

## PRESS RELEASE

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

#### ***Textiles Division:***

#### **Reuse lies at heart of industry's economic and environmental value**

**Brussels, 9 October 2018**

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Research and development projects are under way in several countries aimed mainly at recovering natural/synthetic fibres to provide the garment industry with new raw materials or transforming/agglomerating textile materials essentially for insulation purposes. Some other projects, meanwhile, are focused on automation of material sorting. "These works - essential for the future of our profession - must be carried out while preserving the share of tonnages sorted for reuse," insists Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex in France. "The essential economic and ecological value of our industry lies in reuse."

In his opening address to the BIR Textiles Division meeting in London on October 6, the body's President also underlined the need to educate members of the public that they can deposit all used clothes - "even those of good quality".

There followed a joint guest presentation under the banner of the European Clothing Action Plan (ECAP), the focus of which is to adopt a circular approach to diverting clothing waste from landfill and incineration. Emile Bruls, advisor to Rijkswaterstaat Environment Waste Circular in the Netherlands, noted that several countries - including his own - are considering extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems as a means of collecting more textiles.

David Watson, Senior Consultant at environmental consultancy PlanMiljø APS in Denmark, then reviewed the results of city-specific case studies aimed at "inspiring and guiding" future collection efforts. In the Belgian city of Antwerp, for example, an unusual tender process won by five complementary organisations and involving a mix of collection concepts - including alternative

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**BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS**

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collection points in buildings such as libraries and post offices - led to a 12% increase in collection volumes last year as well as to the creation of 80 new jobs for disadvantaged groups.

Mr Watson underlined the importance of communication and “getting to know” the public when attempting to boost textile collections. In the Swedish city of Gothenburg, for instance, a survey of residents in 2017 revealed that only 50% were aware they could deposit worn-out textiles. At the same time, he acknowledged the low economic value of worn-out items as a challenge.

In the first of a series of national market reports, Pol T’Jollyn of Recutex NV in Belgium spoke of the “big challenge” of finding good original material with a minimum quantity of rags “since these are sold at very low or even negative prices”. From Switzerland, Martin Bösch of Texaid Textilverwertungs-AG lamented the lack of an increase in demand for sorted material, with neither the African nor the Eastern European market having improved after the summer months. Mr Zerroug’s report for France acknowledged that good weather conditions throughout most of the summer resulted in high collection volumes, leading to problems in finding markets for low-quality originals.

The London meeting also heard that the forthcoming Brexit is adversely affecting a large number of the UK’s collection and sorting companies because they are unable to recruit the migrant workers on whom they have come to rely. “Many businesses that were sorting in the UK have had to stop and are now just collecting and exporting unsorted clothing,” explained Alan Wheeler of the Textile Recycling Association. “Much of this is ending up in Continental Europe and is possibly contributing to the excess of original clothing on the market in that part of the world.”

At a workshop immediately following the Textiles Division meeting, the Bulgarian Association of Recyclers and Traders of Second-Hand Clothes expressed concern over its government’s plans to introduce an EPR fee for all second-hand clothing put on the local market. The association claims this could lead to the closure of some sorting companies in Bulgaria “as this will be a direct cost on their businesses”. Furthermore, it pointed to a lack of transparency in how the funds will be used.

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