

THE RECYCLER

Trade magazine for the toner and inkjet remanufacturing industry ~ making waste work

ETIRA celebrates 20 years

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the European Toner and Inkjet Remanufacturers Association (ETIRA).

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Brother launches EcoPro across Europe

Brother has announced the roll out of the subscription service across Europe.

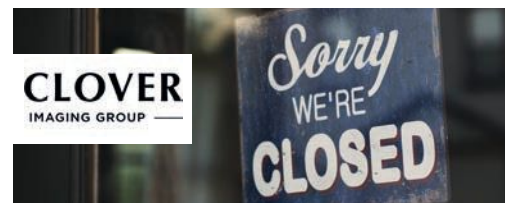
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Authorities urge Epson and Lexmark to inform users about firmware



Following their investigation, the Italian AGCM has asked Epson and Lexmark to clarify the limits regarding the use of non-original cartridges for printers.

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Clover to close Ithaca plant

Clover Imaging Group (Clover) informed its Ithaca, MI employees that it will move inkjet production to its main facility in Mexicali, Mexico by the end of March.

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US Customs confirm Ninestar toner cartridges do not violate GEO

Ninestar has been granted approval by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) to sell its redesigned Brother TN-223 and TN-227 toner cartridges in the United States, otherwise known as TN-243 and TN-247 in Europe.

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ETIRA celebrates 20 years of leading the charge for greener business



▲ David Connett, Partner,
Connett & Unland GbR

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the European Toner and Inkjet Remanufacturers Association (ETIRA).

Founded on 11 February 2003 in Brussels, ETIRA's creation marked the arrival of the cartridge remanufacturing industry's first official European trade association.

Its launch signalled the sector's commitment to raising the profile of reuse and remanufacturing, carrying out important political lobbying work within the EU and providing a platform for organisations within the industry to connect and communicate with one another.

And today, ETIRA's membership includes some of Europe's biggest players in the sector, with more than 40 companies joining the association from all over the UK and the continent and together, continuing to influence and shape the European toner and inkjet remanufacturing industry, as well as the wider circular economy debate and the green agenda.

Reflecting on its creation, Vincent van Dijk, secretary general of ETIRA, said: "ETIRA exists to lead the fight to represent our members' interest and to stand for cartridges as a flagship example of circularity and key to a greener printing industry."

"The association's launch created a face for Europe's remanufacturing industry and also, gave the sector a voice to assert itself at the table of politicians and decision makers across the EU."

Born in Barcelona

The origins of ETIRA were born at the IF conference in Barcelona in 2001 to raise funds to lobby for changes to the WEEE directive that, at the time, were going through the European Parliament. The Directive was very pro-OEM in that cartridges were excluded from the Directive. Intensive lobbying (you could

write a book about that) and a seasoned MEP managed to get a last minute amendment to the Directive to ban "killer" chips that was passed by the Parliament almost unanimously.

In the big scheme of things, it was a small win, but a win it was, and it showed that a group of like-minded people could make a change at the highest levels. But it needed funding and expertise. We raised the money to fund our campaign at the two IF conferences. We used the Brussels office of Bird and Bird to handle the legal side of what we were doing and the Brussels office of Edelman's, a global PR company, to work up the campaign strategy and plan we put into action.

That learning curve showed how a trade association could be effective in lobbying and shaping policy if you have the right people at the heart of the association and it has support.





Image: Freepik.com

ETIRA's focus on driving sustainability within the printing industry has held strong, continuing with its work to lobby the EU and assert remanufactured cartridges as the best choice.

Shaping policy

The world has changed dramatically over the last 20 years, with the industry having to navigate a whole host of unprecedented challenges – from economic uncertainty to the global Covid-19 pandemic.

However, despite these hurdles, ETIRA's focus on driving sustainability within the printing industry has held strong, continuing with its work to lobby the EU and assert remanufactured cartridges as the best choice.

