

STARTUP GUIDE BRUSSELS

The Entrepreneur's Handbook

STARTUP GUIDE

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Startup Guide Brussels

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Sissel Hansen / Startup Guide

The capital city of Belgium and the administrative heart of the European Union, Brussels is a vibrant, multicultural metropolis best known for its top-notch beer, tasty frites and eclectic architecture. Although the official languages are Dutch and French, most people who live in the city speak three or more languages.

With policy makers and corporates roaming the streets of the Belgian capital, it's no surprise that the city is becoming increasingly attractive to entrepreneurs looking to launch or expand their business, especially as Brexit looms. The city boasts a high quality of life and an easily accessible public transportation system as well as countless startup-centric events for founders to network and exchange ideas. Additionally, a number of accelerator and incubator programs have cropped up across Brussels, such as greenlab (which targets sustainable startups) and COOPCITY (which focuses on social enterprises).

We've also noticed that a number of promising social-impact-focused startups have emerged in recent years. For instance, CitizenLab is a participation platform that empowers and makes it easy for citizens to engage with their governments during the decision-making phase of developing new policies. And then there's Helpilepsy, a digital assistant designed for both neurologists and their patients with epilepsy to manage the condition more effectively.

As Brussels' burgeoning startup scene continues to grow, we can't wait to see how it will evolve in the coming years. In the meantime, we're excited to introduce you to the people, spaces, schools, programs and investors that are leaving a mark on the city's entrepreneurial community.

Sissel Hansen
Founder and CEO of Startup Guide



Pascal Smet / State Secretary for Foreign Trade and European Institutions

Brussels is home to more than 180 different nationalities, which is an undeniable richness of our city. We are very much aware and proud of this. But the globalization of the world is at stake and that has a negative impact on the much-needed and renewed cooperation inside and outside of Europe. The Brussels-Capital Region wants to counter this and set an example, so we make sure that the different cultures and ethnicities can live peacefully together. That's one of the reasons why Brussels is known as the most cosmopolitan city in Europe and the second-most cosmopolitan city in the world, right after Dubai.

Brussels is more than just a capital city. Yes, our waffles, Belgian fries and the Atomium are renowned all over the world, but it is my goal as State Secretary for Foreign Trade and European Institutions to highlight Brussels' other strong points as well. Therefore, I am happy to encourage an initiative such as this Startup Guide. Our capital is rich in know-how and full of potential. For example, one in five technology companies is located in Brussels. When it comes to media, Brussels has one of the biggest hubs in all of Europe on a national and international level. That's why we want to reinforce our investment in the audiovisual sector and position ourselves more in fintech and artificial intelligence.

Other than that, it's necessary to invest in social cooperatives that are typical of Brussels, whether it is a socio-cultural project, an educational project or a startup. [hub.brussels](#), for example, plays an important role in this. With support from Brussels-Capital Region, they make entrepreneurship accessible to all inhabitants of Brussels but also to foreign companies that invest in Brussels. So a guide such as this is an essential tool in order to better adapt services to the needs and reality of the capital.

Pascal Smet

State Secretary for Foreign Trade and European Institutions



Local Community Partner / hub.brussels

Brussels and startups – a real love story!

This is exactly the story we wanted to write and show in the *Startup Guide Brussels* you have in your hands. As the Brussels Agency for Business Support, hub.brussels is proud, together with all of its partners, to have successfully combined the city's expertise surrounding the Brussels startup ecosystem in this guide.

Startup Guide Brussels is the international showcase for Brussels' audacity and innovation, two values that we hold dear at hub.brussels. This book reflects the DNA of our capital at an international level. Thanks to the presence of hub.brussels throughout the world via our economic and commercial attachés, as well as the Enterprise Europe Brussels network and the Startup Guide distribution network, the startup ecosystem of the Belgian capital will shine brightly from Paris to New York, and from Amsterdam to Singapore.

Brussels has become an ideal city to establish yourself due to its high quality of life, low cost of living, central European location, numerous spaces available at attractive rental rates and the international aura that helps make it a cultural melting pot. But our main strength is the incredible diversity and quality of our business-support offerings in all sectors, including niche sectors.

Nevertheless, the readability of the Brussels offerings for startups is not always optimal. *Startup Guide Brussels* is here to fill this gap, with its ambition to bring together all the public and private actors in Brussels around a common wish for international positioning for our region. We thank the partners who supported us in the editorial selection of this guide.

We hope you enjoy reading about the Brussels success stories and that they inspire you and convince you – if you need convincing – that this is a city that moves and innovates and is a good place to live, do business, flourish and finally... stay!

