

Dear reader,

In the past year, cooperation was the code word for

again worked intensively with partners Engico and DD Automation. On page 12, you can read how we made each other stronger and together brought our installations to a higher level together. In addition, we discuss a number of projects that we carried out at DASSY, Gheys, Caisseries Belle-Vue and Balta and present them all in this new edition. One-by-one, they are the result of strong partnerships between supplier and customer.

But this year, we went one step further in terms of cooperation. Lode De Boe and I took over Stumaco, a company specialised in the design and construction of machines in stainless steel. A perfect complement to the activities of Fraxinus.

It makes us grateful that we, surrounded by a team of passionate Fraxinusers and strong partners, can make our projects increasingly forward-looking and thus contribute to the success story of our customers.

We hope that this eighth edition of Fraxinews will bring inspiration for an innovative future.

Hans Van Essche **CEO Fraxinus** 

#### **SOLUTIONS** FOR PRODUCTION **AND LOGISTICS**

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HANS VAN ESSCHE SHARES HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

### "One of the themes of the coming year will be automation in the food industry."

In 2019, Fraxinus celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the company did not stop innovating this year. CEO Hans talks about the **expansion in Belgium and abroad** and about the **acquisition of Stumaco**, opening the way for Fraxinus to the food sector.

steady growth of around 15%. How do you attempt to continue this positive trend? Hans: "We are not only growing in terms of turnover, but also in terms of numbers of staff. We always strive for good work surroundings for our people. We are ambitious and which means that it is important to provide the necessary training so that everyone can grow with the company. We are working very hard on expanding our network and that means

In recent years, Fraxinus has experienced

In 2020, you became co-owner of Stumaco. How did this takeover come about?

that we get more and more projects

from abroad."

"After 19 years, the founders Stefaan Vangheluwe and Luc Dewilde decided to leave their company. Lode De Boe and I enthusiastically became part of Stumaco's story. The combination with Fraxinus is a logical step."

What is the company's specialisation? "Stumaco designs, builds, assembles and maintains machines and production lines in stainless steel. The company

is mainly active in the world of fresh

and frozen vegetables and the potato processing industry. This ranges from receiving raw materials to dosing, mixing and packaging. The machines and production lines are used for both basic food and specialities such as crisps, croquettes, pancakes, tortillas and so on."

"Together, Fraxinus and Stumaco offer an integrated solution for robotising in the food sector, enabling us to carry out complete projects."

— Hans Van Essche

#### What does your role at Stumaco mean for Fraxinus?

"Fraxinus and Stumaco can work together on complete projects. Stumaco's machines come into contact with the 'naked' product on the line, whereas Fraxinus is a



specialist in robotising business processes and automating transport, packaging and palletising. In addition, stainless steel is a separate technical domain that we did not have in-house. This way, we share knowledge with each other, but both companies remain autonomous."

#### Are Fraxinus' projects shifting to the food sector?

"There is no immediate shifting of projects, but it is certainly the case that there is cross-fertilisation between the companies. The advantage of the food sector is that it is not sensitive to the economic cycle. There are no integrated solutions for robotising in that niche market currently, and thanks to this cooperation we can offer that. We bring together engineering, mechanical engineering and robotising tailored to the food industry in a single package. In this way, the customer only needs one point of contact and the project is then coordinated from the same base. I believe that this is great for the future for both Stumaco and for Fraxinus."



#### "Fraxinus and Stumaco complement each other perfectly"

## BY LODE DE BOE CO-OWNER OF STUMACO

"After an exciting 23 years at floor producer Unilin, I was looking forward to a new chapter in my career. When I heard that Stefaan Vangheluwe and Luc Dewilde wanted to sell their company, I knew that Hans would be the right partner to join in with Stumaco's story. Fraxinus' in-house specialisation in material handling, transport and packaging lines is the perfect complement to Stumaco's activities. I have been working hard with this since July and the future looks promising. We have young, driven people on board and the order book is filled with orders from home and abroad. In corona times, we have to be careful with predictions, but I see positive times ahead. Together with Fraxinus, we are going for further sustainable growth."



