

A GENUINE FAMILY STORY

WAB 40 | WINTER 2023

BUSINESS

400 years of adventure between Wallonia and New York

FOCUS

The Wallonia of tomorrow: excellence and continuity

BIG PICTURE

Bernard Duchenne: through hell and high water

LAND OF TALENT

Editorial coordination Bernadette

Pâques and Jean-Willy Lardinois

Reporters Angélique Belokopytov

Hugh Featherstone

Emilie Henry

Perrine Mertens

Magali Mouthuy

Bernadette Pâques

Géraldine Sauvage

Frédérique Siccard

Contributors Jane French

Ciarán Ó Faoláin

Elizabeth Mudie

Ojas Chaudhari

Art director Angélique Belokopytov

Layout Christine Voss

Wallonia Export & Investment Agency

Pascale Delcomminette

Marie-Catherine Duchêne

Place Saintelette 2

B - 1080 Brussels

+32(0)2.421.85.76

mc.duchene@awex.be

From A to Z, from the wildest brainstorming to the biggest achievements: in our issues throughout 2023, we've shown you the inner workings of our region's companies, explored what goes into smart creation and practical innovation, showcased projects from various trade fairs, and shown the value of what we produce to the world. We have built relationships and broadcast that very value, in a spirit of both pride and humility.

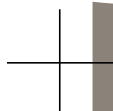
As the year draws to a close, it seems obvious to me that we should be talking about passing on the knowledge and know-how that our companies nurture and that allow for new talent to emerge. That's the angle we want to take here. We want to talk about incubators and talent pools, partnerships with universities, and a different, elevated kind of teaching, where our creators and researchers feel supported and valued. This relationship of trust also makes it possible to welcome aboard other companies that are eager to join this journey too.

That's what Wallonia is all about, after all: a land of talent, fertile ground for new start-ups, a stable base for larger companies, and a touch of wonder for those of us who are taking on the challenges of tomorrow. Their shared ambition? To offer all of us a better future.

Let's unleash a little spark of madness, in the most innovative sense of the word.

I wish you a year in which imagination and creation go hand in hand!

Pascale Delcomminette





SUMMARY

WORK

04 NEWS

06 BIG PICTURE

Bernard Duchenne
Through hell and high water

10 BUSINESS

400 years between Wallonia and New York

12 INVESTMENT

Plastic recycling in Wallonia

14 INNOVATION

Remind Wallonia
Wallonia's aspirational "mineral valley"

FOCUS

16 FOCUS

The Wallonia of tomorrow

LIVE

22 TOURISM

Discover the Spa region

24 GASTRONOMY

Chips de Lucien

25 AMBASSADORS

Jean-Marcel Thomas

INSPIRE

26 DESIGN

Sarah Levy and Laetitia Bica

28 PANORAMA

Coming soon to the Euro Space Center

30 CULTURE

The magic of ceramics

31 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Discover the winter issue of the
WAB magazine | Wallonia.be



Wallonia.be

WAB contact
www.wallonia.be

DIANA: A LIÈGE-BASED PROGRAMME IN NATO

NATO has just launched its “Diana” programme, the goal of which is to support start-ups and SMEs that are likely to develop innovative defence technology. Belgium is represented by five national test centres and a Liège-based incubator, WSL, which specialises in precision technologies such as those used in drones, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality.



A NEW BIOTECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR IN MARCHE-EN-FAMENNE:

The Novalis Boost Up Center, a new cutting-edge biotechnology incubator, was set up in the heart of the province of Luxembourg in October. The region has put over 2.7 million euros into setting up the Center, which aims to attract start-ups and other companies that are working on innovative projects, mainly in cancer research.

A PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR LYS MEDICAL'S IRISCOPE PROBE

Roularta Healthcare and the Journal du médecin have awarded the Prix Galien to Lys Medical in Charleroi, for its Iriscope probe. With a diameter of just 1.8 mm, this miniature endoscopic probe helps identify peripheral nodules as part of the diagnosis of lung cancer, one of the deadliest kinds in the world, with a mortality rate of 85%, partly because of how late it is generally diagnosed. Advanced diagnostic technologies are therefore very important in the fight against this disease. The Prix Galien is one of the most prestigious international prizes in medicine, and is often seen as a Nobel Prize for biopharmaceutical research.



AND THE COMPANY OF THE YEAR IS...

Tournai-based electrical-engineering champion Technord has won the 2023 Company of the Year award, in particular for its “family spirit and exemplary social commitment”. Three years after it was nominated for the first time, the company won the award ahead of three other finalists: Lisam Systems (software), Medi-Market (chemists, and health and beauty shops) and Tom&Co (pet shops). Technord, which had turnover of 90 million euros in 2022, has 14 locations and 400 staff, whom it makes part of its long-term success by giving them half of its net profits each year in the form of a bonus. Since last month, staff can also become shareholders: it is expected that, by next January, 60% of the employees will own 20% of the capital.



STABILAME, GREEN SOLUTIONS AWARDS WINNER AT COP28

The Green Solutions Awards traditionally recognise buildings, neighbourhoods, and infrastructure that set the standard in terms of sustainability. The two-storey CBlue office block, which was built by Stabilame in Mariembourg, has won the International Grand Prize for New Construction.

CBlue won over the jury with its “holistic vision of sustainability” (bio-sourced wooden materials, short supply chains, self-sufficiency in energy, and bioclimatic architecture), as well as “its more-comprehensive approach, which takes the well-being of the occupants into account, its careful use of materials, and its sustainable transport”. The low cost of the building was also a factor in its selection, as was the ease with which it can be reproduced.

ECOSTERYL WINS A 31-MILLION-EURO RECORD CONTRACT

Ecosteryl, a company in Mons, has conquered the medical-waste-decontamination market in Kenya. The contract it has won, which is worth 31 million euros, is the culmination of over 10 years of negotiations with the Kenyan government. It calls for the installation of 25 “environmentally friendly” waste-treatment machines in the country. Ecosteryl has 40 employees and operates in 65 countries.





