WALLONIA AND BRUSSELS



ABD SAMAD HABBACHI : "Feedback is the breakfast of champions"

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BUSINESS SIAL Paris &

SIAL Paris & Ecotrophelia

FOCUS

Belgian Economic Mission [|] to India

INNOVATION

Eloy Water: innovating for sustainable water management

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WHO DARES WINS!

As 2024 came to an end, we were left wondering 'where did the time go?' But we were also left with a feeling of excitement for what lies ahead! We were present at the Olympics and, with the homecoming of the companies that represented us, we were regaled with tales of their adventures that made us burst with pride!

We're talking about all kinds of companies here, from all sectors, some new and some well-established, start-ups and newly internationalised enterprises. Those who are shaping their own future, who are leading the way for others, and who hold the promise of projects, exploration, as well as international collaborations. Companies who have launched globally, inspiring those who follow in their footsteps.

One of the most powerful platforms for companies seeking new markets or wanting to strengthen established ties, are economic missions, especially the ones led by royalty. Those who take part in such missions are invited to the next one, enabling them to spread their wings internationally through the export market. And in a big way! While Rabelais extolled the virtues of travel, it was Marco Polo who set out in search of economic opportunities. Our companies, too, find inspiration from them, while also inspiring others. Boldly going, their daring lands them in Mumbai or New Delhi, where they showcase a variety of solutions addressing anything from health problems to technical complexities in the aeronautics sector. They take on the challenge of finding creative, sustainable solutions, whether they are working on EHS compliance or setting out new codes for design and luxury items. There are many wanting to talk to each other, confronting issues, rethinking and innovating. And that's all for the good.

In this issue, we bring you the stories of SynAbs, BeCOVER, Lisam and AP Collection. Check out our successful compatriots at SIAL, or marvel at Bernard Depoorter's magnificent fashion designs. Or why not revisit our Brutalist heritage? I very much hope that you will find your own inspiration too.

Because 2025 will be the year of further journeys, and I'm sure, of your further success. You can count on the team and I to be there to cheer you on!

Pascale Delcomminette



SUMMARY WORK



FOCUS

LIVE

INSPIRE









WAB contact www.wallonia.be

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WALLONIA HELPS FUND THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

The region will provide €12,796 in 2024 to help developing countries adapt to climate change. This contribution was approved by the Walloon government on 21 December 2024, and will be spread across various funds and projects to strengthen global climate resilience.









MONS STUDENTS WIN STARTECH COMPETITION

Students from the "Light It Up" project (UMons) won WSL's Startech competition on 17 October in Gembloux with their innovative device for optimising public lighting. Thanks to this success, they will now have the opportunity to embark on a trade mission to the USA.



WALLOON COMPANIES HELPED RESTORE NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

Now recovered from the devastating fire of 2019, Notre-Dame Cathedral has been welcoming visitors to Paris since 7 December 2024. Walloon companies such as Artbois and Carrières du Hainaut provided beams and Belgian Bluestone, thereby contributing to the restoration of the world-famous building.







The fifth cargo airport in Europe, Liege Airport set a new record in November 2024 with 2,586 movements and 112,106 tonnes of freight (+16%). The airport's growth, supported by 49 air carriers and 60 logistics businesses, strengthens Wallonia's international reach.



LIEGE AIRPORT SETS NEW CARGO TRANSPORT RECORD

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ABD SAMAD HABBACHI "FEEDBACK IS THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS"

At the helm of A6K/E6K, the rapidly expanding digital technology centre in Charleroi, Abd-Samad Habbachi fosters a sense of discretion while ambitiously and audaciously pursuing a forward-looking professional vision.





COULD YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF?

I grew up in Charleroi. After completing my studies, I started working at the local manufacturing plant, which happened to be Caterpillar! After two or three years, I was given responsibilities at the national level, and soon thereafter at the international level. My motto is: "Feedback is the breakfast of champions." I value relationships with people who are committed to finding solutions.

HOW DID YOU BECOME THE CEO OF D'A6K/E6K?

