



PRESS RELEASE

## **Ontex Eeklo elected Belgian 'Factory of the Future' for the second time**

**Eeklo (Belgium), 07 February 2019 – Ontex Group NV ("Ontex") is proud to announce that its production facility in Eeklo was again awarded the prestigious 'Factory of the Future' by technology federation Agoria and Sirris, the collective center of the technology industry in Belgium. The 'Factory of the Future' award is given to production facilities that stand out with their future-proof operations. It is the second time that Ontex Eeklo has the honor of receiving this award, after previously winning it in 2016.**

In order to become a 'Factory of the Future', a company must go through 7 transformations. No less than 265 Belgian manufacturing companies have already started with at least one of those transformations, with the Factory of the Future Award reserved for the best performers.

*"Since winning the award in 2016, we have invested over 20 million EUR in making our Ontex Eeklo factory even more future-proof. We are very pleased that our efforts have again been recognized by Agoria and Sirris, and extremely proud to be considered an innovative and pioneering manufacturer in the hygiene industry",* **Jef Monballyu**, Plant Manager Ontex Eeklo, said upon receiving the award.

Since winning the prize for the first time in 2016, Ontex Eeklo has focused on seven additional transformation paths to make the plant even better equipped for the future. Investing in ecological production and sustainable innovation was identified as one of the key priorities in this regard. Over the past few years, Ontex Eeklo has heavily increased the use of sustainable resources in its packaging process, among others by using sugar-based polyethylene. The facility also raised the bar when it comes to recycling in the production environment and implemented a better tracking of the environmental impact of its products, using a sustainability scorecard. Regarding energy consumption, Ontex Eeklo now runs on 100% green electricity, and will shortly finish installation of 8,500 solar panels. The site furthermore implemented a new digital monitoring system to better track and reduce its energy use.

Digitization was another key transformation area for the plant. A lot of efforts have been put into creating a true Digital Factory, with Ontex Eeklo taking some important steps in digitizing its technical analyses, quality management and local fleet management systems. Another transformation that helped Ontex winning the Factory of the Future relates to the implementation of a Smart Production System, which optimizes stock quantities and allows for a more efficient management and planning of stocks.

Finally, Ontex Eeklo takes pride in the open innovation partnerships that have been established with a number of renowned universities across Europe. For example, Ontex Eeklo worked with the University of Valladolid (Spain) to develop innovative more absorbent product cores. Ontex

Eeklo also teamed up with leading 3D printing companies to see how 3D-printing solutions can be implemented in the production process.

All these initiatives fit into a global improvement program of Ontex in terms of sustainability, environment, energy and social responsibility.

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### **About Ontex**

Ontex is a leading international provider of personal hygiene solutions, with expertise in baby care, feminine care and adult care. Ontex's innovative products are distributed in more than 110 countries through Ontex brands such as BBTips, BioBaby, Pompom, Bigfrol, Canbebe, Canped, ID and Serenity, as well as leading retailer brands.

Employing 11,000 passionate people all over the world, Ontex has a presence in 20 countries, with its headquarters in Aalst, Belgium. Ontex is part of the Bel20 and STOXX® Europe 600.

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