BERNARD DUCHENNE

THROUGH HELL AND HIGH WATER



Marex Inspection's CEO is redefining the art of submarine inspection and maintenance by combining passion, technical expertise, and travel to the most beautiful countries in the world... underwater.

"My day often starts before dawn, no matter the time zone. It's the perfect time to think, plan, and talk with other business leaders", he said. Immersed in the unique world of quality-control campaigns, Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) inspection, and

the technical expertise for marine industries, offshore, and the underwater entertainment industry, Bernard Duchenne spends three months a year in Belgium.



THE WORLDWIDE GO-TO

During the rest of the year, he travels with these teams as required, mainly to the Gulf states, Asia, or the USA. “Marex Inspection has never taken a commercial approach: our reputation speaks for itself. Each certification equals one new market, and we are now the worldwide go-to for advice and inspection on world-class projects. Today, companies, insurance bureaus, and legal practices that contact us want to make sure they’re getting the very best. And the companies whose materials or defects we review during inspection often call on us again to improve their process”, he says with pride.

To achieve this level of excellence, Bernard sacrificed his social life for 12 years: “While all the others were out having fun, I was studying and diving 6 days a week. Now, at 52, I can enjoy a calmer lifestyle, although I dive only to check my teams’ safety plan and personally validate critical data.”

FAMILY PRIDE

Marex is also a tale of family and passion: “My wife is the finance and administrative director, my father handles the legal department, and my young son is starting to learn about inspection. It’s more than a company, it’s a family heritage and a commitment to excellence.”

Bernard Duchenne is crystal clear when he speaks of the extraordinary journey he and Marex Inspection have experienced together: “It isn’t just a professional achievement: it’s a thriving testament to the importance of passion, technical expertise, and family values in the world of business.”

A DAY WITH BERNARD DUCHENNE



Wake up, then some intense reading for a well-informed start to the day



Quickly check e-mails and current events



Some exercise, breakfast, and review of documents



Internal meetings with the Marex teams



Calls with partners, investors, and other key players





Quick lunch while working



Review ongoing projects and strategic adjustments



Time dedicated to solving technical problems



Dinner with the family or business partners



Reading and studying to keep up to date on various topics

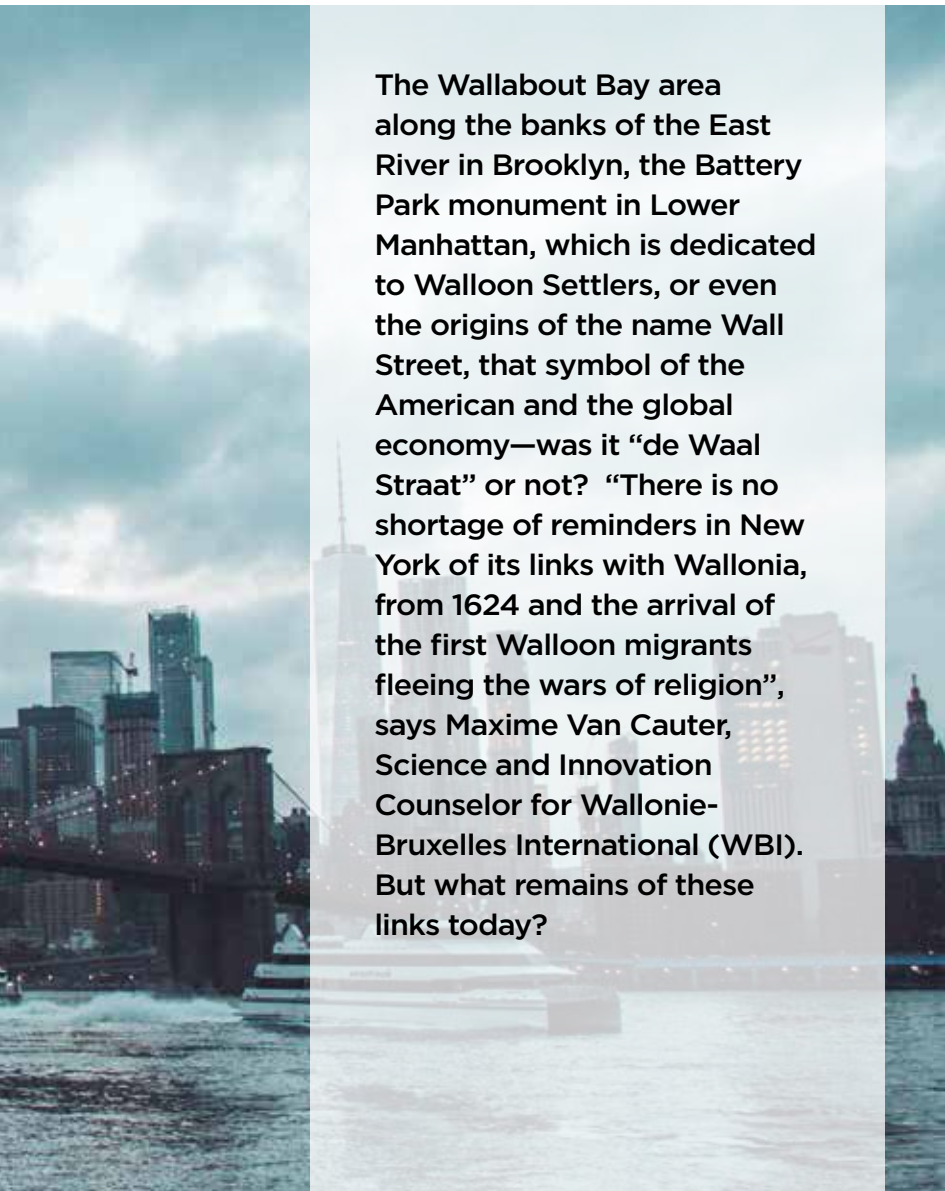


Sleep

WALLONIA / NEW YORK

400 YEARS OF
ADVENTURE!





The Wallabout Bay area along the banks of the East River in Brooklyn, the Battery Park monument in Lower Manhattan, which is dedicated to Walloon Settlers, or even the origins of the name Wall Street, that symbol of the American and the global economy—was it “de Waal Straat” or not? “There is no shortage of reminders in New York of its links with Wallonia, from 1624 and the arrival of the first Walloon migrants fleeing the wars of religion”, says Maxime Van Cauter, Science and Innovation Counselor for Wallonie-Bruxelles International (WBI). But what remains of these links today?

