Colruyt Group and KION launch a new R&D center for next-generation supply chain robotics

Colruyt Group and KION enter into a partnership to accelerate the development and industrialisation of next-generation supply chain robotics. Colruyt Group has sold 70% of its activities related to research and development concerning self-driving pallet trucks to KION. With this strategic partnership, Colruyt Group selects KION as its preferred global partner to bring its most advanced self-driving vehicle (SDV) technologies to the market. With this very innovative technology, both companies will redefine a new benchmark for efficiency, safety, and innovation in logistics. This partnership will maximise the future potential of SDV applications.

In 2023, after years of intensive research and development, Colruyt Group, together with KION brand STILL introduced its first self-developed, self-driving pallet truck. For two years now, these autonomous STILL pallet trucks have been operating seamlessly alongside logistics teams in two distribution centers of Colruyt Group.

These SDVs were the result of a close collaboration between the innovation team at Colruyt Group Smart Innovation (part of Colruyt Group Technics) and KION. Colruyt Group designed and built the software intelligence, while STILL ensured robust hardware integration.

"The SDVs make work in our distribution centers significantly easier. They navigate safely around people and obstacles and locate every pallet with remarkable precision, thanks to advanced technology. This allows our employees to focus on more complex tasks and processes that require specialised knowledge and skills," says Koen De Vos, Director Supply Chain Colruyt Lowest Prices.

Innovative technology developed by Belgian talent

Colruyt Group has a long tradition of technological entrepreneurship, with earlier successes. Its innovation team has already developed several pioneering concepts for its own stores (Easy Check-out/Smart Cart) and logistics operations.

"The success of SDVs for horizontal transport opened new horizons for our innovation team. Today, our engineers are developing cutting-edge robotics software, integrating artificial intelligence and computer vision, for SDVs that will shape the future of logistics operations. We are extremely proud of the expertise our team brings to solving the complex challenges of retail logistics," says Jo Janssens, Director Colruyt Group Technics.

To bring a revolution in logistics to market, Colruyt Group is partnering with KION, which has established a dedicated expertise center in Belgium: KION Automation Center Antwerp. The resulting technology is fully developed in Belgium, with support from VLAIO (the Flemish agency that stimulates innovation and entrepreneurship through subsidies, advice, and guidance for companies in Flanders).

A new R&D center within KION

Developing innovative and sustainable solutions has long been a core mission of Colruyt Group Smart Innovation, strengthening logistics operations with smart, future-proof technologies.

KION sees significant potential for these innovative solutions in retail and far beyond, across multiple industries. With its global footprint and industrialisation expertise, KION is ideally positioned to scale these innovations worldwide. This strategic alignment is the foundation of the new partnership.

The partnership will focus on further developing the SDV program and preparing it for industrial rollout across EMEA markets. Colruyt Group retains a minority stake in the legal entity. Within this partnership, the team of Colruyt Group Smart Innovation will continue to drive both ongoing and future developments, ensuring maximum impact of robotics in logistics.

The transaction

Colruyt Group has sold part of its activities related to research and development concerning self-driving pallet trucks to KION. This transaction is expected to lead to a positive impact of approximately EUR 20 million in Colruyt Group's consolidated income statement in the 2026/27 financial year.

Colruyt Group keeps a participation of 30% and Smart Innovation NV will as of now be recognised as an associate accounted for using the equity method.

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About Colruyt Group

Colruyt Group is a retail group that operates in the areas of expertise 'Food', 'Health & Well-being', 'Non-food' and 'Energy', mainly in Belgium, but also in other countries including France and Luxembourg. Within the 'Food' area of expertise, this concerns Colruyt Lowest Prices, Okay, Comarkt/Comarché, Bio-Planet, Cru and the affiliated Spar Colruyt Group and Delitraiteur stores. In France, there are the affiliated Coccinelle, Coccimarket, Panier Sympa, Épi Service and VivÉco stores. There are more than 500 own stores and over 1.000 affiliated stores. Solucious, Culinoa, Valfrais and Délidis deliver food service and retail products to professional customers in Belgium (hospitals, SMEs, hospitality sector etc.). Foodbag delivers meal boxes across Belgium. Colruyt Group Fine Food comprises industrial-scale production departments. The 'Health & Well-being' area of expertise mainly consists of Jims, 90 fitness clubs located in Belgium and Luxembourg, and Newpharma, Colruyt Group's Belgian online pharmacy active in various countries such as Belgium, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and Romania. The 'Non-food' area of expertise comprises the Zeb, PointCarré, The Fashion Store and Bike Republic stores (together more than 150 stores, mainly in Belgium). Furthermore, Colruyt Group's operations also cover print and document management solutions (through Symeta Hybrid) and strategic consultancy, enterprise architecture and programme management (through Myreas). Colruyt Group also holds interests, including in Virya Energy (of which DATS 24 has been a part since June 2023), Dreamland and BON. The group employs more than 31.000 employees and recorded a revenue of EUR 10,6 billion in 2025/26. Colruyt Group NV is listed on Euronext Brussels (COLR) under ISIN code BE0974256852.