



BIR

Bureau of International Recycling

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. More than 50 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

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European Secondary Textiles Sector: A light at the end of the tunnel?

Representatives of the EU secondary textiles sector expressed their satisfaction with the outcome of a meeting with the EU Commission.

On Thursday, 20th January 2004, a delegation of the European textiles recovery industry met with the European Commission to discuss the severe problems facing the sector. The delegation, which was headed by the President of the BIR Textiles Division, Frithjof Schepke, was received by the Ms Marianne Klingbeil, Head of Unit of DG Environment G. 4 (Production, Consumption and Waste).

The meeting, which European collectors and processors of textiles recyclables had been requesting for months, had the purpose of debating various burning issues: the "waste" definition and the ensuing administrative and financial burden on the secondary textiles sector, the shipment of second-hand clothing and recovered textiles within and outside the EU member states, and the feasibility of introducing a textile recycling levy at EU level.

The growing disposal costs of textile residues and low-grade material could not be covered any more by the income from higher quality material, which endangers the survival of the sector if no solution was found at EU level.

Also, secondary textiles – and in particular second-hand clothing – are still considered as "green" waste by the EU regulation when shipped across borders, which involves administrative burdens and commercial handicaps.

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Although the EU Commission did not promise a specific directive on “Textile Waste”, Ms Klingbeil confirmed that work on the “Waste Definition” had well progressed.

As a matter of fact, the Commission officially decided to look at a possibility to determine criteria that would define when waste ceases to be waste in the framework of their Communication on the Thematic Strategy for the Prevention of Waste and Recycling.

In addition, Ms Klingbeil clearly acknowledged that second hand clothing processed for re-use was not within the scope of the waste definition. She invited EU operators to file a complaint via their national federations or the BIR if they were encountering problems in this respect with their competent authorities.

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