Isabelle Grippa
CEO hub.brussels



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Local Ecosystem

[Facts & Figures]

- Not only is Brussels a bustling entrepreneurship hub, it's also home to the EU Parliament, EU Commission and NATO.
- The city boasts more than 400 startups and has the highest density of tech startups per inhabitant. Brussels startups employ over 3,000 people.
- The government is a strong supporter of entrepreneurs and startups in Brussels, offering dedicated tools such as accelerators and tax support.
- Brussels is cosmopolitan and multicultural and has easy access to 60% of European purchasing power and a direct line to international decision-makers. It also boasts a multilingual and highly skilled workforce.
- According to the Brussels Tech Startup Ecosystem Barometer 2017, 90% of startups based in Brussels rate their city as a great place to do business, and 75% of local founders would recommend their peers to found companies in Brussels.
- One third of all the Belgian tech startups are based in Brussels, with Brussels startups responsible for 38% of Belgian fundraising.
- Entrepreneurs in Brussels can attend a range of entrepreneur-focused events, including startup weekends, healthtech, fintech, AI and IoT hackathons, summits, meetups and open coffees.
- The top five sectors in Brussels are media and entertainment, marketing and sales, finance, healthcare and creative industries.

[Notable Startups]

- LindaCare, a digital health company that creates remote solutions for chronic disease management created in 2015, recently concluded a partnership with Philips.
- To date, Shapp has raised €800,000 (\$903,000) over two successful fundraising campaigns and will be raising another €3 million (\$3.4 million) in its third round.
- Founded in 2016, Qover has successfully raised €8 million (\$90.3 million) since its creation and has 50,000 customers and growing.
- Founded in 2008, Collibra has to date raised \$233 million, becoming the first unicorn in the Belgian ecosystem.
- 3D vision and gesture-technology startup SoftKinetic, founded in 2007, was purchased by Sony in 2015.

Sources: brussels-express.eu, ceicdata.com, Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis, Brussels Tech Startup Ecosystem Barometer 2017, Eurostat 2017, scalecities.com, startupheatmap.eu, startups.be, why.brussels, worldpopulationreview.com.

[City] Brussels, Belgium



[Statistics] Urban population (2017): 1.19 million
Metropolitan population (2017): 2.1 million
Foreign population (2017): 414,139
Population density (2017): 7,384/km²
Municipal area: 32.6 km²
GDP (2017) : €77,694 (\$90,102)

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Intro to the City

Built on rich history by business-minded generations of locals as well as powerful, often legendary rulers from all over Europe, Brussels is the very definition of a global capital. The Atomium, European quarter, Grand-Place and Manneken Pis make it renowned across the globe, but its lesser-known areas give Brussels its unique savor as well. Culture and history abound, while the city's denizens constantly invent its future: Brussels' pop-up stores, startups and global corporations attract visitors from all over the world, who wish to benefit from the Belgian and European capital's dynamic economy. Many never leave: Brussels becomes their home the instant they let it.

The city's welcoming, open-minded residents allow for all ideas and differences, fostering innovation, creativity and a variety of delicious food, as the city's 138 restaurants per square mile can attest. The second most cosmopolitan city on Earth knows how to live. But it's not all beers, waffles and fries: its people devour culture as well and love projects touching all aspects of life, from startups to amateur sports teams, among other things. There's a Brussels for everyone, and, thanks to its human warmth and relatively compact size, it's easy to become part of the community.

With easy access to government support, an abundance of corporations encouraging entrepreneurs, myriads of international institutions and a qualified, multilingual and multicultural workforce, Brussels presents a nurturing ecosystem for starting a business. For an in-depth overview of Brussels life, visit why.brussels.

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Before You Come

The first thing wannabe *Brusseleirs* should take care of is paperwork. Although many groups and institutions exist to help people moving to Brussels, a lot of stress can be avoided by making sure you have your visa, work permit and residence permit in order. Expat communities, embassies and dedicated offices are there to help, so don't improvise administrative tasks. Once you arrive you have eight days to register your address with your local town hall.

The city is quite safe, but don't leave your luggage or valuables unattended in any public areas or even in your car or hotel lobby: better safe than sorry. When you go out, bring some cash as some stores are cash only (or for spontaneous purchases of street food). Also bring an umbrella, a sweater and knowledge of the weather forecast: most days go through at least two different seasons, and the climate can change quickly without due notice.

Cultural Differences

Of the residents in Brussels, 27 percent are not Belgian citizens, so you never know for sure which cultural background the people you meet come from. Show a bit of formal distance and respect social space before letting people reveal how familiar they decide to behave. You'll quickly get it, but it may take you a while to learn the wide variety of local social habits. People in Brussels are very open-minded and welcoming, but rudeness will be bitterly frowned upon: speak softly in public, be polite to everyone, and don't hug people hello or talk about politics and money unless you're with people you know well. Brussels is its own region, like Flanders and Wallonia, with both French and Flemish native speakers living in it alongside people from many other origins. Gentle reminder: "Belgian" is not a language, and Brussels is not Flemish or Walloon, which often confuses foreigners. There is a strong Brussels identity which has evolved from a mix of many identities and is bound by mischievousness, humility, irreverence and acceptance of differences.





