



Flemish innovation partners want to industrialise renovation and construction: accelerating from design to site

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VITO, KU Leuven, Buildwise, Flanders Make and Sirris combine their expertise to accelerate and scale renovation innovation

[EnergyVille](#) partners [KU Leuven](#) and [VITO](#), [Buildwise](#), [Flanders Make](#) and Sirris are joining forces in a strategic partnership. By connecting their research, infrastructure and networks more strongly, they aim to bring innovative solutions to the construction sector faster and thus contribute to faster, more affordable and future-proof renovations.



Flanders faces a renovation challenge of unprecedented scale. Homes that consume too much energy, a renovation rate that is lagging behind and a construction sector under pressure from labour shortages, safety challenges and international competition. Anyone who wants to untangle that knot must go beyond isolated innovations. That is why [KU Leuven](#) and [VITO](#), partners within [EnergyVille](#), [Buildwise](#), [Flanders Make](#) and Sirris are joining forces with one clear ambition: accelerating innovation from the drawing board to the construction site. The innovation partners connect research, development, test and validation infrastructure and sector networks into one innovation chain. In this way, they reduce the gap between promising ideas and their application in renovation and construction projects. Specifically, the five research centres are working together on the industrialisation of renovation and construction: automation, robotics and digitalisation. Next-generation building envelopes are also central to this. These solutions make homes more energy-efficient and climate-resilient. The partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the sidelines of an event at EnergyVille where more than 40 companies from the construction and energy sectors were given an insight into the test infrastructure where their solutions are tested and validated at full scale.

The strength of the partnership lies in its complementarity. Buildwise validates new solutions and brings its close connection with the construction sector. [KU Leuven](#) and [VITO](#), within [EnergyVille](#), contribute their expertise in energy, building physics and circular building concepts. Flanders Make brings its knowledge of automation and robotics. Sirris contributes its experience in manufacturability, scaling up and industrial application. Together, they ensure that research

programmes are better aligned with tomorrow's needs. The partners build on existing collaborations and create room for new research projects, innovation initiatives and valorisation pathways within Flemish and European programmes. With one common goal: a stronger construction and renovation sector that helps Flanders renovate homes faster, more thoroughly and more affordably.

Why this partnership matters

"By joining forces with VITO, KU Leuven, Flanders Make and Sirris, we are building a strong ecosystem of knowledge centres to bring innovation to construction companies faster," says **Olivier Vandooren, CEO of Buildwise**.

"The renovation rate must become four times faster to become climate-neutral by 2050. With the same workforce as today, we can only make such an acceleration happen by fully focusing on automation, robotisation, standardisation and prefabrication. To do this, we need to be able to test new solutions in real-life conditions as quickly as possible. That is exactly why this collaboration is so important: it brings expertise together to considerably accelerate the entire innovation process in construction," says **Bram De Wispelaere, General Manager of EnergyVille**.

"At Flanders Make, we transform disruptive technologies into industrial solutions with impact, so that companies remain at the forefront in a rapidly changing world. By connecting our expertise with that of our partners, innovative renovation and construction solutions can be tested, validated and scaled up faster," says **Grisja Lobbestael, CEO of Flanders Make**.

"Innovation in construction only has societal impact when it can make the step from the lab to the construction site. By joining our complementary expertise, we translate scientific breakthroughs more quickly into practical solutions that help accelerate the renovation wave," says **Dirk Saelens, Professor of Building Engineering at KU Leuven**.

"The challenge lies not only in developing new renovation and construction solutions, but also in making them industrially mature. To truly accelerate the renovation wave, innovative products must not only be high-performing, but also be produced efficiently and rolled out at scale. From our expertise in product development, advanced manufacturing and automation, we help build a modern production apparatus that translates innovation more quickly into impact on the construction site," says **Herman Derache, Managing Director of Sirris**.

"The renovation challenge is too big for fragmentation and too urgent for slowness. We need to work together, gain speed and bring solutions to scale. By connecting our knowledge, infrastructure and industry more strongly, we can test, refine and scale up innovations faster into solutions that are ready for the construction site," says **Inge Neven, CEO of VITO**.



Buildwise

[Buildwise](#) is the innovation centre of and for the construction sector. It supports construction professionals in improving the quality, productivity and sustainability of their activities and paves the way for more innovation on construction sites and within construction companies. Through research and development, it acts as a bridge between technological innovation and high-quality professional construction practice. Buildwise actively focuses on validation, standardisation, quality assurance and dissemination, ensuring that new solutions are applied reliably, safely and correctly. Thanks to its close connection with companies, it supports the sector in the sustainable and widespread introduction of improved techniques, methods and processes.

EnergyVille, KU Leuven and VITO

[EnergyVille](#) is a collaboration between the Belgian research partners KU Leuven, VITO, imec and UHasselt in the fields of sustainable energy and intelligent energy systems. More than 700 researchers develop technologies and knowledge to support public and private stakeholders in their transition towards an energy-efficient, low-carbon and sustainable urban environment. The unique complementarity of the research partners makes it possible to integrate the entire energy system value chain into the research, ranging from materials and components to complete energy systems, business models and strategies. Activities are clustered in eight interdisciplinary domains: solar energy, battery storage, power electronics, thermal systems, power-to-molecules, energy for buildings and districts, electrical networks, and energy strategies and markets.

Flanders Make

[Flanders Make](#) is the research centre for industrial innovation. It combines the knowledge and expertise of more than 1,000 researchers active at the five Flemish universities, KU Leuven, the University of Antwerp, Ghent University, Hasselt University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel, as well as within its own applied research division. Flanders Make connects companies with top researchers and other companies facing similar challenges, helping them innovate faster and more efficiently. It also provides advice and support to integrate advanced technologies seamlessly into business processes. In this way, Flanders Make contributes to a resilient economy, sustainable growth and a strong position for Flanders as an innovation hub in Europe.

Sirris

Sirris is the collective centre of and for the technological industry in Belgium and supports companies in accelerating technological innovation, from idea to implementation. Sirris brings expertise in product development, advanced manufacturing, digitalisation, automation, circularity and industrial test and demonstration environments. This expertise contributes to the industrialisation of construction and renovation processes by making new solutions manufacturable, reproducible and scalable. Sirris strengthens the link between technological

innovation, industrial applicability, value chain development and market-oriented implementation. As a neutral innovation partner, Sirris forms a bridge between research, companies and industrial application in the construction and renovation sector.

Special thanks to our partners



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