They announced the closure of Caterpillar's plant in Gosselies in 2017; it didn't really impact my career, but 2,000 of my colleagues being laid off had a big effect on me. When I was 35, I felt compelled to serve my region, to try to influence its economic development in a positive way. I therefore switched to the public sector, with the CATCH Plan, commissioned by the Government of Wallonia to put forward projects that could revitalise the economy.

BIG PICTURE I WORK

V wab I winter 2024

ABD SAMAD



WHAT IS A6K/E6K?

A6K/E6K was founded in response to the need for strengthening the industrial fabric by promoting job creation. How did we do it? By choosing a unique setting, where national and global leaders of innovation co-exist through their shared vision.

Whether you are looking to develop innovative products and services, or to accelerate your professional growth as a technology entrepreneur, or even to access "STEAM" training programs tailored to meet industry needs, you will find the resources, the expertise and the network necessary to succeed, right here at A6K/E6K.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?

Spending time with my family, and reading. For example, I am currently reading a Stanford report on the development of AI "in all its forms". It is important to continue exploring and understanding constantly evolving technologies in order to seize the opportunities that they offer our society.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR 2025?

Currently, the centre encompasses a space of 10,000 square metres, hosting 80 companies and training 1,500 students. By 2026, with further support from Europe and from Wallonia, we aim to expand to 60,000 square metres and train 10,000 students.

ABOUT A6K/E6K

A6K, which stands for Atelier 6000 (Advanced Engineering Center), acts as a hub for companies active in the technology and digital sector in Charleroi (postal code 6000). E6K, on the other hand, stands for École 6000 (Tech Education Center), which trains the workforce vital to the functioning of the tech companies.

Since its founding in January 2020, A6K/E6K has created a stimulating ecosystem by bringing together industrial companies, start-ups, universities, research centres and training providers, with the goal of promoting innovation in the engineering sector. The hub offers state-of-the-art facilities, including modular offices, a 5G laboratory and a supercomputer. Thanks to its expansion plans, mainly supported by European funds, A6K/E6K has strengthened its position as Belgium's biggest tech hub, and has put Charleroi on the European map of reindustrialisation.



King Philippe visits A6K

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INNOVATION AWARD WALLONIA, LAND **OF FLAVOURS AND KNOW-HOW**

The Paris Salon International de l'Alimentation (SIAL), is featuring four Walloon newcomers to the agri-food industry. Each is a showcase for the quality and richness of our region's produce.

Such is the case for Garden Honey, an organic malt liquor infused with honey and plants from the abbey's beehives and garden. "This prize signifies international recognition of our work and our values," says Oana van Hove, in charge of marketing and sales at the Maredsous Abbey distillery.

This sentiment is shared by Mathilde Riga, founder of Kult Kefir: "Our fruit kefir is an artisanal product that offers a healthy alternative to mass-produced sodas."

And then, others are keeping traditions going. Rachel Renson and her brothers Raphaël and Laurent are the 3rd generation to run the Conserverie et Moutarderie Belge. Their organic vegan asparagus spread, La Délicieuse, "is part of the awareness for well-being."

Finally, Drink a Flower scored highly for its unique dried flower infusion, winning an award for its four explosively tasty flavours. Founder Laurent Serrier proudly states: "We have developed a drink that's low in sugar, healthy, and delicious to boot."



SUCCESS FOR TWO BELGIANS AT ECOTROPHELIA 2024 WITH FULL'IZ

Guillaume Thébault and Brieuc-William Migeon won 2nd place at Ecotrophelia – the European food innovation competition – thanks to their breakfast drink, Full'iz.

Created as an on-the-go breakfast alternative, Full'iz (a contraction of "full" and "ease") is the brainchild of the two students from Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech, born from their shared passion for nutrition and need to save time in the morning. Developed in their student housing and perfected in Gembloux's Smart Gastronomy Lab, the drink stands out thanks to its natural ingredients and distinctive flavours such as raspberry, or mango & passion fruit. Their pitch: "Full'iz provides 20% of your daily energy requirements, with 350 kilocalories spread evenly, and a satisfying texture." With Ecotrophelia's seal of approval and support from the Liège-based company incubator VentureLab, Guillaume and Brieuc are currently in search of funding. In 2025, they aim to expand throughout Belgium before tackling the international market. Their goal? "To make good nutrition accessible to everyone."



