

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention in Paris (27-28 October 2014)

Textiles Division:

New market development a key priority

Brussels, 31 October 2014

Three major conclusions could be drawn from the International Textile Recycling Summit held during the BIR World Convention in June this year: the need for free movement of the sector's goods on the world market; the need for communication activity in order to convey a true image of the sector's positive contribution; and the need to develop new market outlets, particularly for those materials with a low or negative value.

With these words, Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex in France began his presidential address to the latest BIR Textiles Division meeting, held in Paris on October 27. He went on to say that BIR wanted to assist in the development of an "observatory" of best practice in used textiles recycling and of current R&D projects.

In his French market report, Mr Zerroug indicated that demand for used clothing had been largely stable. But Alan Wheeler of the Textile Recycling Association noted that the value of UK used clothing had fallen "around 40%" over the last 12 months and was likely to drop even further. More difficult trading conditions were forcing importers to "tighten their belts" and therefore to put a squeeze on traditionally more expensive items, such as those coming from the UK. The pound's strength in relation to the Euro had heightened the competitive pressure on UK exporters, he added.

Commenting for Italy, Sauro Ballerini noted a slowing of demand and payments from customers in Africa. And in reports submitted by Osamu Shoji of Shoji & Co. Ltd in Japan and Eric Stubin of Trans-Americas Textile Recycling in the USA, the former highlighted the impossibility of extracting any profit from grading original rags while the latter estimated that overall pricing of US originals "may be off by as much as 30% from all-time highs".

BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS

In the textiles recycling sector in Germany, private services were being “pushed off the market”, complained Michael Sigloch of Gras & Sigloch GmbH & Co. He added that fair competition with public concerns was “impossible under these conditions” and that amendment was required of laws related to Germany’s circular economy act. Meanwhile, the Belgian report submitted by Pol T’Jollyn of NV Recutex noted: “Collectors face a problem of unfair competition from the social economy.”

In the first of two guest presentations, Mathieu Hestin - Project Manager at BIO Intelligence Service in France - spoke of the “huge potential” for collecting and recycling end-of-life shoes. The collection rate for shoes in France was currently an “extremely low” 3% and yet the raw material value available for recovery exceeded Euro 250m. The speaker went on to review various initiatives in this field, including: the recycling of shoes into material for use in sports pitches and underlay; and the closed-loop recycling of mono-material shoes such as Crocs.

Fellow guest speaker Andrew Gilbert, Key Account Manager at WRAP in the UK, outlined his organisation’s perspective on improving the sustainability of the clothing and textiles sector in Europe. He identified two main priorities: raising awareness of the need to prevent textiles going to landfill; and finding viable markets for lower-grade textiles.

At the meeting in Paris, immediate Past President of the BIR Textiles Division - Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH - was appointed an Honorary President.

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