

## PRESS RELEASE

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### *Recent BIR World Recycling Convention in Warsaw (28-29 October 2013)*

#### ***Textiles Division:***

#### **Major recognition for industry stalwart Klaus Löwer**

**Brussels, 4 November 2013**

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At the BIR Textiles Division's late-May meeting in Shanghai, it was confirmed that six of the UK's established textile collection companies had ceased trading since the beginning of 2013. And Alan Wheeler from the country's Textile Recycling Association (TRA) revealed to the latest divisional gathering in Warsaw on 28 October 2013: "Things have not got much better since then, with a further two members of our association going out of business, resulting in hundreds of job losses."

At the same time, TRA members were reporting that "warehouses are full and their buyers are buying less". Nevertheless, prices still appeared to be "defying gravity and remaining high", he told delegates.

Textiles Division President Olaf Rintsch of Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus in Germany suggested that the combination of falling original values and firm container space prices could lead to unemptied containers on the streets while "some companies could go bankrupt". Divisional Vice President Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex in France argued prices could rise again once winter weather began to affect collection volumes; he also lamented the impact on supply of continuing thefts from containers, arguing that a collective effort - including from the judiciary - was required to stamp out the problem.

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**BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS**

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Reporting for Belgium, Pol T'Jollyn of NV Recutex went further by describing such thefts as “evil” but “very hard to stop as long as the price for originals remains so high”. He also reflected that sorting company margins were “very small”, with “no sign that this will change very soon”.

According to Michael Sigloch of Gras & Sigloch in Germany, a survey had confirmed that a clear majority of the public regarded used clothes deposited in collection containers “as a donation, and not waste”. However, the intentions of the garment holder had been “swept under the table” by vested interests.

In his familiar international market report, Klaus Löwer of Hans Löwer Recycling in Germany pointed to recent experience in Japan as evidence that textiles recyclers in high-wage countries were able to survive only if they worked with sorting operations in low-wage nations - despite the fact that this approach was “environmentally counter-productive”.

According to Mr Löwer, this was to be his final contribution to the BIR Textiles Division after an association dating back to the 1970s; however, in making Mr Löwer an Honorary Member, Mr Rintsch expressed the hope that the BIR Textiles Division’s long-serving President (from 1996 to 2001) would maintain his strong links with the organisation. Mr Löwer declared himself “overwhelmed” by this recognition.

A “new approach to footwear recycling” was outlined in Warsaw by guest speaker Pailak Mzikian, Group Recycling & Sustainability Director at Switzerland-based Soex International. Helped by ECO TLC funding from France, researchers were focusing on: the development of new separation technologies for the different components in shoes which could number up to 80; the testing of materials; possible new applications; and the development of a network of industries interested in using the recovered materials. To date, processing technology efforts had revolved around a delamination mill, to be followed by a yet-to-be-developed zig-zag air separation stage.

According to Mr Mzikian, the aim was to establish a processing plant at Wolfen in Germany by the end of this year and to create two 100% recycled products by next summer in order to prove the overall concept.

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