Vincent van Dijk explains: "We are constantly lobbying and reaching out to EU policy makers to raise awareness of the benefits of cartridge reuse and, as an association, we've achieved many successes in this area. "We successfully lobbied for favourable wording in the EU ecodesign criteria for imaging equipment, the EU Ecolabel for imaging equipment, the EU criteria for green public procurement (GPP), the US public procurement scheme

EPEAT, the Nordic Ecolabel (formerly "Nordic Swan"), the EU February 2018 study on cartridge reuse, and the 2020 reform of the Voluntary Agreement Imaging Equipment. And now, as requested by us for a long time, the EU has finally decided to regulate the industry and make reuse the norm.

"But we're not ones to rest on our laurels. There is still much work to be done, and we continue in our efforts, along with our members, to drive change across the industry, rising against the pressure of OEMs and pushing for regulatory tools to be put in place – not voluntary.

Empowering consumers

Alongside lobbying government, a core part of ETIRA's work over the last two decades has been to give remanufacturers the tools to enable their customers to choose remanufactured products and to assure consumers that they are choosing a quality product.

The most notable move to do this has been the ETIRA Certification Label, launched in 2021, with the aim of helping customers distinguish between printing cartridges which are better for the environment from others.

The certified mark differentiates remanufactured Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) cartridges from new OEM and non-OEM newbuilds.

And, as ETIRA celebrates its 20th anniversary, it's also reached the milestone of having more than one million of the labels in circulation, with industry leaders including GM Technology, KMP, Armor and Innotec using the mark on their remanufactured products. ➔



"Having the certification label in the marketplace informs and empowers consumers to make the more environmentally-friendly choice when buying printing cartridges," said Javier Martinez – ETIRA President, "It is better for them and better for the planet."

ETIRA remanufacturers that fulfil a qualification process and license agreement can apply the certification mark to their own brand of cartridges, as well as any brand of cartridges they have produced for a third party that complies with the license requirements.

Looking ahead

Since its creation, ETIRA has risen to the challenge of difficult trading conditions and dwindling sales volumes within the remanufacturing industry to promote the vital benefits of reuse and drive change within policy.

With as much as 70% of cartridges thrown away in Europe after the first use, the association's purpose is more vital than ever, as Vincent van Dijk summarises: "Remanufacturing cartridges for re-use can reduce their carbon footprint by up to 45-60%.

"As our industry takes steps to reduce its environmental impact, every cartridge that is remanufactured is one fewer going directly to landfill.

"Our 20 year milestone is a point of reflection for us and our members. It's



At its peak, 10,000 people/businesses were involved in remanufacturing in Europe.

a chance to review the vital work we've done to date but, more importantly, it's an opportunity for us to promote the important job that's still to be done to secure a greener future for the inkjet and toner industry across Europe."

ETIRA - The backstory

At its peak, 10,000 people/businesses were involved in remanufacturing in Europe.

Most of them were very small, maybe producing less than a hundred cartridges a month. But the market share was building, and by the end of the century (I have always wanted to write that), the market share was 70/30 OEM and reuse.

In the noughties, inkjet changed the market dynamic a little. If it didn't have a print head like Epson cartridges etc., the compatible inkjet cartridge was born and rapidly took a 40+% of the market, and HP ink cartridge reuse was a healthy 15+% of the market. This led to the patent wars that saw the OEM gain back some market share over time.

Then came along the compatible laser cartridge, which has grown a significant market share. Today the market is probably 56% OEM, 22% new compatible and 22% remanufactured, with many remanufactured products produced in Asia.

Today the peak of 10,000 people/businesses involved in remanufacturing in Europe has declined to less than 3,000. At the same time, the profile of those businesses has changed. Yes, they are still in the imaging sector; they sell OEM printers and consumables, new compatibles, and remanufactured consumables that are either produced in-house or bought in.





Why are trade associations important?