“There are plenty of business opportunities, mainly centred around green tech, deep tech, media tech, food tech and biotech”, says Quentin Derzelle, Economic and Commercial Counselor for Wallonia Export & Investment Agency. “Today, the USA is Wallonia’s top trading partner outside the EU27, with a trade volume of 6.5 billion euros, or 10.8% of all of Wallonia’s exports. In 2022, the USA was the third-largest importer of Walloon goods and services, after Germany (15.6%) and France (22.9%).”

Besides, New York, “with its culture and business etiquette similar to that of Europe, as well as its relative geographic proximity”, offers access to a catchment area that is home to a quarter of the American population. “Regardless of where Walloons conduct business or research along the US East Coast, they are always connected back to New York City in one way or another”, says Maxime Van Cauter. “The Belgian Consulate is in New York, along with the Belgian-American Chamber of Commerce and the diplomatic offices of AWEX/WBI. Be it out of curiosity, out of necessity, or to transit to another part of the country, one always ends up stopping over in this cultural and financial hub!”

New York is the city that never sleeps, and yet, isn’t really that easy to win over. “New York sets the tone and the rhythm of economy, art, research and business, but it is an extremely demanding city. It is a very expensive city for investors, and it doesn’t always offer the expected returns. But Sinatra put it very well when he said, ‘If I can make it there, in New York, I’ll make it anywhere’”, says Quentin Derzelle. Maxime Van Cauter adds, “You can find the whole world here in New York. You have to adapt to all the different communities when you arrive. We are always there to give you the helping hand you need!”

At the time of writing, the 2024 Commemorations Programme is still being drawn up. It will really put Walloon start-ups in the limelight. Stay tuned!



PLASTIC RECYCLING IN WALLONIA

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR INVESTORS

Wallonia has well-recognised expertise, acquired over many years, in the plastics-production sector: the region has a skilled workforce as well as cutting-edge industrial sites. But what does all this production amount to if, at the end of the day, there is no way to recycle these plastics after use?





Wallonia is a European pioneer in this field. Belgium is the second-most-efficient country in the EU when it comes to this topic: only 2% of plastic waste ends up in landfill, compared with the European average of 24%.

Belgium has 5 sorting facilities dedicated to plastic recycling, 3 of which are located in Wallonia. These 3 sites are linked by 7 inter-municipal household-waste-management companies, which are responsible for collection. In addition, two organisations are responsible for collection and sorting in the Walloon region: **Fost Plus** handles household waste, and **Valipac** deals with industrial waste. “It should also be noted that Wallonia’s waste-sorting system makes it a trailblazer in terms of the circular economy for packaging: glass, cardboard and plastics,” says Fabian Scuvie, Senior Greentech Specialist at Wallonia Export & Investment Agency.

And there is significant ongoing research into this sector within existing plants as well. “For example, Total in Feluy, Jindal in Virton, and Inovyn in Jemeppe, which manufactures PVC, all have research centres”, adds Fabian Scuvie. Several universities are also actively involved in research laboratories.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

The sector also benefits from economic support, from groups such as the Plastiwin cluster and the Greenwin competitiveness cluster, which launch calls for projects in the field from companies of all sizes, as well as from universities and research centres. And then, from the Walloon government, which supports plastic recycling via a range of initiatives, including tax incentives for investors and subsidies. “Wallonia also benefits from its geographical location, which makes it a European crossroads.”

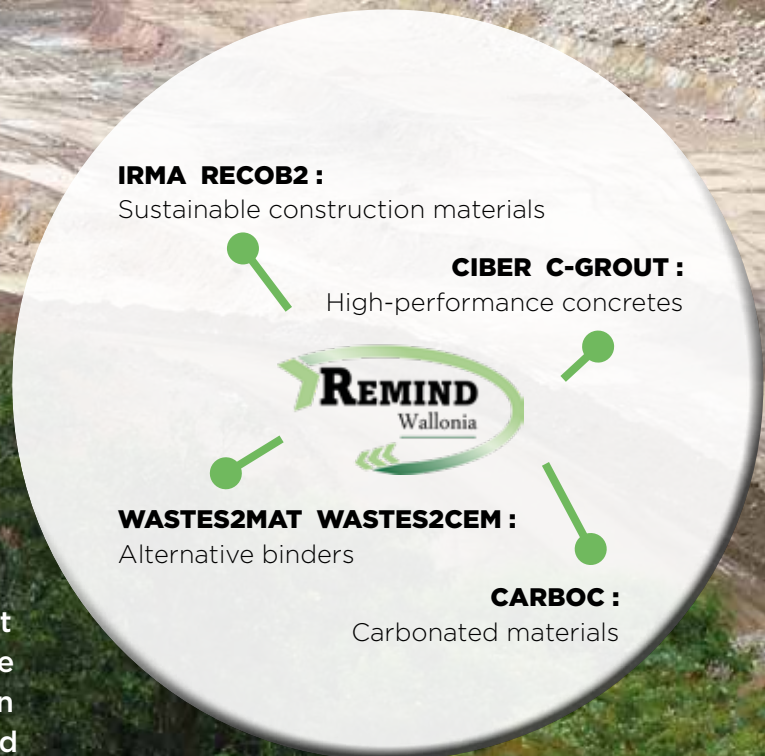
And while Wallonia’s expertise in the mechanical separation of elements is beyond dispute, the future clearly lies in chemical recycling. “We now need players who can process the less-easily separated fractions, to close that gap,” says Fabian Scuvie. All the more relevant now, as Wallonia has set itself the goal of achieving a recycling rate of 65% by 2025.