#### STUMACO IN SUMMARY

STANDS FOR

 $\textbf{stu} \textbf{dies}, \, \textbf{ma} \textbf{chines} \, \textbf{and} \, \textbf{co} \textbf{nstructions}$ 

LED BY

Lode De Boe and Hans Van Essche

STARTED IN

2001

BASED IN

Staden

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AND PARTNERS

Read more on www.stumaco.h



#### DASSY IS PREPARING FOR FURTHER GROWTH

## Conveyor system with lift for new high-bay warehouse

DASSY professional workwear is a manufacturer of **professional workwear**. The Bruges head office supplies some 3.4 million articles for the various brands to a network of European distributors every year. The company grew by 13% in 2019 and is ambitious for the future. That is why it invested in a new **semi-automatic warehouse, including a transport system with lift** designed



From left to right: Hannes Dekeyzer, Nico Delmulle, Frédéric De Man and Hanne Bouckaert



## The lift installation is part of a complete expansion and renovation of the warehouse. A logical consequence of your strong growth story?

Nico: "Indeed, the manual process was gradually becoming saturated on the current surface area, so the decision was made to expand the existing 7,000 m² warehouse by 5,000 m² and further automate it. Fraxinus took care of the delivery of a transport system with lift."

Hanne: "Automation was also necessary for coping with our annual peak in the autumn. We used to have to bridge that period with interim workers, but now this can be absorbed by the installation."

#### Is e-commerce also a reason to automate?

Nico: "Our professional workwear is distributed through a balanced network of official DASSY dealers. They, too, are increasingly focusing on e-commerce. Guaranteeing fast and efficient delivery is the best way for us to support them in this work."

## Before the expansion, the pallets were transported by forklift trucks on the mezzanine. Was automation the main reason to install a lift?

Hanne: "Safety also has its part to play. We used gravitational roller conveyors to take the pallets off the mezzanine, but that no longer met the high safety requirements we set in our warehouse. Further automation turned out to be the solution to avoid potential risks as much as possible and to be able to guarantee a continuous flow."

Nico: "Fraxinus' expertise in safety was an important added value for our project. Many things that we had not thought of ourselves were naturally included and clearly explained in the offer."

Hanne: "Talking about the offer: each step in the process was explained in plain language so that it could be understood by everyone, with or without technical knowledge."

#### For you, what were the absolute must haves for the installation?

Nico: "The installation had to be sufficiently robust and the lift is now much more central in relation to the automation entrance."

Frédéric: "We can also extract data from the installation. For example, the lift indicates when an intervention or maintenance is required, allowing us to anticipate future problems better."

#### What is crucial for you when choosing a partner for such projects?

Nico: "There must be a match to a certain extent and throughout the process, we have felt that Fraxinus' DNA is close to ours: feet on the ground, helping the customer and just getting on with it. Your no-nonsense mentality is something that also is very present in our company."

Hanne: "DASSY is a flat organisation where huge investments are made in an open culture, personal contact, fun on the work floor... This is also the case for our production department in Sri Lanka."

## "Fraxinus' DNA is close to ours, with the same clear communication style and hands-on mentality."

Nico Delmulle, logistics & warehouse manager

#### You employ as many as 1,800 people there. Is there still a lot of manual work in your production company?

"The production process is pretty automated and runs in the best conditions, but we are very committed to quality. A quality control system has been integrated into every step of the supply chain, so we can count on every delivery being correct and meeting our high quality standards."

#### How do you see the future?

"With the current automation we have sufficient capacity to support an annual growth of 7 to 8% until 2030. That should be enough to realise our ambitions."

#### We wish you lots of success!

## Three unique advantages of this lift installation

- The installation is designed so that, in the case of a large number of pallets, the input can be extended via the outbound circuit. This possibility creates almost twice as many buffer positions.
- To be able to handle the pallets easily, a copy of the label is also applied to the back after scanning the bar code on the front. That way, the placing of the pallet does not matter and the operator can scan the bar code on either side of the pallet.
- The lift is equiped with a top floor on top of the lift cage. This closes the hole of the lift when the lift cage is down, which significantly increases safety during maintenance work.

## FACTS & FIGURES

#### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

- > 60 employees in Bruges
- > 12 representatives
- 1,800 production staff in Sri Lanka

#### **TURNOVER 2019**

€ 45 million

#### **BRANDS**

- > DASSY
- › Dress Confect (private label)
- › Proteq

#### MORE LOCATIONS

- > Pallets: from 8,900 to 17,200
- > Boxes: from 24,500 to 78,500
- Read more on

#### GHEYS EXPANDS WITH IMPRESSIVE WAREHOUSE

# Automated warehouse system for varying pallets

Last year, the Limburg transport and logistics company Gheys expanded with a **new 12,000 m²** building for storing plastics on pallets in an automated warehouse. The requirements? A compact installation that easily brings heavy pallets of various sizes in and out of the warehouse. We talked to COO Jan Mertens.

