

Belgian Hydrogen Council joins forces on clean hydrogen

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Pieter Jan Jordaens

On 17 March, regional cluster organisations WaterstofNet and Cluster Tweed launched the Belgian Hydrogen Council (BHC) to consolidate and strengthen Belgium's position in Europe and on the global stage as a pioneering hub of excellence for clean hydrogen. Sirris is also involved in this industry-driven initiative.

WaterstofNet and Tweed have both been coordinating their regional hydrogen clusters respectively in Flanders and Wallonia for several years and are now jointly establishing a national hydrogen council that aims to transcend the various political levels in our country. The Belgian Hydrogen Council will take on important tasks such as the promotion of the Belgian hydrogen industry at home and abroad, as well as advising policymakers on the rollout of their regional and federal hydrogen strategies.

De oprichting van een Belgian Hydrogen Council is cruciaal om onze leidende positie in waterstof te consolideren en te versterken. De Belgische waterstofindustrie vraagt immers al lange tijd om de oprichting van een nationaal forum waar bedrijven aan het roer staan en tastbare resultaten het hoofddoel zijn. Met deze Belgian Hydrogen Council volgt België het voorbeeld van andere landen zoals Duitsland en Frankrijk.

Pieter Jan Jordaens, Manager Energy Transition at Sirris: ‘Hydrogen is going to play an important role in Europe's decarbonisation strategy and the search for alternative energy sources. To realise this ambition, several Belgian companies are developing infrastructure, products and services that will contribute to it. Industrial research and technological innovation is an essential piece of the puzzle to bring down the cost of these new technologies and associated infrastructure, and make them efficient, reliable and secure in line with industry and government needs. In view of the geopolitical reality, all this should be accomplished in a very short space of time. Collaboration is therefore essential, including on the topic of industrial research. For Sirris and the wider research community, it is important to know what the industrial priorities are in terms of research and development so that we can best support the ambitions of the hydrogen ecosystem.’

National council

The Belgian Hydrogen Council will take on some important tasks such as profiling and promoting the Belgian hydrogen industry at home and abroad, acting as a representative of the Belgian hydrogen ecosystem in national and international forums. The Council will also advise our various Belgian policymakers on the rollout of their regional and federal hydrogen strategies. The Council is neither a regional nor a federal initiative, but it is a national council driven by the hydrogen industry. The industry is the Council's pilot with the support of the various governments. The four competent ministers have all expressed their support for this new initiative.

The Belgian members of the Waterstof Industrie Cluster coordinated by WaterstofNet since 2015 and the members of the H2Hub Wallonia coordinated by Cluster Tweed since 2020 are automatically members of the Belgian Hydrogen Council (± 200 members). Thus, the Council effectively seals a partnership and brings together the existing industrial hydrogen ecosystems in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels that reflect the entire Belgian hydrogen sector. It is these companies that will be the driving force of the Council.

Importance for businesses

Why is the creation of the BHC important for our businesses? Pieter Jan Jordaens: ‘Belgium already has several top companies active in the hydrogen economy, which we want to continue to support in the first place so that they can maintain and strengthen this leading position. For example, through internationalisation and the promotion of our Belgian expertise and know-how. Of course, these EU ambitions, as well as international ambitions, create opportunities for companies not yet active in the hydrogen economy to get involved. Likewise, there is potential for spin-offs and start-ups.’

Five thematic working groups or ‘Tasks’ are already being set up. These will become the beating heart of the Council. New working groups may be created according to the needs of our companies. The interested companies can become members of the different Tasks. Relevant sector federations like essenscia, Agoria and FEBEG are also invited to contribute to the Tasks.

Organisation and management

The Board of the Belgian Hydrogen Council is formed by eight companies, covering the hydrogen value chain. These companies were elected among all cluster members and will represent the Belgian Hydrogen Council for the coming two years: ENGIE (production), John Cockerill (technology), Fluxys (infrastructure), Port of Antwerp-Bruges (ports & import), ArcelorMittal (industry), INEOS (industry) Virya Energy (mobility) and Sirris (research).

Pieter Jan Jordaens: ‘Sirris, like the other board members, was elected by an industry vote within the WaterstofNet and Cluster Tweed community. So, an 'industry-driven' initiative, something which we hold dear within our mission.’



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The eight CEOs of the BHC Board

Authors



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