In its sustainability report for the technology industry in Belgium, published in 2023, Agoria informs about the progress of the sector in the field of sustainability.

With this report, realised in cooperation with its 2,000 members and stakeholders, Agoria fulfils its responsibility to communicate transparently its sustainability strategy, with clear engagements and the impact of the sector. The report can be considered as a baseline measurement, the indicators and data of which Agoria will continue to supplement in the coming years. “With our sustainability report, we want to inspire companies within and outside our sector to integrate sustainability even more into their business operations. Committing to sustainable change will be the decisive factor for the future of our companies,” says Jolyce Demely, general director of Agoria Flanders.

Driving force

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“Technological innovation is the driving force of our industry. Our motivation to innovate stems from the ambition to continue creating added value for society, including in the long term. The manufacturing industry is the engine of Belgian export and prosperity. Every job in the manufacturing industry creates at least one other in related service sectors. Almost one in four Belgians earns his or her income thanks to the industry. But high labour costs, the automatic index and inflation put pressure on the added value and competitiveness of Belgian manufacturing companies. Furthermore, the current energy crisis makes it even more difficult for our companies to grow and invest. Research and development are crucial to continue creating added value and jobs from the technology industry and the manufacturing industry in particular. Only by transforming into

‘factories of the future’ – agile, digital, technological and people-oriented undertakings – can our manufacturing companies embed production activities sustainably in a hyper-competitive global economy. Continuous innovation is therefore a necessary precondition to securing the long-term future of the manufacturing industry in our country,” says Demely.

Not only economic value

Technology not only creates economic value, but also helps society in many other areas. For example, technology plays a key role in improving traffic safety, strengthening healthcare, fighting and dealing with pandemics and tackling the increasing ageing population. Technological innovations are also vital to the success of the green transition, just think of CO2 capture and storage, smart energy grids or electric vehicles. In short: without technological innovation, we would live in a less safe, comfortable, healthy, sustainable and connected society. “From our sector, we strive to maximize all such positive impact of technology, while keeping an eye on related concerns, such as the ethical use of AI, the impact of technology on organizations, universal access to digitization and ensuring privacy,” she adds.

Ambitions

In 2023, only 7% of Agoria member companies were working on a circular project. “We want to significantly increase this to at least 50% by 2030. We also want 95% of our member companies to have a cybersecurity plan by 2030. Agoria insists that companies are well prepared for a cyber attack. In terms of digitalisation, we aim for a top 3 position within the EU in the integration of digital technologies in 2025. In 2023, Belgium occupied the 6th place on the European DESI index for that indicator.”

“In our sustainability report, we commit ourselves to create a net 40,000 additional jobs compared to 2020 and fill them by 2030. In addition, we make sure that employees in our sector know what competencies are needed for their jobs in 2030 and that they receive the necessary training. Currently, the technology industry employs more than 328,000 workers in Belgium. Between 1 January 2021 and the end of March 2023, the Belgian technology industry created a total of 18,000 new jobs. This comes down to 32 additional jobs per day. Having already created 18,000 of the promised 40,000 jobs, we are well on track to achieve our goal by 2030.”

Agoria’s commitments:

- We focus on ‘workable employment’ to keep employees in the sector.
- By 2030, we aim to employ 40,000 more people than in 2020.

- We make sure that employees in our sector can ascertain the skills they will need for their job in 2030 and we provide them with the necessary training.
- We strive for annual improvement in the male/female ratio in the technology industry, and have set a target of 25% women in leadership positions by 2030.
- We support activation programmes for older employees, young women, and youth: Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

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