


# Innovaders increase competitive edge of Belgian industry

12 May 2023, 09:20

Herman Derache

*In the latest issue of 'Reflect', the VBO-FEB magazine, the Innovaders are introduced as ten innovation partners for the Belgian industry. In the article, the Federation of Belgian Enterprises gives the floor to Innovader president Jan Laperre and vice-presidents Olivier Vandooren and Herman Derache, Sirris Managing Director, to talk about the industrial landscape today and the role played by the Innovaders in it.*

It is no coincidence that the Innovaders - the 10 collective centres that support technical and technological progress across sectors - remain in the spotlight. In challenging times like these, they are more than ever proving their worth. Herman Derache explains: ‘The concept of a collective centre was quite progressive from the start. As early as 1947, which is when the collective centres were set up, it was already recognised that technology would be the solution to lots of common challenges. The centres were some sort of pioneering, open innovation platforms. Today, innovation is still the essence. Many companies do not have the resources and expertise to innovate, which is where the collective centres like Sirris come in to help and explore available technology, which is then implemented in the best way in products and processes.’

## Green and digital

Looking at the industry today, we see that there is an increasing need to innovate across industry boundaries, and the Innovaders' platform provides valuable support. The two main themes are currently the green transition and the digital transformation of the industry. Herman Derache: ‘In the coming years, we want to achieve all kinds of cross-fertilisation between companies, sectors, academic partners and other organisations, as well as between the collective centres themselves, to take the lead within those themes.’

## Innovaders...?

Although the collective centres only joined forces under the name 'Innovaders' in 2020 , their mission is still the same as at the time of their inception in 1947: to set up applied collective research, in order to strengthen the innovation power of the companies in their sector. As such, they assist tens of thousands of Belgian companies every year, mostly SMEs. Companies can contact the Innovaders for advice and guidance, training, research, demonstrations, publications ... The experts of the ten collective centres make their in-depth market, product and technological knowledge and infrastructure available in a partnership formula tailored to each company.

**Discover the full offer by sector on the Innovaders website.**

Besides custom innovation projects, the centres also offer collective research projects. Unlike single-company innovation tracks, these are relevant studies that several companies can subscribe to or they can also initiate their own research. This lowers the (financial) threshold to innovate, especially for SMEs. The collaboration with other companies in the same sector and the link between the Innovaders partners also ensures an exchange of knowledge and expertise, which in turn leads to innovation and growth.

Innovaders are constantly reinventing themselves and embracing new trends and evolutions. Thus, the industry appears to be increasingly homogeneous, sectors are converging, and challenges are overlapping. This will undoubtedly translate into new, even closer collaborations, across sectors and disciplines.

Read more about the Innovaders and what they have meant to the industry over the past 75 years in our blog here.

## Innovader for the technology industry

As a purebred Innovader and collective centre, Sirris caters to the technology industry, from manufacturing companies and machine builders to software companies, and has done so since 1949. It focuses on five major themes: advanced manufacturing, product innovation, digital transformation, green transition and innovation management.

Examples of the various projects we carry out for and together with the industry include Fighting Icing, which studies and tackles icing on, for example, blades of offshore wind turbines or aircraft wings, or the journey with 3E that evolved from a consultancy company for solar farm operators to a software company. 3E today leases its software platform to manage solar and wind farms and plan maintenance efficiently, with a prominent role for AI. A third example of a successful project can be found at Altachem, which participated in a collective project (Trinity) around the employability of AMRs in their production of high-pressure valves and guns, and professional caulking guns.

The full article, presenting some collective centres, including Sirris, and concrete examples of what they do for the industry can be found on the FEB website (pdf).

Do you have a specific technological or innovative issue for the (manufacturing) industry? Our 150 Sirris experts will be pleased to assist you with practical advice. Let’s hear about your challenge!

## Authors



Herman Derache