REMIND WALLONIA

WALLONIA'S ASPIRATIONAL "MINERAL VALLEY"



Wallonia's mineral industry is prospering. But today, it has two great challenges: a shortage of natural resources, and the decarbonisation of the sector. REMIND Wallonia is determined to provide solutions.





© REMIND Wallonia

On 5 September 2023, the REMIND Wallonia platform or “REverse MIneral INDUstry” was inaugurated in Frameries. The idea dates back to 2019, when Minister for the Economy Willy Borsus announced a plan to move towards a circular economy in the form of “Circular Wallonia”. That was when Stéphane Neiryndck, Director of the Centre de Terre et de Pierre, created what would become REMIND Wallonia, inspired by the Liège-based “Reverse metallurgy” industry. “Walloon subsoil is rich, but we need to be resilient. Furthermore, Wallonia is a pioneer in recycling and has undeniable assets, such as over 10,000 hectares of industrial wasteland that can be redeveloped.” This is how REMIND Wallonia is tackling both the primary and secondary mineral industries. Today, the cooperative pools together 15 Walloon manufacturers over 7 tangible projects operating around 4 key areas.

“THE PLAN IS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE OF THE SECTOR.”

This is the very essence of REMIND Wallonia: the bottom-up process. “We can have rival companies on the same platform”, explains Stéphane Neiryndck, “as long as the projects they come to us with are new. The plan is to work together for the future of the sector.” What are their goals? “To revitalise the manufacturing industry, which is synonymous with long-term employment, and to strengthen the resilience of the economy by moving towards a decarbonised and circular Walloon industry.” Bringing together public, private, and academic sectors, REMIND Wallonia intends, by 2030, to achieve 100 million euros in turnover, and to create 200 direct and 300 indirect jobs.



