



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

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**BIR Autumn Round-Table Sessions
Vienna, 27th-28th October 2003**

Plastics Committee:

Recycled PET - a reliable raw material

PET bottle recycling was a modern-day success story but still faced some very real threats, the BIR Plastics Round-Table in Vienna on 27th October was informed by its guest speaker, Jan Snellenburg of Texplast GmbH in The Netherlands. As well as the impact of 'unstable' virgin prices and 'insufficient uniformity' in the interpretation of EU law, cheap-labour countries such as China were threatening Europe's recycling industry by their willingness to pay prices 'we absolutely cannot afford'.

Across the EU each year, more than 400,000 tonnes of used PET bottles were collected and recycled into fibre, sheet/film, strapping and even back into bottles, thanks in part to the fact these drinks containers were both easy to recognise and of a consistent grade. Consumers had now accepted recycled PET as a 'reliable' raw material, said Mr Snellenburg. Furthermore, constant improvements in technology had meant that reclaimers were able to produce a material 'close to virgin' that could be used directly in food contact applications.

According to the speaker, PET recycling would receive a further boost if the Belgian government were to proceed with a proposal demanding the use of at least 50% reclaimed material in new bottles. A more general move in this direction would not only increase demand for recycled PET but would also 'force producers to go back to transparent bottles', he suggested.

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**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>**

Among the reports submitted to the Plastics Round-Table, a US update from the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries suggested that Chinese demand for PET bales was continuing to underpin the market. HDPE reclaimers were feeling pressure from 'softer' virgin resin prices and temporarily less robust demand from overseas buyers.

India, meanwhile, was set to remain only a 'small' importer of plastics scrap, the meeting was informed by Surendra Kumar Borad of Gemini Corporation NV in Belgium. A licence was required to import and recycle plastics scrap but only one of these had been issued within the previous four years. At present, a total of 26 licensed units were importing between 6000 and 7000 tonnes each month.

In one of several country reports from Europe, Jacques Musa of Soulier in France observed that PET bottle prices were increasing on an almost daily basis as demand became ever stronger.

Marc Figueras of Spain suggested only a few qualities of plastics scrap were readily saleable whereas 'big problems' existed for black polystyrene and HDPE. Overall, he said, it had not been a good year for his country's plastics recyclers.

Reporting for Germany and The Netherlands, BIR Plastics Committee Chairman Peter Daalder of Daly Plastics BV in The Netherlands described exports to Asia as 'fantastic' while the 'crazy' prices being paid were, in some cases, 50% higher than what domestic processors were able to afford. Fortunes were mixed for the recycling sector, with many of those companies engaged in washing their material 'losing big money'; some companies in Germany were losing € 300,000 a month, Mr Daalder believed.

Enrico Bobbio of Polieco in Italy lamented the on-going problems emanating from the association of plastics scrap with waste. The plastics recycling industry had to strive to establish itself in Brussels and to impress on international legislators the economic importance of its activities, he insisted.

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For further information please contact:

Elisabeth Christ

BIR Communications Director

Tel: + 32 2 627 57 78

e-mail: info@bir.org

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>