

# Meeting in the Grey City



*The BIR Autumn Convention Brought some Colour to Warsaw*

For three days recently, Poland was the centre of the world – at least for the recycling industry. More than 800 delegates descended on Warsaw from 21 to 23 October, all visiting the Bureau of International Recycling's (BIR) traditional Autumn Convention. But what can we take away from this short trip to Eastern Europe? What impressions did the delegates take back home with them?

Needless to say, the BIR Convention was a rendezvous point for representatives of the most diverse pressure groups. From unions to companies to political staff, 'see and be seen' was the motto of these three days. Alongside numerous interesting talks, there were negotiations, networking and the chance to get to know Poland's capital city.

But the delegates certainly did take something away from their days in Poland. For me personally, it's the colours – or, rather, the lack of colour. For Warsaw – at least the part I saw between my accommodation and the convention hotel – is grey! And not just the streets, but also the houses (old and new), the cars, the clothing – even the sky was drab and dreary.

## *Western values in an Eastern capital*

Yes, I know, it's autumn – but the grey city still astonished me. Above all, because Western values are being quite deliberately imported into the capital!

Coffee shops are located next to boutiques and restaurants from every nation. The brands found in Warsaw are the same ones that most people know from Western Europe and the US.

But even the illuminated advertising from these same companies somehow seems greyer, to be more washed-out, than in the West. Large posters are attached to the walls of the newly built high-rises and skyscrapers. Several floors up, a man and a woman are laying arm in arm, a politician giving a thumbs-up sign grins out from the wall (the election was on Sunday...) but even these wall decorations – which are usually in particularly loud colours in the rest of the world – are in dark shades here, somewhere between navy blue and black.

## *Warsaw has its own special charme*

Western values transposed in an Eastern European way – the effect is quite strange. And although a walk through the city is enough to realise that the Cold War is long gone (a native Warsaw woman remarked that so many new buildings have gone up over the previous years that even she loses her bearings), the city still hasn't quite fully absorbed the 'good old days'. Nevertheless, Warsaw has its own special charm. Small grey-green parks, large middle-class cars from Western manufacturers, newly built skyscrapers next to architecturally wonderful buildings: a city between two worlds. And right in the middle, an industry that's riding the wave of success. Dear BIR, thanks for Warsaw. I'm already looking forward to the next new impressions – we'll see each other in Monte Carlo!

*Best regards,  
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