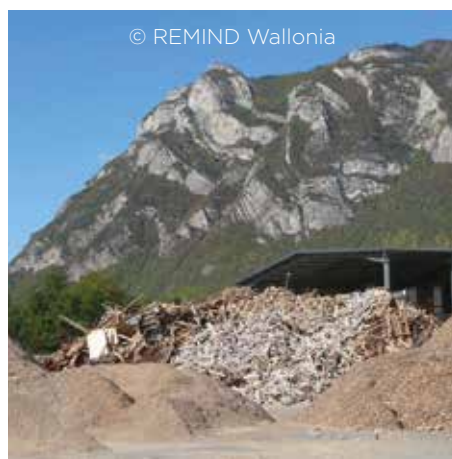
© REMIND Wallonia



© REMIND Wallonia



© REMIND Wallonia

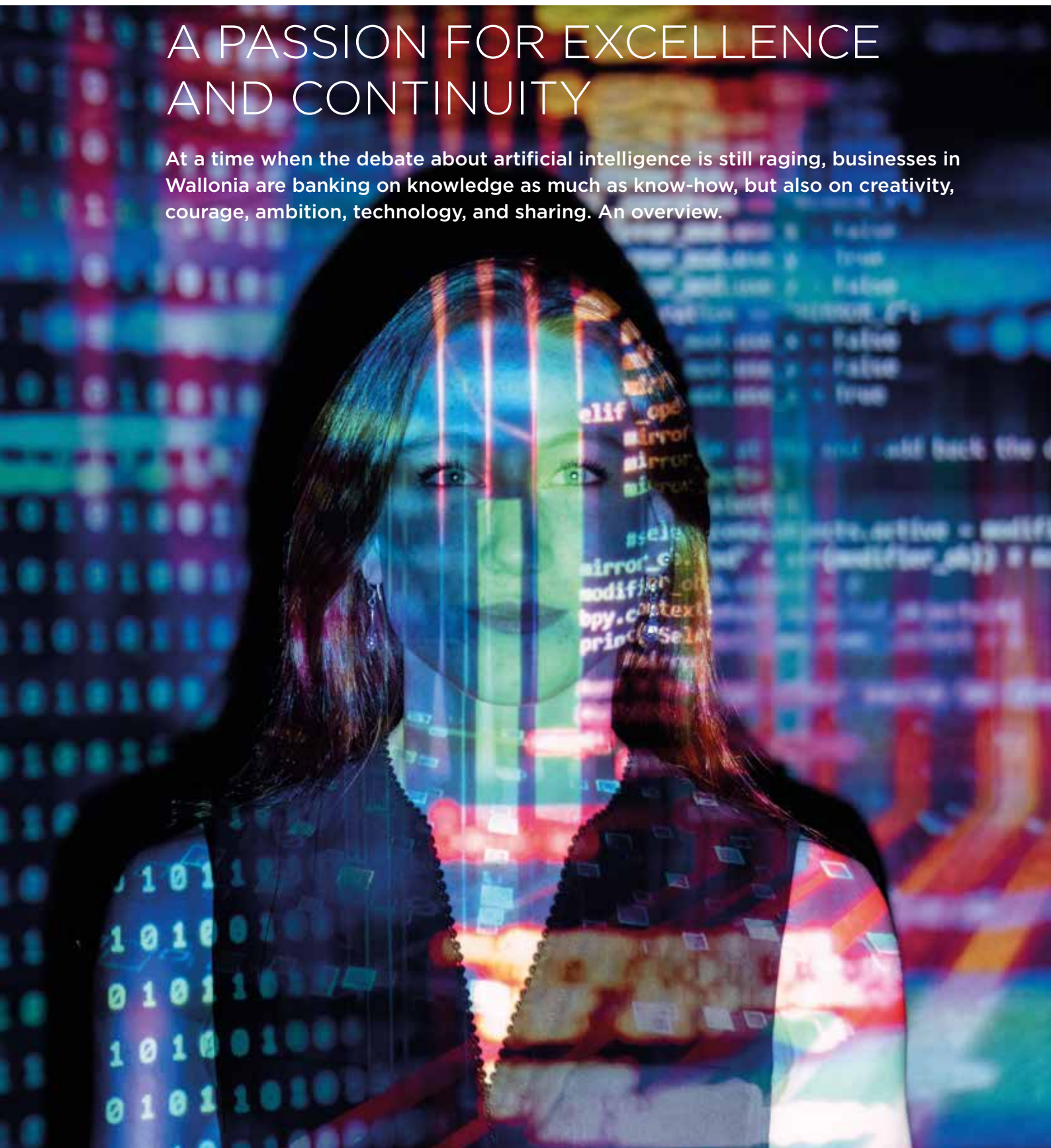


© REMIND Wallonia

THE WALLONIA OF TOMORROW

A PASSION FOR EXCELLENCE AND CONTINUITY

At a time when the debate about artificial intelligence is still raging, businesses in Wallonia are banking on knowledge as much as know-how, but also on creativity, courage, ambition, technology, and sharing. An overview.





Ranked in the top 1% of business schools around the world that are accredited by EQUIS and AACSB, HEC® Liège, the management school of the University of Liège, is still “the only complete business school in Belgium (offering everything from bachelor’s degrees all the way to PhDs, as well as its Executive courses) that has these two international quality labels for the excellence of its programmes, its teaching staff, its support for students, its research, its involvement in the economic context, its alumni network, and its overall governance”, enthuses Nathalie Hosay, Head of External Relations and Communications. “These accreditations testify to our commitment to training students to the highest international standards. For businesses, they also guarantee the quality of our graduates, who will be able to meet challenges and adapt to various contexts, while respecting the principles of ethics and sustainable development.”

HEC Liège is close to companies, offering “teaching that adapts in real time to professional and economic realities”, and is a member of various networks (Conférence des Grandes Écoles, World Alliance on Sustainable Finance, and so on). It is also supported by a strong and active alumni network: 18,500 graduates in 101 countries make for “a dynamic community of students, graduates, faculty, and partners”.

Nathalie points to other ways in which the university “can forge close links to businesses: professionals share their experience in a range of courses, while students do internships in companies or work within the framework of certain final courses to bring their own fresh perspectives to bear.”



FACING THE FUTURE

It's a perspective we particularly appreciate here at Industrya. This ecosystem of start-ups aims to give those with bold ideas the means to realise their ambitions. "We support daring, passionate entrepreneurs who come up with innovative, sustainable industrial solutions to meet the societal challenges of the 21st century: sustainable industrial production, new materials to preserve natural resources, green mobility, hydrogen, the energy transition, smart manufacturing and industry 4.0, IoT, big-data blockchain, and robotics, to name but a few", explains Thibaud Le Séguillon, CEO of Industrya.

We bring together the expertise of John Cockerill, a group of companies operating in heavy industry, with the investment funds SFPI-FPIM, WE-W.IN.G, NOSHAQ and LRM, so as to offer hands-on operational-support programmes in one of our incubators or accelerators in Liège, Charleroi, Genk, Leuven, or Paris. In the three years since it was founded, Industrya has received and considered more than 600 applications from start-ups and scale-ups looking for support. As a result, the fund has already made 10 investments, totalling €10 million.



“The quantity and, above all, the quality of the applications we have received over these first few years attest to the fact that the themes at the heart of Industria’s activities are at the heart of the innovation being driven by a large number of companies who’ve applied. This is a breeding ground for talent, ideas, and technologies that, if properly supported, can contribute to the major energy and industrial challenges of our time”, says Thibaud with pride. As a native of Brittany, he appreciates “the simplicity of doing business in Belgium: the country as a whole, and Wallonia in particular, invest heavily in human relations.”



PASSING ON THE RIGHT WAY OF DOING THINGS

L’Institut wallon de Formation en Alternance et des indépendants et Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (Walloon Institute for Work-Related Training, the Self-Employed, and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, IFAPME) promotes job training where skills are acquired partly in companies and partly through training. Anchored in the socio-economic environment they operate in, the institute and its network of 24 training centres “train today’s skilled workers and all those with an entrepreneurial mindset, by leveraging their skills and their commitment. Our first-rate courses mean almost 90% of our graduates find jobs”, notes CEO Simon Bullman.

“IFAPME works closely with professional sectors and companies to work with trainers, both currently practicing and from academia, to design and organise programmes that are tailored to their particular needs. By encouraging work-related training, it enables companies to share their know-how with trainees, thus ensuring that the required skills are passed on”, adds Christophe Bondroit, Director of Strategy, Partnerships, and Innovation. While crafts and technical trades make up a big part of the programme, IFAPME is also anticipating the needs of the professions of tomorrow, for instance by incorporating digital and environmental skills into its training curriculum.



IFAPME



SETTING OUR AMBITIONS HIGH

“In 2023, Forem, the Walloon Region’s public-employment and vocational-training service, surveyed nearly 2,200 students to come up with a list of the top 20 careers they would like to pursue. Half of them wanted to pursue a career in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM)”, says Thierry Ney, Director of Communications.

While the aim of the study is to gauge the preferences of 16-to-18-year-olds for one profession or another, the idea is also to “send a strong message to companies: some sectors will do well and will see a good number of applicants, while others will need to redouble their efforts to stand out from the competition and attract strong profiles. Only then will we be able to talk about passing on the right behaviours.”

