



**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**

Brussels, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2003

### **BIR Autumn Round-Table Sessions Vienna, 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> October 2003**

#### **Textiles Division: Secondary Textiles Sector still under Threat**

The rising prices experienced in many recycling sectors contrasted sharply with experience among Western Europe's textile companies, the BIR Textiles Round-Table in Vienna was told by its Chairman Frithjof Schepke of Schepke Konzepte GmbH, Germany.

After more than two years of deteriorating market conditions and insolvencies, the sector was now finding that only around 30% of the goods put into collection banks was actually usable. Furthermore, the industry was being hindered by 'unintelligible' rules and regulations, an excessive administrative burden and far higher insurance premiums, he said.

Mr Schepke suggested as a 'short-term solution' that operators removed some of their containers and attempted to reduce collections.

Given the 'minus' returns currently afflicting UK textile recyclers, municipalities had to decide whether to pay companies to collect material or simply to dump used clothing in landfill, argued Benson Greenberg of Sam Greenberg Ltd in the UK. 'We need to demand of the local authorities whether they wish to sustain a textile recycling industry,' he insisted.

Recyclers' problems had been exacerbated by the fact that, whereas payments had previously been made in advance, 'buyers request and are being given credit', he added.

In similar vein, the French report from Seddik Zerroug of Framimex argued that, in order for sorting companies to survive, there was an 'urgent' need for them to be paid for their ecological efforts. The majority of door-to-door collection initiatives had been axed and a large number of collection banks had been withdrawn. There had been a recent upturn in demand from Africa but, even here, prices were low and order compositions were proving difficult to meet. Furthermore, the quality of originals was on the decline.

In his report for Germany, Rainer Binger of FWS GmbH & Co complained that the Far East was 'swamping' markets with new goods at prices lower than those of Germany's second-hand clothing. The news from Italy, meanwhile, was of an enforced move away from rail transportation of the sector's goods towards more expensive options, including road journeys blighted by traffic congestion.

While US textile recyclers were suffering 'insupportable' collection costs, at least their government was attempting to help businesses by negotiating agreements with those countries that had imposed bans on used clothing imports, pointed out Klaus Löwer of Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH in Germany. He lamented: 'In Europe, governments stand by and watch - but also add to our difficulties with waste legislation.' Tighter monitoring of 'green' list exports would increase the workload of already hard-pressed companies, he added.

Amid this succession of downbeat market reports, some relief was provided by Alexander Glaser of Fachverband Textil Recycling EV in Germany. Talks in June this year involving a divisional delegation and EU officials had proved 'very interesting', he reported. 'We have a receptive audience there.'

It had been agreed that, through BIR, the European textile industry would submit a position paper for consideration at EU level. Mr Löwer underlined the importance of adopting a 'common front' in Europe. Matching the demands of each national association would improve the sector's chances of making progress in its discussions with the EU, he argued.

ends

*For further information please contact:  
Elisabeth Christ  
BIR Communications Director  
Tel: + 32 2 627 57 78  
e-mail: [info@bir.org](mailto:info@bir.org)*