

# ENCHEM FRANCE

*EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW*

**Byung Won Lee**  
Managing Director

enchem x



# Enchem IN SHORT

Created in 2012, Enchem employs 750 people worldwide and already has sites in Korea, China, the USA, Hungary and Poland. **As the world's fourth-largest electrolyte producer** with a total capacity of 450,000 tons per year, the Korean company is a key stakeholder in second-generation electric vehicles, which have switched from nickel-cobalt batteries to lithium-ion batteries (longer life, faster re-charging time, maintenance-free battery...). This manufacturer's presence in the Hauts-de-France region not only demonstrates its commitment to its European customers, but also **demonstrates its ambition for sustainable, responsible growth.**



**DUNKIRK**



**[INTERVIEW]**  
**BYUNG WON LEE**

Managing Director  
Enchem France

**When is your new Dunkirk-based production unit due to open and what are its production targets?**



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Our Dunkirk plant is scheduled to open in September 2025. It will have an annual production capacity of 150,000 tons of electrolytes<sup>1</sup>, which is our core business. It also has to manage 40,000 tons of NMP (N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone). NMP is an essential solvent used in the production of lithium-ion batteries, as it helps ensure the cohesion of the battery components and the performance of the separators. This volatile organic compound cannot be released into the environment. We have developed a virtuous process that allows us to recover it, eliminate its moisture

and impurities, and purify it before reuse. We will also be recycling 4,000 tons of liquid manure, an important intermediate product used to manufacture lithium-ion batteries.

**Our environmental policy consists of drastically minimizing our emissions of pollutants, including greenhouse gases, thanks to state-of-the-art recycling technologies. Our plant, which represents a 57 M€ investment, has adopted ambitious targets in terms of both the environment and safety.**

<sup>1</sup> An electrolyte is a conductive substance due to the presence of mobile ions. It is involved in the various chemical reactions that allow the battery to supply energy as well as recover it.

***In Europe, you are already present in Hungary and Poland. Why set up in France and what made you choose Dunkirk and the Hauts-de-France region?***

***How is your arrival good news for the development of the electric car battery industry, a leading sector in the Hauts-de-France region?***

We believe that the rapidly growing demand for batteries will continue to increase worldwide. The Hauts-de-France region is home to several lithium-ion battery gigafactories, including ACC, AESC and Verkor, all of which are less than two hours from our future site. This proximity to our major customers minimizes our carbon footprint while ensuring an optimized supply chain for our electrolytes, which must be kept at temperatures below 10 degrees until their delivery. Enchem is committed to responding proactively to its customers' needs, and has demonstrated this by getting closer to them.

I often say that electrolyte is to batteries what blood is to the human body, by facilitating the circulation of lithium ions between electrodes. But this chemical component, which is essential for manufacturers, is difficult to produce and store. This means it has to be delivered quickly. Our arrival alongside gigafactories, cathode producers and recyclers brings a new technological brick to the value chain in this business. In so doing, it strengthens its ecosystem and its "quality battery" positioning, thereby making Hauts-de-France the nerve center of Europe's Battery Valley.

***The presence of Dunkirk's port infrastructure makes it much easier to transport raw materials that are essential to our business from China and Korea, which is a key factor in our development strategy. In addition, access to low-carbon, economical and stable energy in France, was an important factor in the project's feasibility.***





**You were supported  
in your project by  
Nord France Invest  
and other regional  
economic development  
stakeholders.  
What benefits have  
you gained from this?**

We have indeed benefited from the support provided by your organization, and in particular by Guillaume Jinkoji, whose advice and insights have been invaluable. Through the C3IV tax credit introduced this year, your government is supporting industrial projects in four key energy transition sectors, including batteries, and as a green industry we can benefit from this.

In any case, as far as we're concerned, France and the Hauts-de-France region have clearly demonstrated their willingness

to support green industries like ours, which gives me confidence in our project's success. By the way, it's a pity that there aren't more Korean companies established here. We feel somewhat alone, and sometimes it would be nice to chat with fellow Korean industrialists. Fortunately, we're in touch with the local and regional business community.

***We have felt the determination of all the stakeholders –from Business France to regional partners and NFI– to welcome us and make it easier for us to set up here. This puts an end to the preconceived notion that it's difficult for Asian manufacturers to set up in your country and obtain the necessary authorizations. Perhaps we need to work on our image with industrialists in this part of the world.***

## ***Did you know the Hauts-de-France region before you arrived and what is your opinion of it?***

I only knew about Dunkirk from certain films. Although I knew this town was in the north of France, I wasn't aware of its proximity to Belgium and the Netherlands. I thought Dunkirk was quite "small" at first glance, but as I wandered around, I realized that this city –the 4<sup>th</sup>

largest in the Hauts-de-France region– was much larger than I had thought. I also really like Lille. I like the calm atmosphere that reigns over the region. I feel it is ideally suited to new companies in innovative sectors with an environmental focus.



# NEED HELP WITH YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT?

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