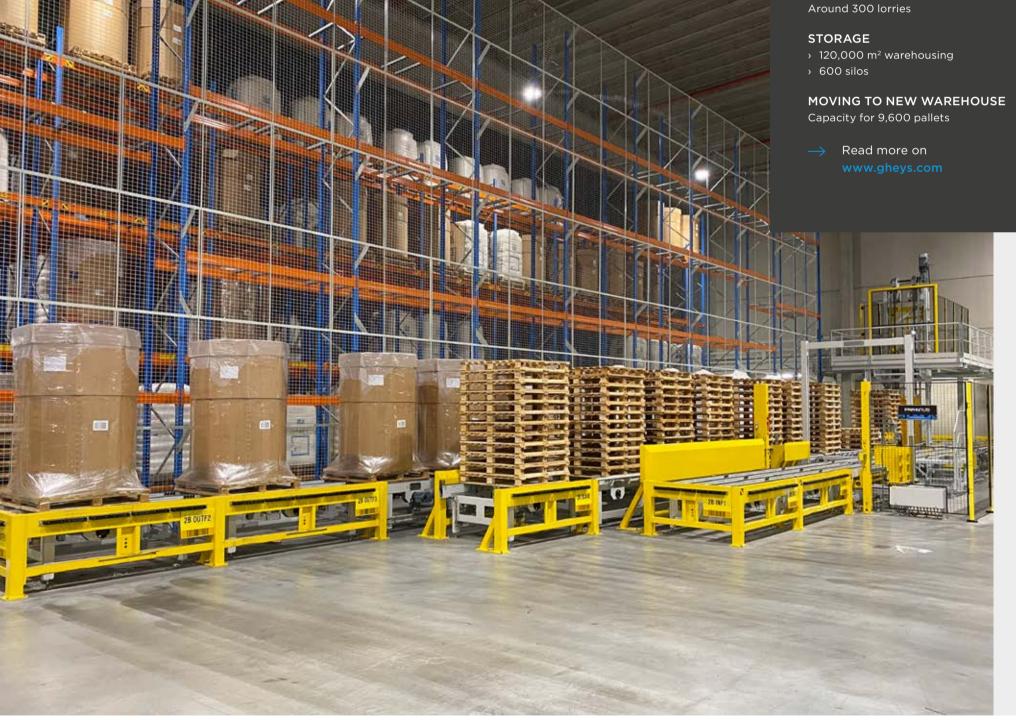
## FACTS & FIGURES

THREE LOCATIONS

Mol, Beringen and Genk

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT







From left to right: Jelle Parmentier and Jan Mertens

#### Can you tell us more about Gheys and the department that the installation was built for?

"We specialise in plastics for the petrochemical industry, which are supplied to us in bulk or packaged by the producers. We store, pack, unpack, mix, sieve and transport the product. The plastics that arrive with us packaged on pallets are stored in this new warehouse, among other things."

#### This is an extremely extensive project with an installation covering a total area of around 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>. What were your main challenges?

"It was an unusual project with intensive control via the WMS system and several additional challenges. For example, the installation had to be able to withstand heavily loaded pallets of different types and sizes, and it had to be able to transport pallets flawlessly. After all, an operator cannot push a slanted pallet weighing 1,500 kg just like that. All these factors have many mechanical consequences that had to be taken into account during the design phase. So we needed a partner who could think along with us around the entire process and that is where Fraxinus proved its added value."

Hannes Dekeyzer, sales engineer at Fraxinus, continues: "This is of course a cooperation between different parties all bringing their own knowledge together. In this project, there was a very good interaction between Gheys, Logflow, C&W Logistics and Stow."

#### Why did you choose Fraxinus and how do you look back on the cooperation?

"We came into contact with Fraxinus via Logflow from Loppem, which specialises in optimising logistics processes. They led the construction of our previous warehouse and told us that Fraxinus might be a good partner for this project. Fraxinus listened very carefully to our experiences from previous projects and took this into account in the tender process. This gave us confidence in their way of working for the further course of the project. We are now in the post start-up phase where problems occasionally arise and where we expect a quick solution. With Fraxinus, we have chosen the right partner: the aftercare is very good. We also really appreciated the short lines of communication and the quick response time. Both in the design phase and during assembly, the team was flexible and reacted immediately to changes. You can design a lot in advance, but you only discover certain things during assembly. Those unexpected things were dealt with efficiently."

