

SES CREATIVE INNOVATIVE THINKING

A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF A TOY SME



MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

SES Creative's mission is to provide children with toys that are beneficial for their cognitive development.

As a teacher in the 1970s, Fenny Scholtz felt that something essential for her pupils' development was missing: creative toys. Together with her business-minded husband Wouter, they began importing and distributing modelling clay in the Netherlands before starting to manufacture their own in 1972. Over the following three decades, Fenny and Wouter frequently introduced new products such as finger paints and expanded the national and international presence of their company, SES Creative. In 2000, two of their children, Helga and Boris, took over the company. With professional backgrounds in finance and sales, they complement each other and continue to develop the family business while keeping their parents' commitment to creativity in mind. Nowadays,



SES Creative offers a wide range of around 400 products from modelling clay, finger paints, and iron-on beads to handcraft kits and role play sets.

MODERN AND LOCAL BUSINESS



Fenny and Wouter established SES Creative in Enschede, a city in the east of the Netherlands known for its textile industry until the 1970s. Since 2000, the company significantly invested in automation processes in order to stay competitive as well as in a 8,000m² plant on the outskirts of the city, where all production phases now take place. Next to the factory, the company also built its own laboratory where it carries out all necessary quality and safety controls throughout the production process before its toys reach children's hands.

Since 2001, SES Creative's workforce has doubled and it now employs around 100 people.

THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

Innovation fosters SES Creative's competitiveness: one in four of its products is newly developed each year.

It is vital for toy companies to constantly come up with new ideas to meet children's latest wishes. SES Creative therefore places a lot of emphasis on innovation and around 25% of its products are newly developed each year. The company's research and development team carefully considers all legal requirements when developing their innovative ideas and turning them into designs. However, continuous changes in the rules bring legal instability and uncertainty for SES Creative, which can negatively affect the company's innovativeness.

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY FLAIR



80% of SES Creative's turnover is generated outside the Netherlands today.

Helga and Boris recognised quite early that, due to the size of the Dutch market, SES Creative needed to adopt a growth strategy focussed on exports. As Enschede is located near the German border, Germany naturally became the first export market, soon followed by France and Belgium. Today, SES Creative is present in around 70 countries worldwide. Pursuing such an international strategy brings with it issues, such as the cost of complying with the ever-changing requirements. This means providing and updating safety certificates for each product, which adds extra administrative burden for the company.

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT



SES Creative supports various regional initiatives, which offer around 200 disabled people the opportunity to help with packing some of its toys. Helga Zevenbergen also actively contributes to the work of the local section of the largest employers' organisation in the Netherlands. She received the Businesswoman of the Year award in 2014 from the Twente Region because of this strong local commitment and her leadership skills.

'SES Creative completes safety certificates, such as the EU's Declaration of Conformity, to show that our products meet all applicable requirements. However, continuous changes and differing requirements in different countries mean that this is very time consuming and costly, even when compared to the production costs of the toy.'

Helga Zevenbergen, CEO



With around 2.9 million children under 15 (17% of the population), there are around 250 toy companies in **the Netherlands**, all of whom are SMEs and provide thousands of jobs. The Dutch market is very seasonal with most toys sold during the two last months of the year, especially for Saint Nicholas.

The **European Union (EU)** is the largest toy market in the world (27% of global sales), meeting the diverse and evolving demands of its 79 million children. Over 99% of the almost 5,000 toy companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). With over 220,000 people working in the sector in the EU, toy companies play a key role in Europe's economic fabric. The toy industry is highly international and is one of the most dynamic business sectors in Europe: around 60% of toys on the market each year are newly developed. The sector is also highly seasonal, with consumers making the majority of purchases during the Christmas period.

The **Organisatie van Nederlandse Speelgoedleveranciers (Ornes)** represents the common interests of its member toy companies. In the Netherlands, the Ornes is the sector's only voice towards both customers and the government. SES Creative is member of Ornes.

Toy Industries of Europe (TIE) is the trade association for the European toy industry. Members include companies and national associations from across Europe, including Ornes and SES Creative.

