

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Singapore (23-25 May 2011)

Textiles Division: Costs proving difficult to cover

Brussels, 31 May 2011

In Europe, there is an enormous demand for originals but quality does not always match the price, argued BIR Textiles Division President Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH in his opening comments to the latest divisional meeting, held in Singapore on 25 May 2011. To complicate business conditions even further, rental costs relating to collection containers have been rising and yet recovered volumes have declined, he observed.

There has been a healthy market for sorted/unsorted shoes as well as decent sales of feathers - but not at previous peak levels, he continued. Wipers have been readily sold but costs have been difficult to cover, while coverage of the outgoings involved in handling the recycling grades has been even more problematical, said Mr Rintsch.

Reporting on the French market, Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex also alluded to "quite low yields" from collection containers - to the extent that overall volumes "are not satisfying demand". Demand for wipers has increased while rags and tearings have been attracting normal price levels, he added.

Despite the significant political and social unrest in several Arab countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the flow of goods was affected "only for a short period", commented board member Sauro Ballerini of Italy. As for his domestic market, he noted a small decline in prices for wiping rags in response to low demand but renewed interest "after a long period" in woolknits and wool rags.

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The high costs associated with purchasing originals have “cast a shadow over our good sales opportunities”, summarised the BIR Textiles Division’s Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH. As for legislative developments within the EU, Mr Löwer suggested that textiles recyclers “will have to wait longer than we expected” for solid progress towards achieving end-of-waste status.

In his final presentation before stepping down as the division’s General Delegate, Alexander Gläser of Germany-based Fachverband Textil-Recycling eV insisted once again that people consigning clothing to collection bins are not simply disposing of an item but are making a donation that “has a specific intention behind it”. In this context, Mr Rintsch emphasised the valuable role played by textiles recyclers over many generations, stating: “We were environmentalists before anyone else thought of the environment.”

An insight into the Japanese market from guest speaker Osamu Shoji, President of Shoji & Co Ltd, revealed that the country’s second-hand clothing exports amounted to an all-time high of more than 161,000 tonnes last year, with 97% destined for other parts of Asia and 2% for Africa. In Japan itself, there are an estimated 270 rag graders and no box collection schemes, the guest speaker explained.

At the meeting in Singapore, Mr Rintsch and Mr Zerroug were re-elected for further terms as, respectively, President and Vice President of the BIR Textiles Division. It was also announced that Mr Gläser’s position as General Delegate would be taken over by Jan Vermoesen of Coberec in Belgium.

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