

## **Introductory speech of Mr. Michael SCHUY, President of EuRIC ERC 2017, Milan, 5/10/2017**

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to welcome you here in Milan!

It is the first time that EuRIC decides to organise a conference elsewhere than in Brussels. Why? Simply to bring closer to you the work that EuRIC does every day with its Member Federations to serve recyclers interests in Brussels. This was a priority for EuRIC and its Board and I would like to very warmly thank ASSOFERMET for hosting the first edition of the European Recycling Conference and empowering us to make it happen!

It is a great pleasure to see in this auditorium leading representatives from recycling companies, industries sourcing secondary raw materials, technology providers, policy makers and journalists across Europe today in Milan. This basically gives credits to the other idea we had when we launched the concept of the European Recycling Conference:

The best to bring EuRIC closer to daily business is simply to explain what keep us working late at night when it comes to legislation impacting recycling activities.

Hence, our choice to kick off this conference by an ad hoc Open General Assembly where we will open the doors of EuRIC by outlining some of the hottest topics for the recycling industry and how we not only follow but act on them.

Before leaving the floor to my colleagues, I would like to say a few words as an entrepreneur running a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation family-owned SME active in scrap metal recycling for more than 35 years.

The work we do in EuRIC directly matters actually to my business because having access to a European and global markets, friendly to recycling, is just as instrumental to my success as it matters to your businesses.

Europe did put recycling among the highest options to treat waste through its waste hierarchy in the seventies (1975 to be precise) long before recycling was



considered as a priority by our national governments. Today's EU circular economy policy is another testimony that recycling matters.

We can only be grateful to European institutions for doing so. I take this opportunity to warmly thank Mr. Gabriele Morgante from DG GROW of the European Commission to be our keynote speaker in the second session.

Recycling is circular by nature, long before it ever became a much supported political objective. When my company processes waste into quality metal scrap meeting industry specifications and sell it, I simply close "another loop" and prevent valuable materials to be wasted. Nevertheless, the amount of regulatory and administrative requirements applicable to our businesses keeps increasing despite its positive economic and environmental impacts.

To give you a very practical example, I never understood why secondary raw materials were in most instances categorised as waste some decades ago, despite their huge environmental benefits in terms of energy and CO2 savings. But even more problematic today is the ongoing trend witnessed at European and national levels leading to the re-classification of valuable materials as hazardous because of the interface with chemical legislation.

Let's be clear, the risks of seeing certain types of metal scrap being reclassified as hazardous waste because of the presence of trace elements or test methods which are simply not tailored to the specificities of recycling can simply put a halt to the recycling of streams, which are crucial to the circular economy without any environmental benefits. This can have a very direct impact on the ability for the businesses we represent to operate and turn waste into new raw materials.

Let me come to the point:

It is presently being discussed to classify scrap alloys containing more than 0,01% of cobalt as hazardous waste. What does that mean to our industry?

An average scrap yard processes millions of different iron items a day. In order not to process hazardous waste inappropriately, we would have to analyse every single item. Even if we had instruments that could measure 0,01 % cobalt (which we usually don't have) we would - by the time it takes to analyse - probably be forced to downsize from several hundred tons a day to less than merely one, which in practice means closing down the business. The option of selling metal scrap as hazardous would also not work, as steelworks do not accept hazardous



waste. It must be asked what good would a reclassification bring at all? What would be a positive effect? The answer is no, there isn't any!

As long as you don't bite and chew on it, cobalt metal scrap containing trace elements of cobalt is not bioavailable, and therefore exhibit no danger to human health or the environment!

And this is one of the many priorities EuRIC works hard on to make sure that policy-making supports and not hinders recycling.

To conclude, I would like to disclose a secret, namely that the first European Recycling Conference will be followed by a second one next year. The location is still to be determined.

And, last but by far not least, I would also like to wholeheartedly thank our sponsors for supporting the first edition of the European Recycling Conference in particular:

- AURUBIS and GRUPO OTUA sponsoring the Networking Cocktail
  - FER, the Spanish Spanish recycling Federation sponsoring the Conference
- And Steelorbis for their financial contribution.

Please give them an applause.

Thank you very much.