Simple really, it's about who speaks for you and your business. A Trade Association like ETIRA can represent your business and discuss the issues that impact your business. From legislation to market representation to highlighting challenges in the market. This is a case of many companies speaking with one voice.

But more than that, a trade association can promote the industry and provide networking opportunities among like-minded competitors, providing a voice for the industry regarding regulations and new legislation and tools such as best practices for that particular industry.

And then there are the everyday problems like tenders that exclude

reused consumables. ETIRA, as a trade association, has, over the years, been successful in challenging such tenders.

Building trust

In any line of business, it can be challenging to give potential customers peace of mind that you'll provide a quality product or service if you have not supplied them. It would be best to have that initial trust factor to secure business and get the ball rolling.

A member of a reputable trade association like ETIRA can do that, as customers tend to look for some certification. Membership in a well-established trade association can open a door and confirm that you are part of a dedicated and professional association group.

So what is a trade association?

According to the European Union, trade associations typically promote their members' trade or professional interests as opposed to foundations, who spend their funds on projects or activities that benefit the public.

The main characteristics of associations are:

- voluntary and open membership
- equal voting rights - resolutions carried by a majority
- membership fees - no capital contribution
- autonomy and independence
- service providers, voluntary work, and advocacy/representation →



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What are the barriers?

Resources – Everything an association like ETIRA can achieve is directly related to the financial resources it gets from its membership fees. A case of David versus Goliath. A single OEM might spend twenty-plus times more on their advocacy than ETIRA generates in revenues.

To put that into context, in 2002, we spent over €150,000 (\$160,000) on successfully lobbying for the changes to the WEEE directive. More recently, €10,000 (\$11,000) on successfully challenging an OEM patent and a similar amount on legal advice. It is a case of using your resources effectively. A court action may consume time and resources, and because lawyers are involved, you can't guarantee a win. At the same time, active lobbying and public



ETIRA is currently promoting the ETIRA certification label, which has a million labels in circulation. ETIRA would like to do more promotion, but it is a resource issue. If ETIRA had more members and or donations, we could expand our industry promotion activities.

An even more significant challenge will be for the OEMs as they embrace this new legislation as it comes in over the next few years. That will drive a reuse agenda,

relations can be more effective. Not always in the law courts, but certainly in the courts of public opinion.

Why don't we hear more about ETIRA activities?

ETIRA publishes what it can in its annual report, on social media, and in the trade press. But it is essential that every twist and turn in lobbying and meetings is not made public. This is because we need the trust of officials, and we don't want to give our lobbying position away to competitors. A bit like playing cards; you keep them close. But all that we do is within the EU transparency rules.

What about the future?

The big challenge is that we all think everyone knows about cartridge reuse, but they don't! The ongoing challenge for everyone is to keep talking about reuse, hardware and consumables.

Reuse has a solid political wind, and legislation is coming that will strengthen the demand for reuse, not just in the print sector but more widely across the EU. An influential voice can input industry views at the highest levels to help steer sustainable policy and legislation that works for consumers, the environment and the imaging sector.

An even more significant challenge will be for the OEMs as they embrace this new legislation as it comes in over the next few years. That will drive a reuse agenda, and like the motor industry back in the 1990s, the linear model will have to change. Are they aware of the possible changes? Of course, they are, but the next pinch point for ETIRA is likely to be when the draft legislation is published. We can expect the OEMs to roll out their lobbying and PR advocates to target key influencers.

An investment

Depending on your business model and your target customer segment, acquiring a new customer can cost anything from €75 (\$80) to more than €1,500 (\$1,600). Networking at an ETIRA event might cost you more than €75 (\$80), but it won't cost you €1,500 (\$1,600) (unless you want to be a sponsor), and you will find potential contacts, clients and partners who can help your business move to the next level.

It is definitely a case of the more active you are, the more you will build long-term relationships and partnerships that are mutually beneficial. Joining ETIRA is not a cost but an investment to meet like-minded individuals, share ideas, strengthen ties, collaborate, and make connections. ■