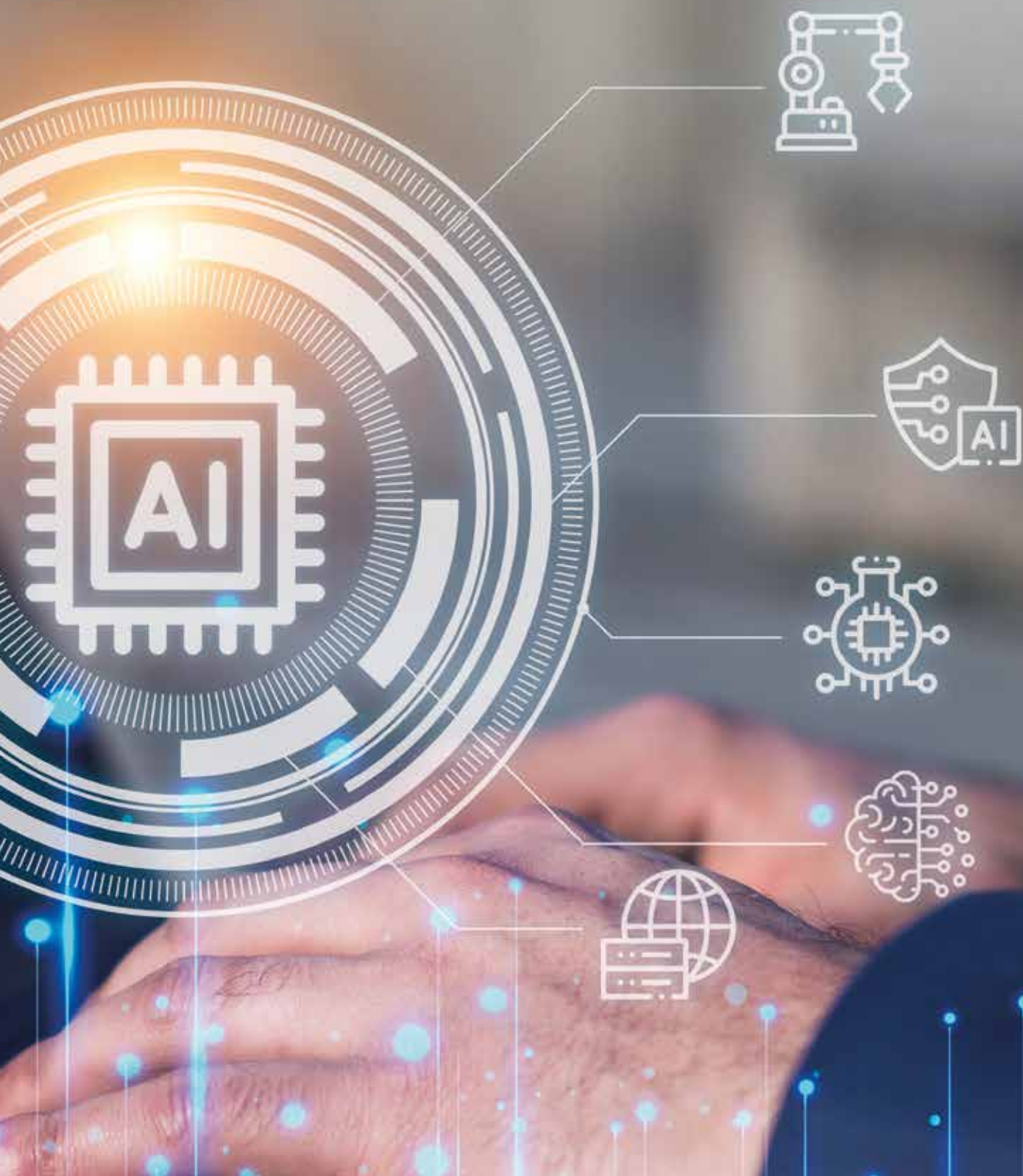


AND HOW DOES AI COME INTO THE PICTURE HERE?

The dreams and aspirations of young and more-experienced talent will have to take account of the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the professional landscape. What impact will it have, and which sectors will be most heavily impacted? With 97 million new jobs expected by 2025, and 85 million jobs under threat, according to the World Economic Forum, how can we adapt skills without neglecting the human element?

For Randstad Group Belgium, a human-resources service provider, AI can be integrated as a complementary tool “to facilitate processes and improve candidate-matching”, explains spokesperson Sébastien Cosentino. “AI can also help us refine our sourcing and selection, while more generally, it can facilitate contact between recruiters and candidates.” The key caveat here is that the use of AI must benefit and sustain authentic human relationships.

Watch this space.



DISCOVER THE SPA REGION

How about a trip from the thermal town of Spa to Little Switzerland?

Known for its thermal waters and unique architecture, located a stone's throw from exceptional natural sites, Spa is positively teeming with treasures, unusual attractions to visit and places to stay, and gastronomic delights. You can explore it by foot, by bike, but also... by car! VISITWallonia is promoting a 116-kilometre route inspired by Kristien Hansebout's book "*Wallonië en de Ardennen*",

which highlights some of the many remarkable spots to visit in Belgium.

The trip begins in Spa and takes you to, among other destinations, the Musée de la lessive (the Laundry Museum), the ruins of Franchimont castle, the Parc Naturel des Sources, and village of Sy, where you get the chance to taste the Fleur de Franchimont, a fruity wine. "Tourists coming to

Spa are looking for a welcoming atmosphere and the chance to meet the locals", explains Tina Chen, Marketing Project Manager. Come nightfall, you can stay at the Silva Hôtel Spa Balmoral, five minutes from the town centre. It's the ideal place to relax and recharge your batteries, all while admiring the view over Lake Warfaaz and the surrounding forest.



www.michelyuryev.com-Fromenade

© David Samyn-Spa



<https://visitwallonia.com/en-gb/3/practical-information/visitwallonia-be-pass>



© David Samyn-Spa



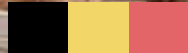
© Michel de Bray



© SPW-AWaP



© Fred Beard



CHIPS DE LUCIEN: A GENUINE FAMILY STORY

Locally produced “Chips de Lucien” (Lucien’s Crisps) are making a name for themselves in Wallonia.