Cost of Living

Avoiding tourist traps makes life in Brussels relatively inexpensive, compared to other European capitals and major cities. Housing costs will start at around €450 (\$510) for a room in a shared home, €750 (\$850) for a studio or €1,000 (\$1130) for a two-bedroom place. Per person, a month's worth of groceries would average at around €250 (\$280) and dining out at €30 (\$34) including a glass of wine or two, with an extra €7 (\$8) for the aperitif drink. The subsequent cab fare will range between €10 and €30 according to distance, and the babysitter will ask another €8 per hour to let you enjoy the night out. Childcare is at least €600 per month but public schools are free, except for books, supplies or field trips. Last but not least, a typical Brussels afterwork night out will include Belgian fries (€2.50) and Pilsner beers (€2.50 each) or special brews (€4.00 and upwards).

Renting an Apartment

Finding a place to live can be achieved easily via real estate agents, but many online groups, such as the Facebook group "BXL à louer," also exchange good deals on a daily basis. If you'd prefer to live in a beautiful Art Déco or Art Nouveau house with roommates, such groups would be the best way to proceed. Coliving opportunities are on the rise, and communal veggie gardens exist in many areas, often encouraged by local authorities. Whether you prefer living in a lively neighborhood or being surrounded by quiet greenery, there is a place for everyone in Brussels. Hipsters will favor Saint-Gilles or Ixelles' Flagey area, while others may enjoy the quiet upmarket Uccle and Woluwe or hippie-chic Watermael-Boistfort. Be sure to set aside a few thousand euros to manage the deposit and other initial housing expenses.

See [Flats and Rentals](#) page 213



Insurance

Belgium's health system contributes very much to the country's standards of living, and registration to a health mutual, a government regulated healthcare plan, is compulsory for everyone living or working in the country. Employers must provide information about the different funds and insurance options, and many offer additional health benefits in employee packages. Dependent family members such as spouses and children under eighteen are automatically covered, but you have to pay most health costs before being reimbursed by your health mutual. The system follows varying ratios according to the cost type and your insurance plan, so keep a copy of all documents and receipts. Additionally, self-employed people must cover the full cost (i.e. 7.5 percent of gross income) of social security contributions, while employees and employers share the bill evenly. Basic personal liability and renter insurances are usually included in bank account fees, but discussing this with your banker will help you find the best options for your situation.

See **Insurance Companies** page **214**

Visas and Work Permits

While the procedure for work permits has been simplified recently, there are many different types of visas. If you're a non-European citizen, visit Belgium's government website (**belgium.be**) to make sure you have the correct, up-to-date information about your situation and the many exceptions (for example, regarding visas for family members and certain categories of residents). Other platforms like **expatica.com** offer a lot of useful information about moving to Brussels. Citizens from European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries don't need a visa or work permit, but passports are still necessary for non-Schengen nationals (i.e. Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the UK). Once in Belgium, the first thing you should do is visit the local municipal administration to be registered on the Foreigner's Register and get your residence card.

Everyone else who wishes to come and work in Belgium for more than three months must apply for the "single permit," which can easily be done on the Brussels Economy and Employment website (**werk-economie-emploi.brussels/en_US/single-permit-work-permit**), where a useful tool will let you know what to do according to your personal situation. Alternatively, non-EFTA countries' self-employed workers and entrepreneurs who want to start a business in Belgium (but who are residing outside of Belgium at the time of request) must apply for a "professional card" at one of the approved business counters or via the Belgian consular or diplomatic authority. This will cost €140 (\$160) plus an additional €90 (\$100) per year of validity.

See **Important Government Offices** page **214**

See **Startup Services** page **214**



Starting a Company

Before getting your professional card, it is highly recommended that you visit the ipcf.be website to find a certified accountant, as navigating the different legal structures and procedures can be complicated, if not overwhelming, and it will boost your business' chances of success while sparing time and energy.

Your accountant will guide you through the Brussels entrepreneurship process and help you choose the right legal structure. The necessary capital for starting your business can vary from a few thousand euros to €61,500 (\$69,415) for public limited liability companies. The financial plan can then be established for the first two years of your activity. It must be prepared with great care as it might be requested by judges (e.g. in case of bankruptcy or suspicions of financial wrongdoing). A notary will then officially create your firm, register it with the Commercial Court and obtain the official company number through the Crossroad Bank for Enterprises (CBE) before having the foundation text published in the Belgian Official Gazette. Only then can you declare your activity at an accredited enterprise counter and activate your VAT status. Take a minute to catch your breath and get ready for the final sprint: getting your company affiliated with a social security fund (managers and partners must do that personally as well) and joining a health insurance fund.

Opening a Bank Account

There's no lack of banking institutions in Brussels, and most are used to clients using English, so it might come down to practicality when choosing a specific bank. KBC, BNP Paribas Fortis, Belfius and ING are the most widespread institutions in Belgium. You'll need a passport or ID card and proof of your address to open an account. Many banks allow you to open an account before you move to Belgium, and if your banking institution has branches in Belgium you can plan your move with your banker in your home country. Some banks require proof of residence, like the single permit. Opening a professional bank account separate from your personal one is compulsory if you're self-employed or starting a company in Belgium. Take the time to evaluate which of the more than one hundred banks active in Belgium better suits your situation. There aren't ATMs everywhere, and some businesses (especially snack bars, food trucks, pubs and restaurants) still don't accept cards (or don't accept all cards), so keep around €50 (\$56) cash handy.

