

PRESS RELEASE

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International Environment Council: End-of-waste criteria crucial for the recycling industry

The process taking place within the EU to develop end-of-waste criteria is very much needed by the recycling industry, underlined BIR Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley at the Istanbul meeting of the International Environment Council (IEC). The world recycling body "will go right to the end of the process" to ensure maximum benefit and relief for its members and for the industry as a whole, he insisted.

BIR's Director General Francis Veys hoped that all EU member states would fully support what emerges from these end-of-waste deliberations in order to minimise differences in interpretation and implementation, he added optimistically: "I see no reason why we won't get this better regulation." In a few years from now, movement of materials falling short of these end-of-waste criteria would prove to be "very difficult", he predicted. "That is the way things are going."

Much of the IEC meeting in Istanbul was set aside for a review of experiences with extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes. Positive consequences identified by Jan Vermoesen of COBEREC in Belgium included support for investments in special facilities to treat, for example, CFCs and cathode ray tubes. Such schemes had also created public awareness of separate collection as well as a positive image for the recycling sector. On the downside, Mr Vermoesen noted confidentiality issues arising from the reporting of clients' names as well as EPR organisations' monopoly position with the power to allocate a market.

Having heard Vladimir Dimitrov of the Bulgarian Association of Recycling explain progress towards enshrining the "polluter pays" principle in his own country, Igor Bilimoff of FEDEREC argued that the increasing number of EPR initiatives in France was a reflection of the municipalities' desire to spend as little money as possible on "waste" activities.

Len Shaw of the Canadian Association of Recycling Industries said that his organisation supported the EPR concept - but only if a number of conditions were met. For example, he argued the main focus should be on designing products in such a way as to alleviate issues at the end-of-life phase. Furthermore, the recycling industry should be allowed to have its say at the development stage of an EPR scheme as producers generally lacked expertise in the field of collection.

Mr Shaw also questioned the introduction of EPR schemes for end-of-life products that were already well managed. In a similar context, Mr Vermoesen of COBEREC had earlier contended that no EPR initiative was necessary "if collection and treatment are market-driven".

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