Thomas, Stany, and Antoine are passionate about potatoes. Four years ago, the three cousins decided to launch a product to boost the long-term future of their farms. They turned to crisps. This is how “Chips de Lucien” was born. The brand was named after their grandfather, a successful farmer in his day. Although they launched this new venture in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, their efforts have paid off! “The pandemic made people think more about what they are eating”, says Thomas Cnockaert. The concept behind the crisps was in response to this demand for healthy eating, as the crisps are 100% natural and are produced by farmers themselves, which is a first for Wallonia. The brand was introduced in supermarkets in 2020 and is now being exported internationally, even to Asia this year! “It feels like we are about to enter the big league, and we are absolutely delighted, as we love challenges. In the future, we would love to expand our range even further”, adds Thomas Cnockaert.



© Chips de Lucien



© Chips de Lucien



© Chips de Lucien



© Chips de Lucien



© Euro Space Center



JEAN-MARCEL THOMAS: THE MAN BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO ICONIC WALLOON SITES

Houtopia, Aqualibi, Walibi, the Euro Space Center. All these well-known Walloon sites have one common factor: Jean-Marcel Thomas.

"I try to be straightforward in my approach", says Jean-Marcel Thomas. He is indeed straightforward, and also a born entrepreneur. At the age of 24, he developed Aqualibi Park. He was then appointed head of Walibi France, then, Wavre, leading them to great success. In the province of Luxembourg, he has attempted to give a new lease on life to the Archeoscopes of Bouillon and Vielsalm, as well as to Houtopia.

The latest pet project of this father of five is the Euro Space Center at Transinne. In 2000, he was given 6 months to either sell or close down the Space Center. "I asked them for 3 years to prove that there was another way out." He has transformed it into a one-of-a-kind space-themed educational park. It now employs 60 personnel permanently, along with 200 students and 120 indirect employees. The Euro Space Center is currently used for visits,

workshops and B2B activities, and has become a huge success. The park is also winning fans internationally, so much so that Jean-Marcel Thomas has been asked to export the concept. "Several countries have contacted me to propose buying our know-how, for which I am grateful. I am a proud Walloon, and I am not interested in relocating. Preserving our know-how will help us retain jobs locally."

SARAH LEVY AND LAETITIA BICA, 2023 BELGIAN FASHION AWARDS WINNERS

Every year since 2017, Flanders DC, MAD Brussels, WBDM, Knack Weekend and Le Vif Weekend have been organising the Belgian Fashion Awards, with the aim of showcasing “lesser-known names and the talent behind the scenes”. The awards elevate Belgian fashion in 7 categories. This year’s ceremony took place on 30 November.

Among the award-winning designers was Sarah Levy, who was named Accessory Designer of the Year 2023. After 10 years of working in architecture, this Brussels-born designer began a Masters in Accessories at ENSAV La Cambre in 2016. Her graduation collection won the Prix Artagon in 2018 and received public acclaim at the Hyères festival (France) in 2019. “That was the starting point for me”, she recalls. As an independent designer, she then took part in various collaborations that expressed her commitment to ecology and quality, with brands such as Marine Serre, Patou at LVMH, and Givenchy. “At the same time, I developed a personal project that questions the use of accessories: my creative laboratory, so to speak.” Her ideas have proven popular, and she has been offered a place in a showroom in Paris, thus giving her an entry into the Asian market, which is very receptive to her approach. She also aims to establish a firmer foothold in Belgium in 2024: “In Belgium, I sell only via my e-shop. That’s something I’m working on: I want to set up pop-up stores in Brussels and Antwerp.”



SARAH LEVY

© Benoit Bethume



© Benoit Bethume



© Benoit Bethume



© Benoit Bethume



LAETITIA BICA

Another award-winning designer is photographer Laetitia Bica. Nominated in the “Professional of the Year 2023” and “Changemaker of the Year 2023” categories, she won the Changemaker award, which reflects the work she has been involved in for several years. Moreso a battle, in fact: “I’ve been a feminist since I was born, so I’m pretty committed.” Her leitmotiv? To show bodies without judgement and to stimulate people’s imaginations. Laetitia’s various collaborations in fashion, music, sculpture and on the stage invite us to reflect on the theme of representation in our society. Indeed, her work was chosen by the Théâtre de Liège for its seasonal poster campaign. “I’m lucky enough to be able to choose projects where I’m upfront about my ideas. I create conversations with the people I photograph. That leads to images in dialogue.” What’s more, Wallonia is fertile ground for her approach: “There are a lot of socially aware people here, because of our humanist and socialist past.”





COMING SOON TO THE EURO SPACE CENTER: A PLANETARIUM AND A MARS BASE

As well as developing Belgium's largest planetarium, the Euro Space Center is also working on the creation of a Mars base.



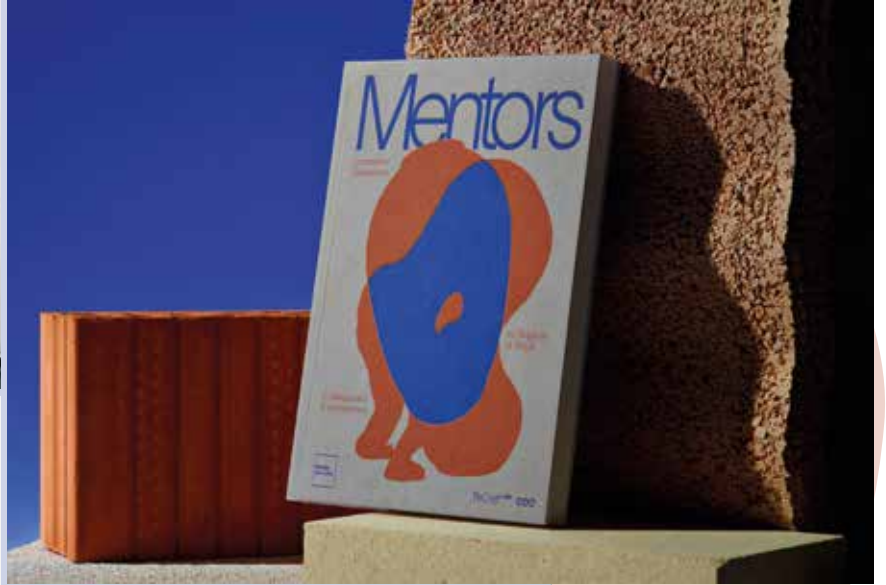
In June 2025, the Euro Space Center will inaugurate Belgium's largest planetarium. With a capacity of 150 seats and equipped with 10k projection technology, the planetarium is set to take audiences on an immersive journey through space and science.