See **Banks** page **212**



Taxes

Taxes support a strong social security net as well as public investment and infrastructure, but the Belgian taxation rate is one of the highest in Europe. The Belgian tax year for personal income runs from 1 January to 31 December, and both residents and non-residents taxed on Belgian income must file an annual tax return. There are many exemptions and niches for corporations and foreigners, so navigating this complex system is far from easy. Income, property, national, regional, local taxes and many others apply. If you live in Belgium for fewer than six months per year, you can qualify as non-resident and thus only pay taxes on income earned in Belgium (including rents and capital gains). But if you live for over 182 days per year in Belgium, you are considered a resident and other taxes apply. With Belgium's ultra-complicated fiscal landscape, Belgians themselves often rely on accountants, so this is a recommended approach.

See **Financial Services** page **213**

Phone and Internet

Belgium uses GSM mobile networks, so if your mobile phone is SIM-unlocked and compatible with GSM rather than CDMA, you can use it with the Belgian SIM cards local operators provide. The three main mobile phone providers, Proximus, Orange and Base, offer the best nationwide coverage, but the competition works just fine in and around Brussels. So, unless you plan to visit remote rural areas, check out comparative tools like besttariff.be to find the most interesting offers from other providers. Unlimited plans typically cost between €30 (\$34) and €40 (\$45) per month, and the 4G network in populated areas like Brussels is fast and reliable. Many operators offer bundle packs including TV, internet and mobile phone plans that come in handy when moving into a new place. Such bundles usually start around €70 (\$79) per month. Signing up for a contract with Belgian operators requires residency status, so prepaid cards are the only option for non-residents.



Getting Around

Brussels is not known for its fluid traffic, to say the least, and the public transportation system is quite efficient, so you might not want to use a car all of the time. The network covers most parts of the city efficiently during the day, but service is reduced after midnight, then stops between 3 AM and 5 AM. MTB subscriptions offer unlimited access to all public networks active in Brussels for €55 (\$62) per month, while a single ride costs €2.10 minimum. The MOBIB transportation card serves as a transportation ID and payment card and can be reloaded online. Bike-sharing options have been on the rise recently, and other options like taxis, ride-sharing and short-term car rental services complete the transportation offer. Expect a cab or rideshare to cost between €10 (\$11) and €30 (\$34) within the city, but drivers will add extra heavy charges to leave the city limits (even a short distance), so pay attention and ask the driver in advance.

Learning the Language

With its large expat population, Brussels resonates with a multitude of languages, but the language most spoken by locals is French. There are many Flemish, Moroccan and Italian speakers, to name but a few, but you're likely to meet people speaking any of the European languages and many non-European ones as well. Brussels offers many language schools with options ranging from hourly rates to more lengthy and intensive courses. While you'll easily find people to practice French or Flemish with, taking online lessons or attending discussion groups will give you a solid basis to work from. Try joining a social activity with locals, such as a sports club or cultural organization. The main difficulty you'll encounter is convincing locals to talk to you in their native language, as virtually everybody speaks at least two languages – English often being one of them – and their openness and good nature means they may use this *lingua franca* to make sure everyone is understood.

See [Language Schools](#) page **214**

Meeting People

Brussels is a very open city with a vast expat population and neighborhoods that are very different from each other, like little cities within the city. But it's usually easy to talk to people and become a *Brusseleir*: once you love the city enough to consider it your home, the locals will consider you adopted. Hanging out in lively neighborhoods like Saint-Gilles, Ixelles or the city center on weekends or even work nights will ensure you'll meet new friends sooner or later. Next to the authorities-supported networking programs, websites like [hub.brussels/en/clusters](#) list coworking spaces and year-round events dedicated to startups. Be.Central, CoStation, Silversquare or the Brussels Networking Club are very popular coworking spaces and/or networking groups that are buzzing with activity. And remember that praising the local brewing skills is an easy way to start any conversation in the right direction.

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start





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[Name]

Bsit

[Elevator Pitch]

“We give parents more freedom thanks to an efficient and simple platform that connects them to caregivers they trust.”

[The Story]

When cofounders Dimitri de Boose (CEO) and Guillaume Laliprete launched their first startup at the beginning of 2015, they quickly realized how challenging balancing parenthood and a full-time job could be. When the company was forced to disband, they turned their attention to a new project that could help parents manage their schedules more efficiently. Joined by James Cogels (assistant director), they launched Bsit in July 2015 with the aim of connecting working parents to reliable babysitters in a hassle-free way. “We believe that parents should be able to have a fulfilling work-life balance,” says Dimitri. “That’s why we want to make the process of finding childcare more simple.” Through the Bsit app, parents can swiftly find sitters in their local area. Each babysitter’s profile has a star rating and a history of reviews in order to maximize trust between sitter and parent. “It’s more reassuring for parents to find a sitter that they already know,” says Dimitri. “The Bsit app enables parents to find childcare providers who have babysat for their friends, family or colleagues.”

