Smart Manufacturing Barometer 2026

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The benchmark for technology adoption in the Flemish manufacturing industry

Manufacturers are investing heavily in technology, with automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence high on the agenda. But where does the sector really stand today? Which technologies are already well established? Where are the biggest investments being made? And what challenges are holding back further progress? With the Smart Manufacturing Barometer, Sirris maps technology adoption in the Flemish manufacturing industry. The study brings together the views of more than **90?Flemish manufacturers** and paints a clear picture of the trends, priorities and challenges shaping the sector today.

What will you find in the Smart Manufacturing Barometer?

The Smart Manufacturing Barometer provides answers to the questions currently on the minds of business leaders and production and innovation managers. The subjects covered include:

- Which technologies are most widely established today

- In which areas businesses plan to invest over the next three years
- What challenges are holding back further digitalisation
- How Flemish companies view AI
- What trends will shape the production environment of tomorrow

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The Smart Manufacturing Barometer provides a unique benchmark and point of reference for companies wishing to compare their technological position with that of the market.

Download the Smart Manufacturing Barometer

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Productivity is becoming a strategic priority

The Flemish manufacturing sector remains a key driver of our economy, despite mounting pressures.
Businesses face rising costs, a tight labour market and increasing international competition. Customers expect greater flexibility, a more personalised service and consistent product quality, yet in many cases the resources remain the same. It is this combination that makes production more complex than ever. Productivity growth is no longer a choice: it is a strategic necessity in order to remain competitive and enable further growth.

Quality and bespoke solutions: a Flemish strength

Flemish manufacturers rarely compete on price alone: their strengths lie in quality, flexibility and bespoke solutions. Many companies manufacture in small batches or operate on a make-to-order or engineer-to-order basis. This focus on customisation is a strong competitive advantage, but at the same time it increases the complexity of production processes. Planning is becoming more challenging. Knowledge is becoming more critical, as errors have a more immediate impact on performance and delivery reliability. How you keep that complexity under control without compromising on competitiveness is therefore becoming an increasingly relevant question.

Technology as a driver of productivity

Automation, digitalisation and AI are becoming key factors in boosting productivity and keeping complexity under control. However, these technologies have the greatest impact when they are underpinned by well-structured processes and a firm operational foundation.
Despite this, an objective picture is lacking of where Flemish manufacturing stands today. Sirris's Smart Manufacturing Barometer provides answers to these questions.

> 'Get the basics right. Without stable processes and committed people, technology has little impact', says Walter Auwers, Business Unit Manager for Advanced Manufacturing at Sirris.

The relevance of this benchmark to your business

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Are you wondering how your organisation compares with other Flemish manufacturing companies? Want to make your production smarter, more digital and more future-proof, but don't know where to start? The insights from the barometer will help you make informed choices and take the right next step.

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