"The assembly on site went very smoothly: a compliment to the team who came to Beringen every day in the midst of the corona crisis."

— Jan Mertens, COO Gheys

#### Speaking of efficiency: in which area does the installation bring the most benefits for you?

"The greatest gain is in the space saving which allows us to store more pallets on a smaller surface area: the racks are higher and thanks to the mobile shelving system, we only need one central aisle per block."

#### Highlighting the installation

#### BY HANNES DEKEYZER

Sales engineer Fraxinus

#### THE FACTS

In the new warehouse (12,500 m²) pallets will be stored in a 10,000 m² installation with mobile shelving from Stow.

The inbound pallets are arranged at the reception area and then detected by the two antennas in the warehouse and placed in the racks. The outbound pallets are taken from the racks and loaded back up on the antennas in the warehouse.

They then leave the warehouse via this route

#### **OUR SOLUTION**

- To be able to store any pallet, regardless of size, weight and type, we work with a slave pallet which, after centring the top pallet, is pushed underneath and then transported on roller conveyors.
- We made the roller conveyor much smaller than usual in order to improve stability and extend the life of the pallet.
- For the sake of efficiency for the forklift truck driver and for maximum storage capacity, the installation after the reception area is fully double deck.
- Pallets can travel up to 130 metres from the top end to the furthest antenna in the warehouse. That is a long way to go, so we have provided scanners at every crucial point of the installation which means that there is no need for data tracking. This makes it a lot easier to restart if something should go wrong with a pallet on the way.
- At the intersections of the long route, the existing route can be linked to a new adjacent building. The antennas can then be mirrored here and the central axis can be used twice









Caisseries Belle-Vue is a manufacturer of wooden crates and pallets for various sectors including chemistry, civil engineering, electronics and metal. The brothers René and Jean-Pierre Crommen called in the combined expertise of Certis Benelux and Fraxinus for the automatic assembly of the pallets.

#### CERTIS AND FRAXINUS JOIN FORCES FOR CAISSERIES BELLE-VUE

# Automatic assembly of pallets in different formats

#### Why the need for this installation?

"Our customers hold less and less stock, because storage space is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive.

As a result, they make smaller and smaller orders, which means we have to be able to react flexibly and deliver within 48 hours.

This requires a machine that on the one hand can produce quickly and, on the other, can change sizes quickly," says René.

#### How does the installation help create an efficient production process?

"The installation is equipped with a double machine, which allows the operator to work continuously. The control of this machine is very well conceived and allows the operator to change products quickly and easily," says René.

"In addition, the installation completes the pallet," adds Jean-Pierre. "After assembly, the robot places the pallet in a second machine where, if desired, the corners can be cut off and the pallets can be labelled. The joint operation of both machines means that we have time over for those extra operations. The robot then stacks the pallets, nested or not. This is all done automatically and controlled which means that the operator can work efficiently and achieve a high yield."

#### Does the installation also affect the quality of the pallets?

"Certainly! Because the position of the planks is computer-controlled, they are always in the same place and the nails always end up correctly. This makes the pallets more uniform and extra strong," says René. "Fraxinus also developed a sensor that we build into every nail gun to check that all nails have been shot into the pallet correctly," adds Geert Decommere of Certis.

Nothing but advantages! We wish you every success and look forward to working closely with you.

## Twelve years of partnership in automatic lines

Certis Benelux has more than 40 years of expertise in strapping, foil wrapping and fastening techniques. All divisions of the company offer equipment and semi-automated as well as fully automatic lines. The Certis team has been working with Fraxinus for automated lines for 12 years. "Fraxinus' engineers design our ideas, elaborate them further and then build them on a project basis. This interaction has become something we rely on," says Geert Decommere, Business Development Manager at Certis.

## FACTS & FIGURES

Family-owned Caisseries Belle-Vue was founded in the late 70s by François Crommen and is since the 80s in the hands of the second generation. Four children are still active and are continuing to build the company's future.

#### LOCATION

Heppignies, Hainaut

#### **EMPLOYEES**

65 in the factory, 12 in the office, 8 workers in the transport department

#### ANNUAL TURNOVER

€ ± 20 million

#### SALES AREA

Active in Belgium and neighbouring countries

#### DAILY PRODUCTION CAPACITY

- › Crates: 2,000
- Pallets: 3,000 to 3,500
   The Fraxinus plant has produced 23,000
   pallets since its start-up.
- Read more on www.cbvh.be

The cooperation in the field of innovative nail technology is the cornerstone of successful automation in the wood-processing packaging industry.