Since its founding, Bsit has expanded across Belgium, Luxembourg, France and the Netherlands and created additional services from after-school care to helping parents find a babysitter while on holiday. “Parents deserve to have as much freedom and flexibility as possible,” says Dimitri. “That’s what Bsit is all about.”

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Angel



External

After bootstrapping the project for the first six months, Bsit raised €1.3 million (\$1.5 million) in June 2016 from angel investors. This was followed by a sum of €1.7 million in June 2018 backed by Brussels-based fund Sambrinvest and angel investors. The startup also raised a VC round in July 2019, which will assist them in their expansion plans.

[Milestones]

- Expanding our services across the entirety of Belgium in April 2016.
- Reaching 100,000 users in just one year of operations.
- Securing our first round of fundraising in June 2016, which enabled us to grow our team.
- Developing our additional after-school service for working parents.

[Links]

Web: bsit.com Facebook: [bsit.appli](https://www.facebook.com/bsit.appli) Twitter: [@bsit_app](https://twitter.com/bsit_app) Instagram: [bsit_childcare](https://www.instagram.com/bsit_childcare)



[Name]

CitizenLab

[Elevator Pitch]

"We are an e-democracy platform that helps local governments consult the opinion of their citizens and turn their input into insights for decision making."

[The Story]

When Wietse Van Ransbeeck and Aline Muylaert were twenty-two-year-old students, they felt frustrated by the lack of opportunities to get involved with their local council, so in 2015 they founded CitizenLab, an e-democracy platform that aims to increase transparency among civil society and make local governments easier to reach. CitizenLab allows governments to gather ideas, organize participatory budgets, carry out surveys and organize votes online. Citizens have a space for debate and can share their own proposals, with the platform having integrated natural-language-processing abilities to help administrators analyze high volumes of citizen contributions and extract meaningful insights. "In addition to empowering citizens and increasing trust levels, this gives governments a better understanding of what their citizens need, therefore providing them with valuable insights to make better decisions," says Wietse.

CitizenLab counts over one hundred European cities and municipalities as customers and also has clients in Belgium, the Netherlands, France, UK, Denmark, Austria, Canada and Chile. It aims to double its client numbers next year and is recruiting sales managers for key markets and developing a referrer network. "Policy makers are increasingly aware of the growing demand for transparency and citizen empowerment in their municipality's decision making," Wietse says. "CitizenLab aims to make more than 5 percent of every municipal population actively and regularly participate in the local democracy through their e-participation platform."

[Funding History]



Seed



External

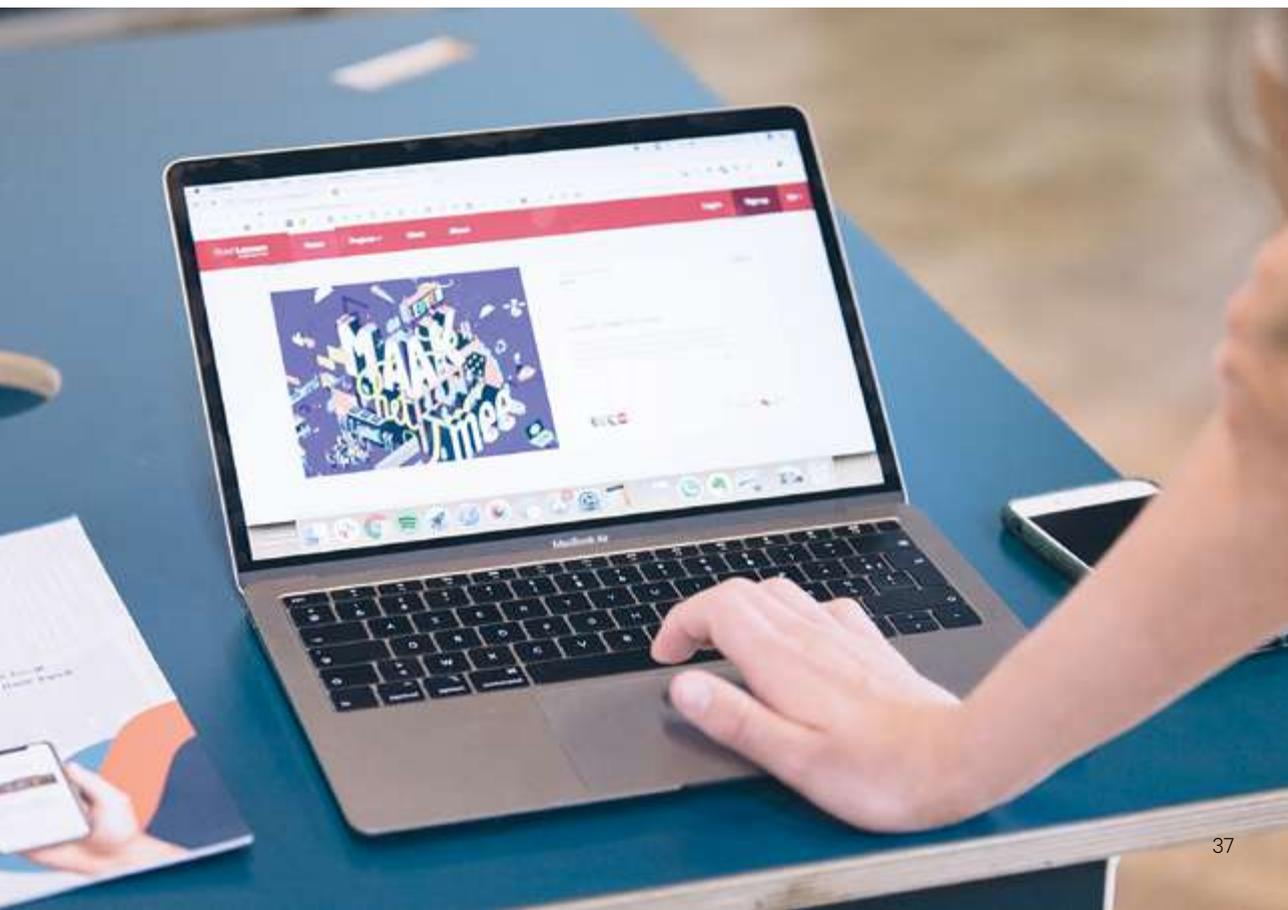
CitizenLab has gone through two rounds of investment: first a seed round raising €500,000 (\$560,000) in 2016, and then more recently a €2.1 million (\$2.4 million) round led by Inventus, an impact VC fund, and including Cipel Schaubroeck, a Flemish IT company.

