



PRESS RELEASE

Centexbel looks back on successful participation at BEDEX

TEXTILES AND PLASTICS AS THE FIRST LINE OF PROTECTION IN DEFENCE

MoU with Flanders Make, Fedustria (and Wood.be in preparation) strengthens acceleration of innovation towards industry

Brussels, March 12–14, 2026 – Centexbel, the Belgian research centre for textiles and plastics, looks back on a strong presence at **BEDEX – Brussels European Defense Exhibition & Conference**, where more than 200 exhibitors and 35 international delegations gathered in the heart of the European institutions and NATO. The exhibition featured professional days on March 12 and 13, and a public day on March 14, including conferences and an extensive exhibitor programme.

*"Our message was simple yet powerful: textiles are the first line of protection in defence," says **Pol Lombaert, General Manager of Centexbel**. "From bullet- and stab-resistant applications to advanced combinations of textiles, plastics and ceramics: we noticed strong interest in high-performance, reliable solutions that effectively protect soldiers."*

ATMOSPHERE AND VISITOR MIX: ENERGISING AND REFLECTIVE

The exhibition showed a clear dynamic: excellent organisation and a notably broad visitor mix – ranging from politicians and international delegations to industry professionals and the general public. At the same time, the visibility of heavy systems and the increasing 'gamification' in defence technology prompted reflection on the growing distance between screen-based operations and the reality of conflict.

Our participation in BEDEX fits perfectly with Centexbel's role as a **one-stop shop** for **prototyping, testing, problem solving, certification** and **technological advice**. Centexbel operates fully cross-sector, serving both civilian and defence domains. **Reliability, safety, performance** and **sustainability** are the common threads throughout all our activities.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REINFORCES COLLABORATION

During BEDEX, Centexbel, Flanders Make and Fedustria signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to structurally deepen their collaboration and bring innovation to market faster. The signing took place on Thursday, March 12 at 10:15 in the presence of **Flemish Minister-President and Minister of Industry Matthias Diependaele**, at the **Flanders Investment & Trade stand** (Hall 7, stand 529).

"Accelerating innovation means combining expertise instead of duplicating it," Lombaert explains. "With the sector embedding of Fedustria, the process and machinery expertise of Flanders Make, and our material knowledge, we bring the full trajectory from question to solution closer to companies."

A concrete example is the **material selector** jointly developed by **Centexbel** and **Flanders Make**: process and mould advice for injection moulding applications is combined with material selection (polymers, additives, colourants), providing users with **one integrated, industrially viable solution**.



KEY INSIGHTS: BROADER AND DEEPER THAN EXPECTED

Centexbel identified new or underestimated needs among defence companies, ranging **from acoustics and fire behaviour to design advice, supply chain insight and reshoring of production to Europe**. These questions often concerned critical links in the defence chain and clearly fell within the expertise domains of textiles, coatings and plastics.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CIRCULARITY: FOCUS ON END-OF-LIFE AND ECODESIGN

While **recycled materials** were less discussed during the use phase, Centexbel received many questions about **what happens to materials after their lifecycle** – especially for high-value textile materials such as wool used in uniforms.

Ecodesign clearly took centre stage: the focus was on highly protective, wearable and context-resilient systems that remain effective in extreme conditions (cold/heat, moisture/dust, chemical or biological risks). Such demanding applications rarely allow mono-material solutions. However, **smart and well-thought-out material combinations** ensure **longer lifespans** and **more efficient material use** – resulting in ecodesign in practice.

Centexbel has been supporting companies for years in the transition to sustainable and circular production – with a focus on bio-based materials, ecodesign, recycling, analytical capabilities and certification (including OEKOTEX® and QACER recycled content).

INTERACTION WITH DELEGATIONS, PROFESSIONALS AND THE PUBLIC

Delegations (national, international, EU, military) proved well aware of the strength of Belgian textile and plastics innovation. Among **professional visitors**, Centexbel recorded 60 to 70 in-depth discussions, which are now being systematically followed up. On Saturday, when the fair **opened to the public**, we received enthusiastic feedback – including from soldiers who highlighted how crucial it is for textile materials to be both protective and comfortable

BEDEX provided strong visibility among both professionals and the general public, as well as a broad pipeline of leads and collaboration opportunities. In the coming weeks, Centexbel will focus on structured follow-up and prioritisation.

Centexbel looks forward positively to participating in a future edition, given the clear momentum and strong alignment with the centre's mission.

CONTACT:

Pol Lombaert, Algemeen Directeur Centexbel

pol@centexbel.be

+32 496 65 81 89

www.centexbel.be

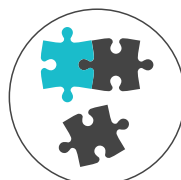
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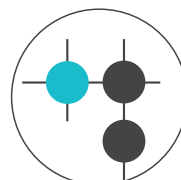
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