

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention (Round-Table Sessions) in Budapest (13-15 October 2019)

Textiles Division:

Brexit adds complexity to already-difficult market conditions

Brussels, 17 October 2019

The textiles recycling industry is suffering from a combination of high supply, falling quality and payment issues among some customers, stated Martin Böschén of Switzerland-based TEXAID * Textilverwertungs AG in his summary of market reports delivered to the BIR Textiles Division meeting on October 14. "We also need to find better recycling solutions for what we can't reuse," the Division's President told delegates in Budapest.

"With a recession on the doorstep, we are not foreseeing any short-term improvement and are expecting a continuing difficult situation for the textiles recycling industry for the next couple of months, which could also lead to financial problems for some market participants," he said.

Reporting for Italy, Sauro Ballerini warned that low-quality "fast fashion" from China has the potential to offer competition for used clothing in all markets. Meanwhile, there has been steady demand of late on France's used clothing market as well as consistent export orders, according to Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex.

In anticipation of the European directive calling for totally separate collection of textiles by 2025, Belgian authorities are already pushing the public to put all kinds of textiles into collection containers - even material which goes directly for incineration. "This means

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that the quality of our originals is going down, and we will have a larger quantity of material for incineration, which will put a big pressure on the margins of the sorting companies,” lamented Pol T’Jollyn of Recutex NV.

Adding a further complexity to current conditions is the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. “If there is no deal (by October 31), reports suggest an estimated 85% of lorries using the main Channel crossings may not be ready for new French customs checks and could face delays of two and a half days,” warned Alan Wheeler of the UK’s Textile Recycling Association (TRA). “More specifically for the waste and resource management sector, I think everyone in the UK should be preparing themselves for much stricter scrutiny of their exports of waste into the EU going forward.”

Furthermore, Mr Wheeler added, the UK government is favouring a proposal that would prevent any of the country’s businesses from taking on foreigners (including EU nationals) for jobs paying less than £30,000 per year - a figure he described as “utterly absurd”.

Mr Wheeler also provided delegates with details of two new initiatives currently at different stages of development in the UK. The first is a partnership between TRA and the National Bed Federation designed to provide commercial advantage to legitimate operators by auditing applicants to join a Register of Approved Mattress Recyclers (RAMR). Three pilot audits have already been completed ahead of the register’s public launch in 2020.

Meanwhile, the TRUST initiative is an accreditation scheme launched in September this year to alleviate concerns about business practices among collectors and sorters. The two-stage application process covers such areas as health & safety, employment law and environmental legislation. “Some charity shops have already said they won’t deal with collectors unless they are accredited,” stated Mr Wheeler.

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