[Milestones]

- Our first customer, the City of Hasselt, using our platform to codesign the city's largest park.
- Raising our first seed round of €500,000 in October 2016.
- Having both founders named in *Forbes* 30 Under 30 for Europe for their impact on the future of democracy.
- Securing €2.1 million in Series A funding.
- Counting more than one hundred local governments as customers by 2019.

[Links]

Web: citizenlab.co **Facebook:** [citizenlabco](https://www.facebook.com/citizenlabco) **Twitter:** [@citizenlabco](https://twitter.com/citizenlabco) **LinkedIn:** [company/citizenlab](https://www.linkedin.com/company/citizenlab)



[Name]

Fyteko

[Elevator Pitch]

“Fyteko is a biotech startup developing new sustainable products for agriculture. Our first product range, Nurseed, based on a new macromolecule, is a patented biostimulant that enables crops to tolerate and recover better from abiotic stress.”

[The Story]

Founded in mid-2014, Fyteko is recognized as one of the most innovative startups in Belgium and has won several innovation prizes. By developing and producing new biostimulants, the agtech company is looking to play a significant role in providing disruptive sustainable solutions, enabling farmers to mitigate climate change and increase food security worldwide. With the climate emergency creating uncertain weather conditions, crops such as corn, rice, wheat and soybeans are increasingly vulnerable to abiotic stress, which reduces their yield and thus affects global food supplies.

Fyteko has shown that its biostimulant innovations can significantly improve the tolerance of crops to abiotic stress. With their knowledge of biocatalysis, the use of biological catalysts to speed up reactions between organic components, Fyteko has developed products that enable crops to resist and respond more efficiently to abiotic-stress conditions and thus withstand the adverse effects of heat waves and erratic rainfall. “To help farmers counter the impact of climate change on crops, we’ve created two biostimulant products, Nurseed and Nurspray, which offer sustainable solutions that make a real difference to farmers’ lives,” says Benedicte O’Sullivan, COO at Fyteko. Working with its partners and clients in Belgium and all over the world, the agtech startup has won a raft of innovation awards, and, in 2018, it closed a roundtable investment of €2 million (\$2.3 million) to continue its work.

[Funding History]



Pre-Seed



Seed

Fyteko received its first grant in late 2015 from a regional competition in Belgium, which enabled it to receive €462,000 (\$520,000) over three years. By late 2016, it began looking for investment and closed a €500,000 roundtable with the Belgian Innovation Fund. Another €2 million round table was finalized in December 2018.

[Milestones]

- Receiving the “Most Innovative Startup of Brussels” nomination by Innoviris (funded by the Brussels region) and a €450,000 grant for three years in 2015.
- Securing the first roundtable and raising €500,000 with a Belgian VC in 2016.
- Getting a €360,000 grant over a three-year period from a European project in 2017.
- Securing a second roundtable of €2 million in 2018 with our current VC and a private investor.