BUSINESS I WORK

winter 2024

LOGISTICS PROVIDER **CLOVER GROUP** SETS UP IN WALLONIA TO MEET EUROPEAN CHALLENGES

"Wallonia was CEO Paul Lavery's first choice for the European headquarters," explains Yacin Saadi, Vice President of Clover Group Europe. And indeed, the region is often seen as the economic crossroads of the continent. Keen to gain a foothold in Europe post-Brexit, and with the support of AWEX and the British Chamber of Commerce, the British logistics group chose to set up in Fleurus, thanks to its proximity to Charleroi and its cutting-edge companies. Yacin and his Walloon roots were also a factor. "My network here is an asset," he says, "and the support of the local authorities was also decisive."

Clover Group offers turnkey solutions in high added-value logistics, specialising in highly regulated sectors such as security, aerospace, and defence. Since September 2024, its headquarters, located in an area booming with development in space and defence, has been the focal point of Clover Group's operations in Europe. Over 3 million euros have been invested, 6 Walloon employees have been brought on board, and sales have reached €500,000 this year (2024).

And if we are talking about logistics, we must obviously also address environmental issues. The company is committed to a sustainable approach, limiting its carbon footprint through a policy of "travelling exclusively by train and a tree-planting programme."



INVESTMENT I WORK

The Belgian branch of Clover Group is planning to double its workforce over the next two years by recruiting local talent. It will also be increasing the number of regional partners, and tripling sales turnover as from next year. "We want to streamline our operations and contribute to the economic and sustainable development of Charleroi and the Walloon region as a whole, where everything is close at hand," says Yacin. And beyond that, at the European level, "we plan to open further branches," though "the parent company and European operations will still be in Wallonia."

ELOY WATER INNOVATING FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

eloy, a family business that was founded in 1965 by Olivier Eloy's grandfather, has always managed to reinvent itself. It first made its mark in earthworks and then in construction, and now it also excels with its new division, eloy Water, which focuses on water management.



"We started out working in water treatment before becoming product designers", says Olivier Eloy, who has been running the company since 2019 with his brother David and his cousin Pierre-Etienne. This second division, eloy Water, which was created in the of its materials. "We are looking to is to reinvent water management," 2000s, is a real driver of innovation in both domestic and industrial wastewater treatment, as well as in the harvesting of rainwater. "We design and manufacture all of our solutions at our Sprimont site: tanks made of fibre-reinforced concrete and investing in renewable energy, at our concrete plant, or made of such as a wind turbine which will be plastic with the unique rotationalmoulding technique, which are both the first guarter of 2025. sturdy and lightweight."

The company innovates, too, for the sake of ever-greener initiatives. Aiming as it does to become a key player in the environmental transition, it recently integrated advanced technologies into its factories to improve the circularity reduce our environmental impact by 30% by 2027, in terms of both our CO2 emissions and our use of resources." To this end, the company has been prioritising recycled materials, optimising its processes, installed and put into operation in us need to set an example."

Active in around twenty countries, and particularly in France, which represents 70% of its export market, eloy Water is championing expertise and know-how, even as it pursues an ambitious vision: to become a key player. "Our ambition says Olivier Eloy. He points out that some wastewater can be treated and reused, even on a household scale. "If this way of managing water becomes cleaner and more efficient, it will contribute to sustainable development. And industrial and economic players like





BELGIAN ECONOMIC MISSION TO INDIA BELGIAN EXPERTISE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEW MARKETS

The Wallonia Export & Investment Agency (AWEX), in collaboration with the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA), hub.brussels, Flanders Investment & Trade, and the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, has organised an economic and trade mission to India led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium, from 1 to 8 March 2025 in New Delhi and Mumbai. During this mission, multiple Walloon companies will represent various sectors, including SYnAbs, Lisam, N-Side, AP Collector and BeCOVER.









