

PRESS RELEASE

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Brussels, 1 June 2007

BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition Athens, 21-23 May 2007

Textiles Division: **Problems persist but business is improving**

In his final speech as President of the BIR Textiles Division, Frithjof W. Schepke of Schepke Konzepte in Germany was in a position to deliver perhaps his most positive assessment of market conditions since arriving in office. "Business is booming," he declared. "Even goods that were not moving before are now moving."

However, he also acknowledged that "where there is light, there is also shadow". The textiles recycling industry still faced "structural problems", including the high cost of raw material and the high proportion of unsaleable material in collections, as well as increasing competition from charity and "quasi charity" organisations.

General Delegate Alexander Gläser of Fachverband Textil-Recycling eV, also from Germany, pointed to the "flooding" of the industry's traditional overseas markets - for example, Africa - with cheap new textiles and shoes from China. Sauro Ballerini of Italy agreed that market conditions had improved but that certain problems - such as the high cost of transportation - continued to impact on his domestic industry.

Beginning a round of country-by-country reports, Terry Ralph of the UK Textile Recycling Association (TRA) and Recyclatex confirmed that a meeting had taken place on May 9 this year with Dr Caroline Jackson, an MEP and Rapporteur who had

been instrumental in adding second-hand clothing to the list of recyclables to be considered within the European Parliament's review of the "end-of-waste" issue. Dr Jackson had promised to promote the case for harmonisation of textile definitions within the EU, he noted.

Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex reported that, in France, a law designed to develop the sorting of used clothing was expected to come into force in January 2008. "Many French companies are relying on this law in order to be able to continue their operations," delegates were told.

Hans Brak of Vereniging Herwinning Textiel in the Netherlands offered his support for the system rolling out in France whereby manufacturers and importers of clothing are asked to pay into a fund to aid recycling. The speaker also introduced the notion of a recycling-related brand mark for clothing to enable the buying public to make an informed choice.

Continuing the earlier theme of definitions, there was also discussion of an "interpretative communication" from the EU Commission offering definitions of the terms "product", "production residue" and "by-product". According to Mr Gläser, this offered support for moves to extricate certain textile recycling industry products from waste legislation.

However, BIR Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley emphasised that this "communication" was an interpretation of existing EU law and that use in the manner proposed "may weaken the intention of getting a solution through the main waste framework directive".

Guest speaker Hildegard Hülsenbeck of Lobbe-Tzilalis in Greece explained that the recycling of textiles represented "virgin territory" in her home country, although the national government had undertaken to develop recycling plans for materials not covered by existing recovery programmes.

In Athens, the new President and Vice President of the BIR Textiles Division were named as, respectively, Olaf Rintsch of Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus in Germany and Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex, France.

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