

Recycling International's coverage of the BIR World Convention in Miami this June was headlined 'Glimpses of sunshine through the clouds'. But such glimmers of optimism were largely absent from BIR's late-October gathering in Paris, with experts generally more downbeat about the recycling industry outlook for the short term at least. Maintaining the meteorological theme, Paper Division president Reinhold Schmidt said that recyclers were at the mercy of the fact that 'the economic barometer in many parts of the world is continuing to go down'.

By Ian Martin

**T**he BIR world recycling organisation's latest convention signalled 'a changing of the guard' and thus the potential for 'new ideas', according to world president Björn Grufman of Sweden-based Metallvärden AB.

Changes in presidency or chairmanship were confirmed by the BIR's Ferrous Division, its Stainless Steel & Special Alloys Committee and, after 18 years, the Tyres & Rubber Committee; the long-standing president of the BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division stepped aside and was succeeded by an interim president; and the Textiles Division was headed up for the first time by a president appointed at the previous convention. In addition, BIR director general Alexandre Delacoux confirmed that the world body would

be appointing a new conventions director to succeed Francis Veys with the aim of ensuring that, in an era of substantial choice, its twice-yearly conventions would remain inked on to the business calendars of recycling industry leaders around the globe.

### Markets 'not too easy'

Held in Paris towards the end of October, the latest BIR World Convention attracted more than 1000 delegates and accompanying persons from a total of 54 countries. But while the two-day event provided the world recycling body with an opportunity to report on its internal changes, it could not offer delegates a corresponding change in the overall market outlook.

Grufman declared: 'The market is not too easy for us, especially on the steel scrap side.' Since 2008 in Europe, for example, the volumes of scrap normally treated by the recycling sector have been eroded by an

estimated 30-40% drop-off in the manufacturing industry. 'We have the same capacity as then but everybody is fighting for the little material that is around,' Grufman told journalists on the eve of the convention. With margins spiralling 'lower and lower', 'a reduction of the industry can be expected' in Western Europe because there is 'not enough material', he warned.

There was 'a bright future' in prospect for recycling but also a need to establish the 'right framework' for it to flourish, according to Delacoux. At present, he said at the same pre-convention gathering, the recycling industry was being forced to contend with 'trading hindrances' and with the fact that, in terms of lobbying power, other sectors have a louder voice.

As part of a wider bid to educate policy-makers and legislators about the scale of the recycling industry's contribution, BIR will be updating the 2008 study conducted by Imperial College London into carbon emission savings achieved through use of secondary rather than virgin raw materials. The conclusion reached six years ago was that the recycling of seven metals plus recovered paper prevented more than 500 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each



*BIR meets in Paris*

# No change for industry's fortune



BIR's environmental & technical director Ross Bartley: the bar is shifting.



BIR director general Alexandre Delacoux: other sectors have a louder voice.



Alfred Rosales of FEDEREC: more and more extended producer responsibility schemes.

# the better in nes

year, broadly equivalent to the entire output of the global airline industry.

## 'Pillar' and 'free asset'

At the BIR's International Environment Council (IEC) meeting in Paris, it was revealed that the global tally of extended producer responsibility schemes is currently around 400 - and still growing. According to Alfred Rosales, executive director of French recycling federation FEDEREC, 48% of these schemes are based in the USA and 42% in Europe, with Asia and Latin America on 4% apiece. Of the grand total, some 35% related to waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), 18% to tyres, 17% to packaging and 12% to end-of-life vehicles. As a 'pillar' and 'free asset' of EPR schemes, the recycling industries should be part of their governance, Rosales argued. Furthermore, he called for independent monitoring of company data to avoid confidentiality issues.

The director general of Spanish recovery and recycling federation FER, Alicia García-Franco Zúñiga, also aired some misgivings about EPR schemes. In her own country, she said, 'abuses' of positions of power were taking place - nota-

bly in the cases of end-of-life tyres and WEEE. With good news at a premium in Paris, the opening words of IEC chairman Olivier François of NV Galloometal provided a welcome contrast: 'We can hope for good consequences for our work on recycling.' He was speaking in the context of 'a convergence' of legislation which had seen France introduce a new law on October 14 calling for a 50% landfill reduction by 2025 and an EU proposal that 'landfilling of all recyclable waste shall be prevented by 2025'.

But in the first of two presentations relating to the UN-EP Basel Convention, BIR's environmental & technical director Ross Bartley expressed concern at the different benchmarks that existed for environmentally sound management (ESM) at the world level for industrialised countries and developing countries. 'The bar is shifting depending on what wastes you are dealing with between countries and regions,' he told the meeting. It was also clear, he said, that close attention would need to be paid to whether the Basel Convention adhered to its original remit of solely hazardous wastes and wastes from households.



Having a fun time in Paris are from left to right Matteo Bonetti of Gruppo Fiori, Murat Bayram (EMR Group) and Andrea Pensotti of Comsteel.



Delegates complete business deals outside the Pullman hotel.

## 'A real desire'

Eric Harris, associate counsel/director of government & international affairs at the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, focused on draft technical guidelines on transboundary movements of e-waste and used electrical and electronic equipment, with particular regard to the distinction between waste and non-waste under the Basel Convention. Having noted that parties had been invited to submit comments on two proposals by the end of February next year, Harris confirmed: 'There is now a real desire to move things forward.' □

### Forthcoming BIR Conventions

<b>2015</b>	May 18-20	Dubai, UAE
	October 19-20	Prague, Czech Republic
<b>2016</b>	May 30-June 1	Berlin, Germany
	October 24-25	Amsterdam, Netherlands or Copenhagen, Denmark