[Links]

Web: fyteko.com Twitter: [@fyteko](https://twitter.com/fyteko) LinkedIn: [company/fyteko](https://www.linkedin.com/company/fyteko)



[Name]

Helpilepsy

[Elevator Pitch]

“Helpilepsy is a digital medical assistant designed to allow neurologists and their patients living with epilepsy to track, understand and manage their condition.”

[The Story]

The core concept behind Helpilepsy stemmed from an understanding of how difficult it can be to live with a neurological condition. From the perspectives of both the patient and the neurologist, epilepsy can often be confounding, with infrequent sessions leading to a lack of data, which in turn makes it more difficult to make the correct medical decision and more difficult for the patient to understand why that decision was reached. After months of research and development with neurologists and people with epilepsy, Helpilepsy was able to gain feedback on how to address and confront this kind of confusion from the perspective of epilepsy patients, doctors and even pharmaceutical representatives.

Helpilepsy is designed to work simply: patients log their data, seizures and side effects on the app, providing a clearer picture of their illness to their medical professional. The app allows for video uploads and automatic data logging via sensors in modern smartphones and watches, creating a more nuanced and detailed set of data from which neurologists can make decisions through their own web dashboard. The digital assistant has now assisted in more than five hundred appointments, with 90 percent of its users saying that it's been very helpful. Having just received medical-device certification and looking to expand into the examination of other neurological conditions, Helpilepsy is making people's lives easier by the day.

[Funding History]



Pre-Seed

Helpilepsy raised €100,000 (\$110,000) during a small preseed funding round with a European incubator. It currently has ten hospitals and one pharmaceutical company paying for the product and has received several grants. Helpilepsy is currently planning its first seed round.

[Milestones]

- **Winning the support of key opinion leaders enabled more meaningful interactions with our user base.**
- **Receiving 90 percent positive user feedback, assuring us that we were really helping people.**
- **Receiving our medical-device certification this year.**
- **Assisting in more than five hundred appointments across multiple hospitals.**

[Links]

Web: helpilepsy.com **Facebook:** [helpilepsy](https://www.facebook.com/helpilepsy) **Twitter:** [@helpilepsy](https://twitter.com/helpilepsy)



[Name]

Kazidomi

[Elevator Pitch]

“We’re an ecommerce company on a mission to make healthy and organic products affordable for everyone. Our products are all selected by a committee of health experts and range from food, cosmetics and supplements to natural cleaning. We deliver throughout Europe.”

[The Story]

Emna Everard, the founder of Kazidomi, comes from a long line of entrepreneurs and was inspired by them to study business with the intention of following in their footsteps. In her final year of university, she took an unconventional approach to her thesis, creating a business plan rather than the traditional essay format. That plan became Kazidomi, an online retailer for organic and healthy foods. Kazidomi offers a selection of close to three thousand items, including cosmetics and own-brand products, and it consistently updates its inventory.

Its membership program allows customers to access lower prices on all the products in exchange for an annual fee of €100 (\$110). This approach has successfully caused a considerable uptick in average basket size, while the business itself continues to grow and reach new regions. In other words, Emna’s retail empire is built on granting access to the best prices possible – and her biggest challenge was to convince suppliers to continue selling to a platform that would discount their products between 20 percent and 50 percent compared to other retailers. The inspirational vision of the future of the organic market fixed this, and more than two hundred suppliers now fully support the project.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Angel

Kazidomi began with only €6,400 (\$7,200). Later, it secured an investment of €50,000 (\$56,000) from a business angel, then a loan of €100,000 (\$110,000) allowed it to grow its product selection. It sought out angel investments later on and received funding totaling close to €1 million (\$1.1 million) since then. Currently, Kazidomi has private investors exclusively.

[Milestones]

- Adjusting our marketing strategy, becoming more accessible and reaching new customers through Instagram influencers.
- Negotiating with our suppliers to lower prices and creating our Membership Program.
- Expanding our stock from only 350 products to a growing total of 3,000.
- Expanding shipping to reach the entirety of Europe with delivery in three days maximum.

[Links]

Web: kazidomi.com Facebook: [kazidomi](https://www.facebook.com/kazidomi) Twitter: [@Kazidomi](https://twitter.com/Kazidomi) Instagram: [kazidomi_fr](https://www.instagram.com/kazidomi_fr)



[Name]

LucidWeb

[Elevator Pitch]

"We help agencies, publishers and broadcasters distribute and share VR, AR and 360-degree content, making their stories available on mobile, desktop and VR headsets."

[The Story]

Founded by Leen Segers in 2017, LucidWeb has set itself the mission of democratizing VR and 360-degree discovery and storytelling. The company has evolved over time, starting out as a B2C application that showcased VR experiences created in Europe. With distribution proving a constraint, LucidWeb started to focus on an open standard called WebVR, which has since become core to its identity and essential to its mission. "It allows LucidWeb to build solutions so its clients can share and distribute VR stories easily through the browser," says Leen.

