

Press release

Consortium of TenCate, Norma and others receives €1.5 million from Province of Overijssel for smart production in The Factory of the Future

The Province of Overijssel has granted a €1.5 million development subsidy to a consortium headed by TenCate for the innovation centre The Factory of the Future. The size of the project amounts to approximately €6 million. The objective of the project is to make the production of advanced TenCate materials, such as protective fabrics, even more efficient, sustainable and smart, in what is known as smart production. Apart from initiator TenCate, Theo Rietkerk, a member of the Provincial Executive of Overijssel, has consistently done his utmost in recent years to promote this groundbreaking technological innovation in the manufacturing industry in the Eastern Netherlands, which is of great importance for the regional economy and direct and indirect employment.

The use of new technologies, such as digital inkjet technology, will also make it possible in the near future to produce new innovative materials, known as smart materials. The introduction of digital inkjet technology has the added advantage of being able to respond to individual customer requirements ("mass customization" and "on demand delivery") and of enabling processes to be read in digitally by linking the production process to a range of customer networks through the internet.

Strengthening competitiveness

Theo Rietkerk, a member of the Provincial Executive of Overijssel for Economy, Energy and Innovation, has for many years done his utmost to promote this development in the manufacturing industry in the Eastern Netherlands: "Innovation is the key focus area in strengthening the competitiveness of our country. Overijssel is regarded as one of the main drivers of the Dutch knowledge economy. The current era of the Internet of Things requires that the innovation strengths we already have be enhanced, renewed and connected. Thanks to this groundbreaking project the consortium led by TenCate will make a contribution to smart production, smart materials and the development of smart business models. This project is also of great importance for the regional economy, the SMEs that supply it, and the growth of regional employment, both direct and indirect. It also acts as a pull factor on other companies, including multinationals".

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High production speed

One of the current main activities of the consortium relates to the further development and introduction of the Osiris technology of TenCate. This is a digital inkjet technology that was originally developed by the Hengelo company Osiris Inkjet Technology, which is being carried on by TenCate. This continuous inkjet technology achieves extremely high production speeds and for TenCate it is ideally suited as a sustainable finishing technology for technical textiles. During this process a high-grade functionality is applied to the substrate. This innovation could also be used in other sectors within the technical and other areas of the (technical) textile industry.

Value network and smart production

In this context TenCate has joined forces with various companies in Twente, including a number of SME companies and the Norma Group, which supplies complete mechatronic systems. The consortium is an example of a network structure of companies in the "Materials and Mechatronics" sector (materials, machine building, components, engineering and IT), which is strongly represented in the Eastern Netherlands.

Innovation centre The Factory of the Future ties in with technological innovations in the manufacturing industry, which will enable production processes to become more sustainable and to make communication between the parties and logistical coordination in production networks possible (smart factories projects). The projects aim to provide an impetus to the Dutch manufacturing industry, in order to make this more competitive, cost efficient and flexible. Smart, technologically high-grade manufacturing processes can make a major contribution to future growth.

New employment

Future growth will also have a positive effect on employment, particularly in the Eastern Netherlands. TenCate has set up a pilot scheme in a sustainably upgraded location on the company premises in Nijverdal, which will also offer opportunities to other companies to conduct tests using this new digital technology. This test location will be opened before the end of this year. Expectations are that this development will generate a minimum of 50 to 100 direct jobs in the region within the next five years.

Within the consortium close cooperation is expected with other companies in the near future, which will also result in new employment opportunities being created.

Royal Ten Cate**Almelo, the Netherlands, Wednesday, 17 September 2014**

For further information:

Digital visual material is available on request on: media@tencate.com

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The Factory of the Future is a smart production innovation centre for digital printing and finishing through inkjet technology. Technical textile substrates are finished using continuous inkjet technology and drop-on-demand technology. Inside The Factory of the Future materials technology company TenCate collaborates with numerous national and international industrial partners, including Norma Group in Hengelo (The Netherlands).

Royal Ten Cate (TenCate) is a multinational company that combines material technology with chemical technology in the development and production of functional materials with distinctive characteristics. Systems and materials from TenCate come under four areas of application: safety and protection; aviation and space; infrastructure and the environment; sport and recreation. TenCate occupies leading positions in protective fabrics, composites for aviation and space, antiballistics, geosynthetics and synthetic turf. TenCate is listed on the NYSE Euronext.