Thanks to a 'Certis' range of high-quality nail guns built into Fraxinus' machines, sales of Coil, Jumbo Coil and Super Jumbo Coil have been boosted in recent years.

#### BALTA OPTS FOR FLEMISH ANCHORING WITH LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

## Automated packing of carpets into boxes

Operational Excellence is one of the pillars on which Balta's strategy rests. This manufacturer of textile floor coverings therefore continues to invest in innovation, where possible in collaboration with local partners. The collaboration with Fraxinus in the **development of a new packaging machine** is a good example: we look back with Johan Vandesande (Balta Group's technical purchasing manager) and Rik Pappijn (plant manager).

#### How did the need for this automation arise?

"As the European market leader, we must constantly respond to the current needs of society. For example, the enormous shift from mass production with large runs to the same level of production but with many more customer-specific orders can be seen here too. We want to respond to this with flexibility by producing many more and smaller runs and packaging in a customer-oriented way. This machine makes that possible", says Rik Pappijn.

## Automation not only ensures a more efficient production process, but usually also has a favourable impact on other areas. Would you say that this is true also with this packaging machine?

"Without a doubt. The social, economic and ecological impact certainly also plays a role in such investments, and as a listed company we naturally pay a great deal of attention to this. We focus on the GRI standard 414, an international standard for drawing up a sustainability report. This standard plays a part in all the actions we take, but specifically for this installation, we can first and foremost use our production staff in a more multidisciplinary way and offer a job with less ergonomic impact.

In addition, we work with cardboard packaging and the concept of the boxes is designed to maximise the degree of filling of the trucks. This reduces  ${\rm CO_2}$  emissions per packaged product," says Johan.

"Another advantage of the installation is that it also greatly simplifies the supply chain. At Balta, the box is automatically prepared for shipment and then transported to the customer's main warehouse. From there, the box leaves for the shop, where it only needs to be partially dismantled to make the carpets presentation-ready," Rik continues.

#### This brings many aspects nicely together. What does that say about the future?

"The installation is planned for extensions for further automation in the future, for example the automatic removal of the pallets and the setting up and folding of the empty boxes. In addition, we continue to invest and are currently in the consultation phase with Fraxinus for new optimisation projects," concludes Johan.



#### Highlighting the installation

#### BY BART BARBIER

Project engineer Fraxinus

#### THE FACTS

The carpets, rolled up in plastic, must be stacked and packed in cardboard boxes.

The machine must be able to pack several different sizes of carpets. The material the carpets are made from is an added complexity, making them difficult to manipulate.

#### **OUR SOLUTION**

The operator scans the carpet and places it manually on the conveyor belt in our installation. Thanks to this scanning, the machine is automatically set up and the carpet then passes through a metal detector and is transported to a buffer zone. There, the carpets are placed in position and picked up in pairs with the robot gripper. This gripper is able to pick up different sizes and place the carpets in the automatically supplied box. Once the box is full, another robot closes it with a lid and it is transported to the strapper and the despatch zone.

## FACTS & FIGURES

#### LOCATION

Eleven locations worldwide Head office in Sint-Baafs-Vijve

#### **EMPLOYEES**

Around 4,000 worldwide

#### **TURNOVER 2019**

€ 671.2 million

#### **TOTAL PRODUCTION FOOTPRINT** 752,000 m² (150 football fields)

Read more on



From left to right: Bart Barbier, Johan Vandesande and Hans Van Essche

#### FRAXINUS IN BRIEF

## Fraxinus cycles with B2Bike

At Fraxinus, we like to motivate each other and if this makes us fit too, then we are more than enthusiastic. For this, we work together with B2Bike, which wants to keep companies moving by means of bicycle leasing. As an employee, you choose from different brands and models, from mountain bikes to electric bikes. After the lease period you own the bike making it an interesting financial benefit for the employee. Our people also choose themselves which affiliated dealer they want to purchase a bicycle from, which is great for maintenance and repairs. To date, around 13 employees have opted for this formula. We are pleased that our spacious bicycle shed is well filled. Let's keep it up!



# Together with former Unilin board member

#### SYNERGIE with machine builder for the food industry **Stumaco**

Lode De Boe, Hans Van Essche has recently become the head of Stumaco. Stumaco stands for studies, machines and constructions. Since 2001, the company has specialised in the design, construction and assembly of machines in stainless steel for the food industry. Fraxinus and Stumaco remain autonomous, but in this way they can work together for complete projects in a sector that Fraxinus previosuly had no links to.

