



BIR

Bureau of International Recycling

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. More than 55 countries are represented through their national trade associations and individual companies which are involved in recycling. BIR comprises four commodity divisions: iron and steel, non ferrous metals, paper and textiles, and has committees dealing with stainless steel and special alloys, plastics and rubber. BIR's primary goals are to promote recycling and recyclability, thereby conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and facilitating free trade of secondary raw materials.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brussels, 1st June 2005

BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition Barcelona, 23-25 May 2005

Textiles Division:

Textile recyclers seek compensation for their environmental services

There had been a slight improvement in conditions within the European textiles recycling industry since the previous BIR meeting in October last year, despite closures. However, the sector was still beset by a range of 'uncertainties', according to BIR Textiles Division President Frithjof W. Schepke of Schepke Konzepte in Germany. These included the value of the US dollar, import restrictions, and fears over duty increases in certain African markets, he told delegates on Wednesday, 25th May 2005.

The industry even had to suffer allegations in national newspapers that its exports were costing jobs in some importing countries. Calling any such suggestion 'ridiculous', he reminded delegates of the study conducted in Kenya which concluded that second-hand clothing imports actually created 5000 additional jobs.

A key topic in Barcelona was the meeting held earlier this year between Textiles Division representatives and the EU Commission's DG Environment Unit for Sustainable Development and Raw Materials. According to Alexander Gläser of Fachverband Textil-Recycling in Germany, the industry's call for compensation for its services 'was not really taken on board'. Textiles Division Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH was moved to comment: 'We could stop collections and see what happens - then it would be the municipalities which would have to do something and citizens would have to pay.' Michele Launay of Syndicat National Textiles in France added: 'The whole sector might disappear unless there is payment for the service we provide.'

BIR

Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 24, B-1050 Brussels (Belgium)

Tel: + 32 2 627 57 70 - Fax: + 32 2 627 57 73 - E-mail: bir.sec@skynet.be - <http://www.bir.org>

The Barcelona meeting was provided with an outline of the O.U.V.E.R.T.E.S. initiative which is seeking solutions to the 'crisis' afflicting Europe's textiles recycling industry and which has attracted financial support from, among others, BIR itself. Seven countries are currently members of the project, namely Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK. According to Eric Lavilluniere of the European Confederation of Workers' Co-operatives and Social Co-operatives (CECOP), feedback indicated that between 10 and 20% of textile recycling firms had closed down within the last three years. The industry was facing a 'structural crisis' whereby an ever-dwindling proportion of its collected material could be sold at cost or above.

Since market forces 'will not solve the problem', the O.U.V.E.R.T.E.S. project was addressing the potential for securing a 'contribution' for the services provided by textile recyclers. It was also looking into the possibility that a 1975 marketing responsibility directive might be used to achieve legislation favouring the textiles recycling sector. Mr Lavilluniere stressed, however, the need for the recycling industry to lobby national governments on this issue.

Among the market reports delivered in Barcelona, Terry Ralph of Terimpex Ltd in the UK said that imports of new clothing from the Far East were threatening the very existence of the textile recycling industry. 'Some goods from the UK are by necessity being sold on credit, thus increasing the possibility of bad debts,' he noted. Hans Brak of Vereniging Herwinning Textiel in The Netherlands told delegates of an industry mission to China earlier in the year during which the host country made clear its unwillingness to consider imports of second-hand clothing or materials for recycling. Meanwhile, Rainer Binger of FWS GmbH & Co KG in Germany said his domestic market had been 'flooded' by clothing and that 'the only solution is intermediate storage'.

Mr Löwer noted that, following pressure from exporter nations, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania had postponed proposals for massive increases in import duties on second-hand clothing.

*For further information please contact:
Elisabeth Christ
BIR Communications Director
Tel: + 32 2 627 57 70
e-mail: bir@bir.org*