

Technological innovation takes guts and creativity!

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If 2020 was characterised, for many companies, by anguish and the disruption of their usual business activities due to a pandemic that hit hard, 2021 can absolutely be characterised by the unprecedented resilience of those same companies.

Important insights

In 2021 some important insights also came to light following these extraordinary events.

First of all, something we have actually known for some time. The **manufacturing industry** in Belgium - and by extension in Europe - is hugely important. In our country alone, this industry accounts for 320,000 employees and 8.3% of the GNP. It is the engine of renewal, recovery and revival. If we want to maintain and strengthen our social prosperity, we have to continue to invest in these companies.

In addition, we have learned that the **profound transformations** that are swiftly sweeping through our society have not been slowed down by the pandemic - quite the contrary, in fact. **Sustainability** is more than ever a priority on the corporate agenda. Driven by a sense of responsibility and also encouraged by highly conscious and critical consumers, companies are taking the lead in the green transition, both in terms of the circular use of materials, renewable energy and the reorganisation of the value chain. Companies have also been confronted with the

digital transition for quite some time now. But a new dimension was reached in 2021. There is a growing understanding that digital technologies will be an essential and crucial lever in bringing the green transition to fruition. For the European Commission, **sustainability and digitisation** are therefore a twin transition, they go hand in hand, reinforcing each other and also providing companies with unprecedented opportunities.

The third point to remember is that **technological innovation** has become almost imperative today if a company wants to survive in this turbulent environment. It requires companies to be creative and to have guts. Although the economic conditions are not making things easy. Time pressure, geopolitical tensions, scarcity of raw materials and increasing costs are making it quite hard on innovative companies.

Hand to the plough!

Sirris, for decades the reliable innovation partner for the technology industry, has a crucial role to play for companies in these challenging times. In 2021, Sirris took up its responsibility with verve. The 160 colleagues realised technological innovation projects at more than 1,200 companies in 2021. Good to know: 75% of these companies are SMEs. In addition, 130 collective R&D projects took place under the wings of Sirris. There was also an investment of € 600,000 in the further expansion of the company's own high-tech infrastructure. All this resulted in an annual financial turnover of € 23.7 million.

Eye on the future

But that’s not the end of Sirris's ambition for the sector. 2021 was a year of thorough strategic reflection, but our ultimate goal is assuring the technology industry that we will continue to provide our full support for their technological innovations in the years ahead, obviously with our usual clout. This thorough reflection resulted in a concrete action plan with some important objectives. Sirris is determined to grow in the coming years. Companies definitely need this sizeable critical mass in the various fields of expertise supported by Sirris. In addition, Sirris and Agoria want to join forces more intensively. By combining our economic, social and technological expertise, we can give Belgian technology companies that unique edge that can make the difference in the long run. After all, the complexity of the challenges they face requires an industrial community in which they can work confidently towards a sustainable future.

Armed with these insights and an ambitious action plan, Sirris looks to the future with confidence. After all, it is our mission and commitment to be there for our technology companies in these turbulent times.

Want to know more? Read our annual report 2021 and discover the details of ten concrete cases of technological innovation that Sirris realised in collaboration with the companies last year.

Authors