

Two new Factories of the Future in Wallonia

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SPA Monopole, Puratos, Alstom (second title), Valeo Vision Belgique and JTEKT Torsen Europe (third title) are Wallonia's new 'Factories of the Future' for 2023. Hence, Wallonia now boasts a total of 12 Factories of the Future.

Following an initiative sparked by Agoria and Sirris, the Factory of the Future Awards were deployed throughout Wallonia within the framework of Digital Wallonia's Industry of the Future programme, coordinated by the Agence Numérique digital agency.

Factories of the Future are companies that invest in digitisation, personnel, smart processes and products, and world-class production. They manage energy and materials thoughtfully and stimulate employee involvement, creativity and autonomy. To be awarded this highly coveted title, companies must achieve a maturity scale of at least 4 out of 5, based on a reference of 7 digital, technological and organisational transformations, during a critical audit conducted by independent experts.

According to **Willy Borsus**, Vice-President of Wallonia, Minister of Economy and Digital, 'The presentation of our Factories of the Future Awards is a highlight of Digital Wallonia's Industry of the Future programme. With two new companies certified, Puratos and Spadel, together with three other companies whose title has been renewed, Wallonia now boasts 12 Factories of the Future, to which I associate 20 'Made Different' ambassadors. The digital economy is at the heart of Wallonia's reindustrialisation. Contrary to popular belief, the more companies digitise their

business, the more they integrate advanced technologies, and the more they create employment. This vision transpires through Wallonia's Recovery Plan, of which digitisation of the manufacturing sector is one of the priority aims.'

'Factories of the Future are a genuine showcase of cutting-edge digital technologies to serve tomorrow's industry: robotics, digital twins, augmented and virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc. These technologies constitute a field of excellence in our digital sector. Over 230 businesses proposing such advanced technologies are indexed on the Digital Wallonia platform,' explains **Benoit Hucq**, Managing Director of the Agence du Numérique.

Clarisse Ramakers, Managing Director of Agoria Wallonie adds, 'For the technology industries represented by Agoria, digitisation and optimisation are key sectors for ensuring competitiveness. Just like many other sectors, the automotive industry is currently under global pressure, be it due to procurement issues, climate and energy-related challenges or fleet electrification. Key contractors demand carbon neutrality in the very short term. Within this context, receiving an Factory of the Future Award is a genuine advantage in terms of competitiveness and differentiation. It also rewards and highlights the staff efforts that help collectively transform the company.'

Jean-François Delaigle, Regional Wallonia Director at Sirris, highlights, 'Sirris and Agoria encourage our businesses to "choose ambition". All of us here at Sirris are proud to be involved in this Industry of the Future programme! More generally, for the research centres that work to support these companies, seeing them Factory of the Future certified also rewards our work. It is extremely motivating to see these Walloon businesses choose the road that signifies higher ambition! We congratulate their teams, who have been actively involved in obtaining this well-deserved Factory of the Future Award, together with all previously awarded Factories of the Future for relentlessly challenging themselves to maintain this level of excellence!'
'Acknowledging the industrial excellence and agility of two of our Walloon food companies is a powerful signal for our entire sector. Our resolutely forward-thinking businesses innovate permanently in order to satisfy consumer demands, in a constantly changing world. In the face of the many sources of turbulence they are confronted with, they invest to stay competitive and continue to provide superior quality products, sustainably, with Food Heroes playing a central role,' notes **Anne Reul**, Secretary-General for Fevia Wallonie.

François Heroufosse, Managing Director at Wagralim adds, 'These businesses in the food sector are undergoing change and increasingly rely on digital solutions to integrate Industry 4.0. This spurs them to turn to ecoproduction, to integrate world-class technologies and to ensure enhanced command of quality and customer service. The awards presented today are important for encouraging other companies to join this virtuous circle, and they endorse our work to support companies in the fields of operational excellence and managerial innovation.'

In Flanders, five companies received the award for the first time this year: VCST Industrial Products, Sanofi, Barry Callebaut, Altachem and Pomuni Frozen. Four others have successfully maintained their title: Audi Brussels, TotalEnergies, Vandemoortele and Daikin (for the third time running).

Authors