

Archi Leenaers, president of Anatech, on innovation

'Adding extra value, again and again'

Last month Anatech from Sittard-Geleen (The Netherlands) won the Limburg Innovation Price 2009. For those of you who have never heard of them before: Anatech is one of the world leaders in high tech instrumentation.

For over twenty years Anatech is synonymous with innovation. Since 1987 the company developed some 35 innovative instruments. President Archi Leenaers explains why innovation is so important. "Many companies call themselves a manufacturing company. They make goods. Things you can do in Sittard-Geleen, but also in Eastern Europe or in Asia. That is not very difficult. The point is to add extra value. You do this by gathering know-how and convert that into products. That is good for your competitiveness. Creating special knowledge makes the company unique and strong."



Is gathering 'knowledge' and adding value unique for The Netherlands?

Leenaers: "Dutch people easily leave traditional paths. We are used to approach things differently, the so-called 'out of the box' thinking. Large Dutch companies been doing so for a long time. Look e.g. at DSM and Sabic, two large chemical companies from this region. They continually invest in innovation. While SMEs still think they can continue for generations with the products their fathers where already manufacturing. That's a phantasy."

What makes this region attractive for innovative businesses?

Leenaers: "Technology attracts technology. In this region technology has historically been very important. When looking for a job in technology Dutch people will certainly take a look in this region. Assuming that there is sufficient demand here. It is therefore important that local municipalities create an attractive business atmosphere. So that new businesses want to settle here."

What can the city Sittard-Geleen do to attract entrepreneurs?

Leenaers: "An entrepreneur is good at doing business. The authorities can help the company to start-up and establish. With very practical support. Ensure that necessary permits are granted on time and the infrastructure is sufficient. The city Sittard-Geleen is doing well at that point. The amount of rules has been decreased properly. That makes life easier for entrepreneurs. But there is always room for improvement."

Source: Stadskrant, City Sittard-Geleen, August 2009

Text: Els Peeters