

Exploring Steelcase Factories in Europe: Innovation at the Heart of Industrial Expertise

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This article is part of a series dedicated to Steelcase's European factories, known for their industrial excellence, innovative capabilities, and commitment to the planet and local communities.

In Europe, Steelcase relies on a strategically distributed network of factories to meet today's industrial challenges. Beyond production, these sites serve as innovation laboratories where technology plays a central role. From automation to equipment modernization, the company fosters a culture of continuous development to enhance performance and resilience.

Innovation Rooted in Company Culture

Technological innovation at Steelcase goes beyond integrating new machines. It is built on a culture of continuous improvement, where every employee is encouraged to contribute ideas. Local teams are empowered to identify repetitive or strenuous tasks that can be automated, as well as outsourced activities that can be reintegrated into the factories. This approach promotes industrial agility and better control over quality and timelines. Technological advancements are designed to be scalable, supporting future market transformations.

"We aim to anticipate tomorrow's needs by developing flexible and sustainable solutions that evolve with customer usage and expectations," says Pierre Blesch, Director of Manufacturing Services in EMEA. "The goal is to create intelligent industrial environments where technology adapts to people, not the other way around."

A European Network Driving Innovation

Regular exchanges between European sites serve as the catalyst for collective innovation. Each factory, with its specific expertise—seating in Sarrebourg, desks in Rosenheim, melamine storage in Stříbro, and partition screens and custom solutions in Madrid—shares its progress, experiments, and feedback.

This caster assembly robot automates a repetitive motion often linked to musculoskeletal disorders, protecting operator health.

Pre-programmed driverless carts optimize workflow and boost productivity.

"This fluid exchange of information helps pool best practices, avoid redundancies, and quickly identify the most effective solutions," explains Sebastian Barragan, Manufacturing Engineering Manager at the Madrid plant. "More importantly, it creates a genuine innovation ecosystem where each site inspires others and contributes to the emergence of new, sometimes unexpected ideas that wouldn't have surfaced otherwise."

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PIERRE BLESCH | Director of Manufacturing Services

At Steelcase, innovation is ongoing, fueled by annual optimization goals, supplier interactions, and constant monitoring of new technologies. “We draw inspiration from trade shows, collaborate with technical partners, and commission custom-designed machines tailored to our needs,” says Pierre Blesch.

Custom Equipment to Meet On-the-Ground Challenges

This approach is reflected on production lines. At the Sarrebourg plant – which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year – collaborative robots assist operators with tasks like screwing and caster assembly. In Rosenheim, automated guided vehicles navigate aisles to transport pallets, while robots handle unloading and assembly, reducing physical strain on operators and enhancing quality control.

Innovation also involves modernizing existing equipment. In Madrid, the painting line has been completely redesigned to improve quality and extend the installation’s lifespan. In Stříbro, a new edge-banding machine now produces freeform parts with laser finishing, offering better cost control and technical flexibility.

Possilio, Steelcase’s latest collection of height-adjustable desks and benches, are manufactured at the Rosenheim plant in Germany.

Steelcase’s European factories embody a future-oriented industrial vision where technology serves agility, quality, and operator wellbeing. Through a culture of continuous innovation and cutting-edge equipment, Steelcase anticipates market changes while strengthening resilience. Technological innovation becomes a strategic resource to tackle customer needs and future challenges.

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