THE WALLONIA OF TOMORROW I FOCUS

SYNABS ANTIBODIES, THE SOLUTION TO BETTER GLOBAL HEALTH

Based in Gosselies, SYnAbs is a leading producer of antibodies. Among the roughly 800 companies working in this field globally, SYnAbs stands out by specialising in hemoglobinopathy. These are "mutations of the hemoglobin molecule," explains CEO Julien Isoard, "and only 3 companies around the world, including us, produce antibodies to fight against these disorders." Certain genetic disorders prevent red blood cells from carrying oxygen to the organs, severely impacting life expectancy. Isoard says, "One such example is sickle cell disease (or drepanocytosis), which is widely prevalent in India. We have been conducting extensive tests for this disease in the country since 2023." These tests use antibodies developed and supplied by SYnAbs. This Walloon company has developed around 20 million tests, which is almost a third of the estimated volume required of 70 million. "The economic mission would allow us to deepen our ties further. I hope to meet with the Indian Health Minister, J.P. Nadda, along with our 30 to 35 partner enterprises, to raise SYnaBs' company profile even further," says Isoard. This could open up other markets in Africa and South-East Asia, where SYnAbs stands poised to introduce their tangible solutions. Their aim is to "have a positive impact on global health."

https://www.SYnAbs.be/

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THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL TIES



BECOVER A WALLOON AMBITION TO SERVE THE GLOBAL AERONAUTICS INDUSTRY



COMPLIANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Lisam is a software solutions provider for EHS-ESG compliance, and has become a global leader in the "management and creation of regulatory documents for chemical products," says CEO Michel Hemberg. India could turn out to be an interesting market. "As the country is yet to adopt the GHS regulations which define the regulatory standard for handling

chemical products, our solutions could prove useful to them." Hemberg hopes to leverage the mission's prestige to secure a meeting with the chemical industry association and perhaps the relevant minister. "India is currently researching the ways in which other countries manage chemical product legislation. So, it is clearly a market with considerable potential." Although

Launched in November 2024 in Herstal, in the province of Liège. BeCOVER is a test centre that is unique in Europe. BeCOVER is capable of testing low and high-pressure compressors for aircraft engines as well as gas turbines. Funded by the Government of Wallonia, the Belgian Government and Safran Aero Boosters, the company is positioned "towards a niche market", according to Olivier Servais, the Managing Director. "Our goal is to become the first test centre capable of meeting the needs GTRE centre)." Olivier Servais further

of new technologies in the field of civil and military aviation, along with fulfilling the future needs of the energy sector."

While Servais is looking forward to showcasing BeCOVER's savoir-faire during the Belgian economic mission to India, the company also intends to "strengthen ties with key players such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, and enter into discussions with the research and academics sector (through the

states, "this mission is an opportunity for us to open new doors."

The initial tests, scheduled for 2025 onwards, are expected to help secure orders through 2027. "We must prove that we are true to our word, while leveraging Walloon expertise in new markets like Asia," says Servais. He further adds that BeCOVER is considering opening up to other markets as well, "like wind tunnels for drones or sportscars." https://becover.eu/



BeCOVER LEVERAGE WALLOON EXPERTISE AND CREATE LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

BeCØVER

G WE CAN PROVIDE PRACTICAL DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF **REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

THE WALLONIA OF TOMORROW I FOCUS



Lisam is only focused on business activities in India at the moment, the company has already set up an office with 25 employees. "I would like to extend my trip to meet the staff who work there. I hope that this mission will lead to an increase in our business." https://www.lisam.com/

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Separated by distance, (A)lexis and (P)auline would exchange love letters and stuffed animals. This led to the conception of AP Collection, which has been redefining the norms step for the brand. "The mission will of design and luxury through their chairs and sofas adorned with stuffed Bracquegnies, Hainaut Province, these the luxury goods sector." This will creations combine humour, emotion also be the perfect chance for AP and sustainable practices. "We want Collection to "consolidate its presence to prove that luxury and sustainability in a rapidly growing, high-potential

