

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention (Round-Table Sessions) in London (5-7 October 2018)

International Environment Council:

Meeting focuses on Brexit and the informal recycling sector

Brussels, 10 October 2018

With BIR holding its latest Convention in London, Brexit and its consequences provided a regular point of debate during the course of the two-day event - most prominently at the International Environment Council meeting on October 6 chaired by Olivier François of Galloo.

Hilary Stone, Honorary Research Fellow at Imperial College London's Centre for Environmental Control & Waste Management, warned delegates of some of the dire potential scenarios for trade, especially if the UK leaves the EU on March 29 next year without a withdrawal deal in place. In this case, the UK will face new tariffs on exports of recyclables to the EU while also being able to set tariffs on imports of recyclables into the UK.

The UK and the EU reached an agreement in principle in March this year for a transition period running to the end of 2020, during which the UK will be treated for most relevant purposes as if it were an EU member state. However, this agreement will not be legally binding until a withdrawal deal is formally agreed and ratified - something which has yet to happen, Ms Stone underlined.

The UK government will carry across EU Waste Shipment Regulation 2006 so that UK and EU law will be identical, Ms Stone also noted. Identifying consents to ship waste as a key issue, she said the UK view is that they should still be valid whereas the EU "does not agree". She was joined by Mr François in calling on companies to carry out an urgent review of any of their existing notifications given that the UK's withdrawal date is less than half a year away and the notification procedure frequently takes more than six months.

BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS

Following recent United Nations meetings in Geneva where informal recycling was on several agendas, fellow guest speaker Dr Anne Scheinberg, Global Recycling Specialist with Springloop Cooperatie UA in the Netherlands, focused on the role of the informal recycling sector in the Circular Economy era. Informal recyclers “are your suppliers”, she insisted, in that the sector captures 15-25% of waste and diverts it to markets. “A threat to them is a threat to you,” she added. “You can offer your informal supply chain legitimacy, protection and prices.”

To make integration accessible, it is necessary for a path to be cleared, according to Dr Scheinberg. “Informal recyclers can walk the path but they are not the ones who can clear it,” she said. “BIR members have a strong interest and are best placed to work on the path. You are best positioned to solve their - and your - problems in a positive and proactive way.”

In assessing latest regulatory developments, BIR Trade & Environment Director Ross Bartley said a review covering certain Basel Convention annexes has raised the threat of mechanical recycling operations being reclassified as pre-treatment/interim/preparatory operations. The review will take some time and BIR has made technical submissions on the mechanical recycling of the waste and scrap of: aluminium; concrete from construction & demolition; copper; glass; gypsum; iron and steel; textiles, including second-hand clothing; slags from iron & steel works and from non-ferrous metalworks; wood; and end-of-life tyres.

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