the OECD, extending the requirements on governments to cover, for example, environmental insurance, environmental impact studies and the setting of emission limit values.



Alicia García-Franco Zúñiga, Director General of the Spanish recycling federation (FER) believes achievement of product status represents 'a good solution for transboundary trade'.



Rachel Pollack, Editor-in-Chief of 'SCRAP' and the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries' Director of Commodities Joe Pickard.



Camera problems for Hans Koning, Managing Director of the Dutch metals recycling association MRF.

This 'disparity in the hurdles' needs to be monitored and throws up the question of whether a company can be environmentally soundly managed in a country where the government is poor and/or infrastructure is lacking, he said.

Mr Bartley also commented on the non-binding code of conduct relating to the transboundary movement of scrap metal that may inadvertently contain radioactive material, which is being developed under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Partly as a result of significant input from recycling industry representatives, the document shows 'a good understanding' of the issues as they relate to the scrap industry. Therefore, he said, there is a need to protect the current text and to ensure recyclers are not punished for discovering radioactive sources in incoming scrap given that they explicitly do not want to receive them. □



Olivier François of Galloometal in Belgium, Chairman of the BIR International Environment Council.



BIR President Björn Grufman of Sweden-based Metallvärden: 'The recycling industry is still growing, and more and more companies are taking part in it.'