The Euro Space Center is simultaneously working on creating a Mars base project, with the aim of applying the research conducted by the European Space Agency's MELISSA project. This will be done by creating a complex of 3 laboratories: mechanical, (work done by drones and (robots), geological (soil studies), and biological (hydroponic greenhouse). This project, designed with an edutainment purpose, aims to deliver a fully immersive STEM experience to participants.

"We are hoping to collaborate with certain research bodies as well as public or private university laboratories", explains Jean-Marcel Thomas, Director of the Euro Space Center. The Mars base is expected to open to the public in 2028 or 2029.



© MLechien



© Strebelle Olivier



© Nathalie Doyen

THE MAGIC OF CERAMICS

The exhibition "Mentors: Ceramists and Teachers in Belgium" brings together the work of nearly 70 ceramists at two cultural sites. Keramis - Centre de la Céramique in La Louvière is where the "pioneers" of the last century are being exhibited. Meanwhile, on the site of the Anciens Abattoirs (Old Slaughterhouses) in Mons, BeCraft is featuring ceramists working today.

The two co-curators of this double exhibition, Ludovic Recchia and Kris Campo, aim

to provide new insights into the practice and teaching of ceramics in Belgium, from the beginning of the 20th century up to the present day. The central theme of passing on knowledge is expressed with a timeline in which past and present are linked through a territorial network covering both the north and south of the country.

The exhibition will run until 18 February 2024, and the beautifully produced exhibition catalogue is published by Prisme Editions.



Wallonia Export & Investment Agency in 2024: 198 activities on 5 continents

Wallonia Export & Investment Agency's ambition for 2024 is to keep supporting businesses in their international goals, even in times of economic and security instability around the world. Under this ambitious programme, the company's business-development offering will be 10% larger next year than this.

Walloon companies will still be able to be there and canvass markets in various ways: in a shared pavilion that brings several Walloon companies together, on a canvassing stand or an information stall in an international convention, during economic missions or contact days abroad, but also in seminars, royal visits, or even in Belgium during B2B sessions with foreign buyers.

For 2024, we are lining up some new events, including DMEA in Berlin (9 to 11 April, on health and digital care), Intertraffic in Amsterdam (16 to 19 April, on logistics and smart mobility), and LSX World Congress in London (29 and 30 April, on life sciences). Three markets will also be coming back: Benin, Togo, and the Lubumbashi region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Finally, after the United Kingdom in 2023, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland) will make up the target market for Wallonia Export & Investment Agency in 2024.

Stay tuned! <https://www.awex-export.be/fr/plus-d-infos/actualites/le-programme-d-actions-2024-de-l-awex-a-l-etranger-est-disponible>



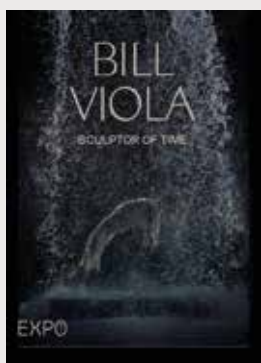
CULTURE

Two major events to wrap up 2023 and kick off 2024, with eyes and minds wide open.

Jochen Lempert Exhibition - MACS - Grand-Hornu - from 12 November 2023 to 17 March 2024

For his first exhibition in a Belgian museum, German photographer Jochen Lempert is taking over four rooms at the MACS for his delicately shot images of nature. The first thing that strikes you is the simplicity of his tools: a reflex 35-mm film with normal focus, home-made black-and-white prints, and Baryta paper in various sizes, which the artist arranges on the white walls without frames. This body of work invites us to contemplate as much as it does to read, through an inexhaustible network of correspondences generated by analogy or contrast between shapes, tones, and subjects.

www.mac-s.be



Bill Viola Exhibition - La Boverie Liège - from 21 October 2023 to 28 April 2024

The La Boverie museum is currently hosting an exhibition by American artist Bill Viola. A major figure in contemporary art, Viola is considered one of the pioneers of the medium of video art. Presented by Tempora and the Bill Viola studio, in partnership with La Boverie, Bill Viola. Sculptor of Time is the first Belgian exhibition with an international scope to celebrate the work of this unrivalled and hugely influential video artist. www.laboverie.com

All the discoveries you can treat yourself to are available at <https://www.wallonie.be/fr/agenda>

Temperatures are dropping, the streets are dressing up in garlands of light, a wintry but festive atmosphere is settling in. It's time to indulge yourself and enjoy the best in gourmet cuisine. Get inspired by our selection of winter activities and cosy accommodation throughout Wallonia.

https://visitwallonia.com/en-gb/?cookie_lang=en-gb



Wallonia, the land of **SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION**



- ✓ **Circular materials** eco-design, industrial symbiosis, encouraging the reuse and repair of these materials within the economy, recycling innovation, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for **enhanced health** biotechnologies, medical equipment, eHealth, mHealth, silver economy, prevention, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for agile and safe **design** and **production methods** (IoT, 3D printing)
- ✓ Sustainable **energy** systems and **housing**
- ✓ **Agri-food** chains of the future and innovative management of the **environment**

CONTACT US TO EXPLORE GREEN OPPORTUNITIES IN WALLONIA

welcome@investinwallonia.be



Wallonia.be