

Sustainability and competitiveness need to go hand in hand

The European textile industry discusses the EU textile strategy to create a greener and more competitive sector within Europe



Brussels, 26 March 2024 – Under the Belgian EU presidency, Centexbel, Creamoda, EURATEX and Fedustria organised a successful event on the EU strategy for sustainable and circular textiles.

Around 200 people gathered in Brussels. European policymakers, Belgian politicians, experts from governments and, of course, CEOs of textile and clothing companies, discussed the key components to develop a strategy which will support the competitiveness of our sector.

Amid economic turmoil and evolving legislation, clear consent prevailed on the imperative for bolstering the competitiveness of European textile and clothing companies. Sustainability and competitiveness need to go hand in hand. Decisive action from the upcoming European Commission and Parliament is now crucial to enact robust industrial policies.

With the EU's open trade policy offering growth prospects and market expansions, concerns about global competition loom large. Panelists deliberated on maintaining Europe's competitive edge through common standards, robust market surveillance, and strategic policy alignments, notably regarding potential FTAs with India and policy shifts in the US.

Innovation emerges as the linchpin of bridging sustainability and competitiveness. The announcement of the Horizon Europe Partnership program "Textiles of the Future," along with discussions on collaborative research ventures and skill shortages underscored the industry's commitment to transformative technologies.



Panellists included Amaryllis Verhoeven (DG GROW, European Commission) Christophe Kiener (DG TRADE, European Commission), Steve Lamar (CEO of the American Apparel and Footwear Association), Julie Lietaer (CEO European Spinning Group & Founder Ariadne Innovation), Carl Baekelandt (CEO Purfi/Concordia Textiles), Hans Dewaele (Executive Vice President & CCO BekaertDeslee), Johan Haelterman (Chairman of the Executive Committee at NBN & Member of the ISO Council), Pol Lombaert (Group Innovation Director BIG Floorcoverings), Wouter Verbouwe (Business Development CE and R&D Manager Basaltex), Elsie De Clercq (Advisor VLAIO) and many more.

Alexia Bertrand, State Secretary for Budget and Consumer Protection, delivered the closing statement, highlighting the critical role of the textile industry in Europe's green transition. She emphasized the urgent need for enhanced competitiveness and market surveillance, stressing the necessity of a level playing field for textile and clothing imports from outside Europe. Finally, Bertrand emphasized the importance of empowering consumers through the provision of access to information.

Karla Basselier, Fedustria CEO, sent her thanks to the EU Belgian Presidency. It was important to have its support in organising this event. Grateful that Belgium has put the need to strengthen our competitiveness as one the key priorities of its chairmanship high on its agenda. Now it is time to act since a competitive textile industry within Europe is the only engine to make the EU textile strategy a reality.

According to Dirk Vantyghem, EURATEX Director General, these events are crucial to align the opinions of different stakeholders: industry, research institutes, national authorities but also global partners. We do not live in a bubble, we are all interconnected, especially the textile sector. If we really want to change the world, we need to act together: it's the only way to reconcile green policies with industrial ones."

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More pictures at this [link](#).