Montironi. It is an ethical choice that is bolstered by charitable initiatives to support endangered species. The Belgian economic mission is a big give us the opportunity to showcase our creations as works of art and can go hand in hand," says Pauline market," adds Alexis Verstraeten, who https://apcollection.be/



TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN, BETWEEN BELGIUM AND INDIA, IN ORDER TO CREATE MASTERPIECES THAT TRANSCEND BOTH TIME AND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

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THE WALLONIA OF TOMORROW I FOCUS

is already connected to India through a workshop held in Udaipur. Through this mission, AP Collection not only aims to "build partnerships with interior designers, luxury furniture distributors and high-end hotels," and also with "established long-term distribution animals. Crafted by hand in Strépy- to meet with major stakeholders in hubs in Mumbai and New Delhi." These goals are synonymous with a "broader internationalisation strategy," which will guarantee a permanent place for Walloon design on the global market.

REFRESHING STROLL ALONG THE LESSE? IT'S A BREEZE

Looking for a breath of fresh air? Why not go on one of the 18 easy walking routes in the new brochure you can download from the VISITWallonia.be? Here you'll find a range of ideas for discovering our beautiful region step by step, with routes of between 5 to 10 km that you can get to easily with family or friends.

VISITWallonia.be





TOURISM I LIVE



For more walks and hikes, visit VISITWallonia.be/rando

One of the routes suggested takes you through the Lesse valley, starting from the church in Redu, which is one of the 33 most beautiful villages in Wallonia, famous for the past 40 years for its bookshops. The 9.6km signposted walk leads you through an unspoilt natural landscape. You walk down to the river and enter a lush untamed forest. Near the start of the walk you'll find the Mudia, an informative and interactive museum housed in a former rectory. And as you walk along the river, you'll see the flora and fauna, Mirwart castle, or the Roche aux Chevaux, which offers a breathtaking panoramic view.

LIVE I GASTRONOMY





LOUISE **HENRIQUES:** A RISING STAR IN CHOCOLATE



The finale of the second season of Les étoiles du chocolat (The Stars of Chocolate) took place at the Tours & Taxis Park on 6 December, to crown Belgium's top artisan chocolatier. This year's winner was 27-yearold Louise Henriques from Namur, who was part of Jean-Philippe Darcis's team. Louise pulled off the win by crafting a fabulous trompe l'oeil as a part of a grand buffet themed around Belgian music. The creation included a sculpture, a praline, and the trompe l'oeil itself. Louise, who trained at the Institut des Techniques et des Commerces Agro-Alimentaires (Institute of Food-Processing Techniques and Commerce) in Namur, is the founder of Loulou sucrée, a patisserie and chocolate shop in Naninne. "I'm so happy to have been able to take part in the competition. It's a big win, not just for me but for my entire team. I poured my heart and soul into it. and I think that's what made all the difference", she said, all smiles, at the awards ceremony. And with this win under her belt, Louise will be showing off the excellence of Wallonia's chocolate sector at World Expo 2025, in Osaka, Japan, during Wallonia-Brussels Week, from 25 to 30 May.







THE ORDER OF THE CROWN: HONOURING EXCELLENCE

Founded in 1897 by Leopold II, Order of Leopold II," explains its were honoured-just as were the Order of the Crown is a President, Gil Bourdoux. Far from other notables before them, such Belgian honorary award which limiting itself to a symbolic role, as Sœur Emmanuelle, Justine today recognises fundamental the Order celebrates personalities values such as civic-mindedness, whose "commitment and talent Salvatore Adamo, who were solidarity, and democracy. The Association of This year, figures such as the the Order of the Crown and the singer Stromae, Michelin-starred These awards acknowledge not Order of Leopold II (L'Association chef Sang Hoon Degeimbre, the de l'Ordre de la Couronne et honorary adviser to the Belgian inspiring careers, whether artistic, de l'Ordre de Léopold II, Socol) Court of Cassation Christine "brings together holders of the Matray, and professor of chemical Order of the Crown and the engineering Elisabeth Monard

upholding have made their mark on society."

