
Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Rome (30 May – 1 June 2012)

Textiles Division:

Container woes for Europe's textiles recyclers

Brussels, 7 June 2012

For the first time since becoming President of the BIR Textiles Division, Olaf Rintsch of Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH in Germany described himself as “very pessimistic” about the business outlook.

For Europe's sorters, prices of originals were so high that it was proving almost impossible to run profitable operations in high-wage countries. And financial pressures had been intensified, he added, by increases in petrol costs and wage bills, as well as by container rental costs soaring to “dizzying heights”.

Mr Rintsch went on to emphasise the BIR Textiles Division's strong opposition to illegally-placed containers. Meanwhile, instances of theft of containers or of their contents “have increased substantially in their frequency, and legal measures to fight this have been insufficient to date”, according to divisional Vice President Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex in France.” At the same time, he added, volumes derived from each container have been 15-20% lower on average in the first half of this year when compared to the same period in 2011 owing to the unfavourable economic climate and increased competition.

In the Italian market report from Sauro Ballerini, it was noted that the economic crisis in Europe has made the public more reluctant to discard their old clothes while demand from Egypt has increased slightly owing to a reduction in customs charges.

In his report for Belgium, Pol T’Jollyn of NV Recutex also underlined the difficulties in obtaining good-quality originals at reasonable prices. And in describing conditions in the USA, the Textiles Division’s Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH said prices of originals have been so high that sorters have faced shortages, with some opting to reduce their capacity utilisation rates or to leave the business altogether.

In the first of three guest presentations at the Textiles Division meeting in Rome, an overview of recycling in Central America was provided by Sandra Chinchilla, General Manager of Fibertex in El Salvador. She pointed out that around 60% of the region’s population tends to buy used clothing, before adding: “There is much work to be done by governmental authorities to encourage industry and to educate the public with regard to recycling in general.”

Latest recycling-related initiatives by the European Outdoor Group (EOG) - an association representing the common interests of the continent’s outdoor apparel industry - were outlined by Benjamin Marias, Co-Managing Director of Azimut Innovation in France. Speaking on behalf of the EOG’s Sustainability Working Group, he highlighted the development of an index of end-of-life indicators to help apparel producers to “eco-design” their products.

And Fabrizio Tesi, Managing Director of COM.I.STRA Spa in Italy, spotlighted the recycling skills honed by his company since its formation more than six decades ago. The business produces carded fibre obtained from recycled fibres and wool fabrics from out-cuts. “What we produce is eco-sustainable,” he declared.

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