# FREEK VROMAN CELEBRATES HIS 10TH YEAR AT FRAXINUS



"Following my training as a professional welder, I worked for a number of years with a different machine constructor, but the monotony of the job soon got to me. Looking for something more versatile and flexible, I ended up at Fraxinus as a mechanic. Initially, I combined welding and assembly more or less fifty-fifty. But I have now stopped with welding completely and am mainly involved in the assembly, construction and installation of machines. Thanks to this variation, I still enjoy my job after 10 years. No two projects are the same either: we keep building different machines and that keeps it interesting. Whether I would add another 10 years? I'm happy with what I do, so why not!"

# "THE ONLY WAY TO DO GREAT WORK IS TO LOVE WHAT YOU DO"

Steve Jobs

## FRAXINUS GROWS

Over the past year, we have welcomed three new colleagues in different departments.



YVES VANDE VYVERE
Assistant production manager

"Fraxinus' no-nonsense approach and clear structure immediately appealed to me. Since January, as the right hand of our production manager Andy, I have been responsible for ensuring a good workflow. I take care of the planning and prepare the site so that the assembly installation departments can work optimally. Every day brings a fascinating activity!"



BRAM DEWEER
Project engineer

"At Fraxinus I had the opportunity to work in the workshop for six months to get to know the products and the people on the floor better. Previously I used to build small machines, while Fraxinus works on large custom-made machines.

This experience on the floor helps me to draw up my designs. It takes about five years to fully master the construction of these kinds of machines, but that is exactly where the challenge lies for me."



FILIP BRUYNEEL

Manager for the sawing department

"Sawing, sorting parts, sheet metal... My job offers a lot of variety and that is exactly what I was looking for. I already had 35 years of experience with the same employer, also in the metal industry, so the vacancy perfectly matched my profile. It also clicked very well with my workmates. The atmosphere is good and that is always a bonus."





Since 2004, Dominiek Deboosere has specialised in the cabling of electrical installations with **DD Automation**. Four years later, Jo Coene started up his programming company **Engico**. Together they are **two indispensable partners** in the automation story of Fraxinus. "We are the perfect partners, each strong in his own field."



From left to right: Hans Van Essche, Jo Coene and Dominiek Deboosere

#### PARTNERS IN FOCUS: ENGICO AND DD AUTOMATION

# "Fraxinus is not afraid of innovation and it pays off"

Dominiek: "Before Jo joined, I had spent three years at Fraxinus. I was a freelance robot programmer when Hans asked me to build an electrical cabinet for him and the ball started rolling. The number of assignments increased and so did the need for solid software knowledge. We brought that in-house with Engico, an important asset that increased the scale of our projects. In the beginning, we did single conveyor belts, so to speak, and now we are realising complete lines. Fraxinus has grown enormously over the last 15 years and as subcontractors we were able to reap the benefits of this. Today about 70% of our turnover comes through Fraxinus."

"As smaller players, Engico and DD Automation are also fortunate that Fraxinus dares: they are not afraid to adopt the latest developments or to apply the latest techniques."

Jo Coene, Engico

#### What is the recipe for success of your collaboration?

Jo: "The triumvirate. Hans, Dominiek and I work in complete symbiosis. We communicate well with each other and problems can be solved quickly. In addition, our individual companies are strong: each is good at what he does. Specialisation is a striking trend in our sector, and thanks to our cooperation we bring a great deal of focused expertise to the table. As small players, Engico and DD Automation are also fortunate that Fraxinus dares. They are not afraid to adopt the latest developments or to apply the latest techniques. For us, this is not always as easy, but this way we keep up with the market and the projects we do are all the more challenging."

#### How do you see the future?

Dominiek: "Mechanical engineering is constantly evolving, so it is difficult to predict where we will be in ten years' time. Hopefully we will be able to continue to keep up the momentum and continue to grow with it. Fraxinus also has the ambition to go more international and we have already been able to work on installations in the United States, Malaysia, Costa Rica and most European countries, among others... These are always instructive projects. The greater our knowledge centre, the better for the customer."

## FACTS & FIGURES

#### DD AUTOMATION

#### SPECIALISATION

cabling, construction of casing and programming of electrical installations

#### STARTED IN

2004

#### BASED IN

Roeselare

#### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

15

Read more on www.ddautomation.be

#### ENGICO

#### SPECIALISATION

automation, programming and engineering

#### STARTED IN

2008

#### BASED IN

Ingelmunster

#### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

ŝ

Read more on www.engico.be