AMBASSADORS I LIVE







Hennin, Charles Aznavour, and awarded the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Crown. just their merit, but also their academic, or socially oriented.

info@socol.be

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MARIE ADAM-LEENAERDT: THE ART OF SHAKING UP FASHION

Marie Adam-Leenaerdt's talent was on full display at the Belgian Fashion Awards, where she won the 'Emerging Talent of the Year' award. A graduate of La Cambre Mode[s], she founded her own fashion label in 2022. As a designer, she embodies audacity and innovation with a timeless and conceptual approach. "I twist the rules to present a new take on clothing," she tells us, a bit quirky with a touch of humour that is "typically Belgian." This award is not the first time her work has been recognised, as she has already been nominated at the Adam Fashion Awards and the Prix LVMH.

"The Belgian Fashion Awards build connections at the international level, particularly via export support programmes," says Laure Capitani, coordinator at Wallonie-Bruxelles Design Mode. With a presence in Paris and elsewhere, Marie Adam-Leenaerdt is already developing her next fashion show and the growth of her label. "My dream is to live and base my work in Belgium."







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PANORAMA I INSPIRE



BERNARD DEPOORTER'S FLORAL ART: TRADITION AND PASSION







Photos © Pierrick de Stexhe



BRUTALISM IN BELGIUM

Built between 1950 and 1980, Belgium's standout brutalist structures are in a perilous position, with many at risk of being demolished, altered, or abandoned. Brutalism in Belgium covers more than 50 at-risk structures.

Pierrick de Stexhe, an architect and photographer, took black-and-white analogue photos of the buildings with a large-format camera, He then developed and digitised each negative himself.

While they were inspired by the largely British movement, Belgian architeets such as Jacqmain, Vandenhove, and Bastin were also impressive creators in their own

right," says Pierrick, who enlisted the help of Jacinthe Gigou, Jean-Marc Basyn, and Marc Dubois so that they could discuss perspectives, the history of the movement's trends, and its underlying philosophy for the book.

"This beautiful book surprises and delights," says publisher Liliane Knopes. "By juxtaposing the photographs and the descriptions on white paper, and the negatives on black backgrounds with silver ink, we wanted to show that raw side of the material, but also its temporal limits."

Find out more at Prisme-Editions.be

The space industry's biggest and most important event, Space-Comm Expo will take place on 10-11 March in the UK with 170

10/03/2025 to 11/03/2025: SPACE-COMM EXPO 2025

exhibitors and 4 600 visitors. AWEX is organising B2B meetings, VIP access and a networking event at the Belgian Ambassador's residence on behalf of Wallonia's cutting-edge businesses.



26/04/2025 to 30/04/2025: Qatar Kuwait 2025 multi-sector trade mission

The oil-and-gas-rich states of Qatar and Kuwait are diversifying their economies by investing in health, sustainability and smart cities. The trade mission scheduled for March will enable them to explore these markets, make connections and identify opportunities for Walloon businesses.





26/05/2025 to 31/05/2025: visibility week for Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in the Belgian Pavilion at the Osaka **2025 World Exposition**

AWEX and WBI will be organising economic, academic and cultural activities with the following themes: life sciences, Food & chocolate, Tourism & culture, Digital & ICC, and Industry 5/0 at the Belgian Pavilion.



VISITWallonia.be/pass



FORTHCOMING EVENTS I INSPIRE





11/03/2025 to 14/03/2025: FOODEX Japan 2025

With more than 2 800 exhibitors et 76 000 visitors in 2024, FOODEX JAPAN is one of Asia's largest food and beverage trade shows, and also a strategic platform for exporting to the continent. Niche, premium products that meet Japanese standards enjoy strong potential, especially with the support of the EU-Japan trade agreement.





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

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