

Belgium has 11 new “Factories of the Future”

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Walter Auwers

Brussels, 11 February - The most future-proof factories in the country are being honoured today. No fewer than 11 Belgian companies can now refer to themselves as a "Factory of the Future". This is the highest number of new winners since the Factory of the Future awards were first presented. Another five companies were able to extend their use of this prestigious title. The prizes reward Belgium’s most advanced and future-oriented production companies. The awards were presented in the presence of Flemish Minister-President Matthias Diependaele and Walloon Vice-Minister-President Pierre-Yves Jeholet, both of whom are also responsible for Industry.

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Factories of the Future are companies that are fully committed to digitalisation, talent development, smart processes, sustainable products and world-class production. They think carefully about how they use energy and materials, and they encourage their staff to be involved, creative and autonomous. The winners have to receive a score of at least 8 out of 10 from the competition jury of experts in each of these areas. They are then allowed to officially call themselves a “Factory of the Future” for three years. After this three-year period, they have to prove themselves once again and a jury decides on the basis of a new audit whether their title can be extended.

This year, 11 production sites earned the title for the very first time: **UCB Belgium Biomanufacturing Operations Center, Pfizer Manufacturing Belgium, CCEP Chaudfontaine, Puratos Lummen, Pringles Mechelen-Belgium, Lantmännen Unibake, Knauf Insulation, Newell Brands Belgium, Safran Blades, Duracell Solutions** and **Decospan**. They received their prize from Flemish Minister President Matthias Diependaele and Walloon Vice-Minister-President Pierre-Yves Jeholet. Upwards of 700 people attended the award ceremony.

Flemish Minister-President and Minister of Economy, Innovation & Industry **Matthias Diependaele**: *"Flanders ranks among the very best in innovation and has industrial clusters that are renowned far beyond the boundaries of our region. In this fast-changing world, we have to pull out all the stops to maintain and further develop our leadership position. With the Industry Forum, together with all the sectors of industry we are taking up the challenge of an integrated industrial policy in Flanders. Manufacturing companies are the driving force behind our economy. They account for almost half of Flemish exports and put food on the table for many people in Flanders."*

Walloon Vice-Minister-President and Minister of Work, Economy & Industry **Pierre-Yves Jeholet**: *"In its policy statement, the Walloon government clearly stressed the importance of digital technology via the Digital Wallonia strategy, which it is to expand and expedite. The digital transformation of production companies is an absolute priority to ensure the competitiveness of our industry in a globalised market. I plan to continue the actions of Digital Wallonia so as to support the industrial transformation of our region. The Factory of the Future Awards are a unique opportunity to celebrate the champions of this industrial transformation. With four new companies obtaining the label and one that has secured the label again, Wallonia now has 21 Factories of the Future. Together, they provide striking proof of our capacity for innovation and create skilled jobs."*

Five other manufacturing companies were able to extend the title they had previously obtained: **Vinventions, P&V Panels** and **Stas Waregem** can call themselves a "Factory of the Future" for the second time. For **Van Hoecke** and **TE Connectivity**, meanwhile, this is the fourth time. In a period of 11 years, the lead group of the most future-oriented production companies in Belgium has expanded to become a select club of 75 enterprises.

Cooperation between different sectors

Since 2015, the Factory of the Future Awards have been an initiative of the technology federation Agoria, the collective centre of the Belgian technology industry Sirris, and the industry federations Fevia (food), Fedustria (textiles, wood and furniture), and essenscia (chemicals and life sciences), in cooperation with the innovation clusters Centexbel (textile technology), Wood.be (wood and furniture) and the spearhead clusters Flanders' FOOD (agri-food sector) and Catalisti (chemicals and plastics). In 2018, this initiative was integrated into the "Digital Wallonia" digital strategy and the reference tool for the 38 'Industrie du Futur' partners.

The winners

In the **food and drinks sector** – Fevia, **Florence Maniquet** fm@fevia.be
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- CCEP, Chaudfontaine
- Puratos, Lummen
- Pringles, Mechelen - Belgium

- Lantmännen Unibake

In the **wood and textiles sector** – Fedustria, **Karla Basselier**, CEO, 0497 545 913, karla.basselier@fedustria.be or **Diederik Demuynck**, Public Affairs Officer, 0486 063 848, diederik.demuynck@fedustria.be

- Decospan
- Van Hoecke

In the **chemicals & life sciences sector** – essenscia, **Gert Verreth**,gverreth@essenscia.be, 0477 46 42 27

- Pfizer Manufacturing Belgium
- UCB Belgium Biomanufacturing Operations Center
- Vinventions

In the **technology sector** – Agoria: **Jan Gatz**, jan.gatz@agoria.be 0479 40 75 68

- Knauf Insulation
- Newellco Belgium
- Safran Blades
- Duracell Solutions
- P&V Panels
- STAS Waregem
- TE Connectivity

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