In 2019, the company expanded its mission to also democratize access to AR storytelling. It builds custom WebVR and WebAR experiences for clients and manages the platform LucidWeb Pro, a white-labeled distribution platform for immersive media, including VR and AR. The platform helps broadcasters and agencies to distribute unique branding and storytelling experiences through web browsers in a convenient way. It now works with some of the biggest agencies and broadcasters in Europe and has expanded its team to ten. Its success, Leen believes, is based on its quality and diversity. "LucidWeb values, above all, a minimal design and an optimal user experience, so its products are attractive and accessible," he says. LucidWeb focuses on making content available on mobile, desktop and headsets, differentiating themselves from other companies doing WebVR that focus on desktop and mobile only.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Seed

LucidWeb was bootstrapped via custom software development in WebVR and WebAR for its first two years and secured its first angel investors in 2018.

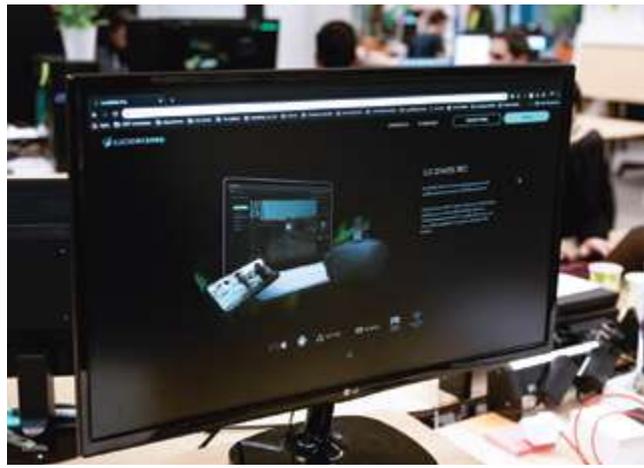
[Milestones]

- Gathering an outstanding and international team of VR/AR enthusiasts who share the same vision.
- Having European broadcasters like VRT and ARTE France, and US-based technology giants like Netapp using our platform.
- Bringing LucidWeb Pro from closed to open beta and receiving very positive feedback.
- Seeing our player used by Venice Virtual Reality to showcase four films presented at the 76th Venice International Film Festival.

[Links]

Web: lucidweb.io **Facebook:** [lucidw3b](https://www.facebook.com/lucidw3b) **Twitter:** [@lucidw3b](https://twitter.com/lucidw3b) **LinkedIn:** [company/lucidweb](https://www.linkedin.com/company/lucidweb)

Making it easy for everyone to get on it.
Web publishing platform for brands and
all production agencies.



[Name]

MuuseLabs

[Elevator Pitch]

“MuuseLabs is the creator of Jooki, a music and stories player that allows kids independent listening and enjoyment free from screens while keeping parents in control.”

[The Story]

The founders of MuuseLabs are three fathers who all have backgrounds in the tech industry and who wanted their kids to be away from screens and independently enjoy audio entertainment. In response to this concern, they built a platform to allow children to experience stories and music curated by their parents and without technology’s risks. Jooki, the device, allows parents and children to cocreate playlists and find new music and stories, making it ideal for children from three up. Cofounder and CEO Théo Marescaux built his first experimental device and let his kids try it out. “They had a real blast with that,” he says, but he knew that the device had a long way to go and so he enlisted the skills of cofounders Will Moffat and Pieter Palmers.

In its current iteration, the device contains the tech it needs to be self-sufficient, with no interaction from a smartphone, while colorful character figurines trigger playlists. Functionalities like a volume-limitation feature keep parents in full control, and they can even send voice notes directly to their child’s device through the Jooki app on their phone. Having had one of the most successful Kickstarter campaigns in Belgium, MuuseLabs started shipping Jooki in 2018 and has integrated with services like Spotify and Deezer to bring tens of millions of music tracks and stories to its audience as it continues to grow globally.

[Funding History]



Pre-Seed



Seed

MuuseLabs was accepted into an accelerator in Berlin and awarded an EU grant. Additional funding was raised in a Kickstarter campaign, the success of which attracted private investment due to Muuselabs’ growing user base.

[Milestones]

- Building our first prototype was using wooden cubes and QR codes.
- Having our founders accepted into the prestigious SXSW accelerator program.
- Launching our successful Kickstarter campaign and attracting attention from investors.
- Partnering with Deezer and Spotify, helping us with our content offering of streaming music.

[Links]

Web: jooki.rocks **Facebook:** [jooki](https://www.facebook.com/jooki) **Twitter:** [@JookiRocks](https://twitter.com/JookiRocks) **Instagram:** [JookiRocks](https://www.instagram.com/JookiRocks)



[Name]

Qover

[Elevator Pitch]

“Disrupting the status quo of the insurance industry, we build our own insurance products and provide them through open APIs, allowing businesses to integrate them seamlessly online.”

[The Story]

Qover founders Jean-Charles Velge and Quentin Colmant sought to create something that the world had never seen before: insurance as a service. This disruptive notion stemmed from Quentin’s experience working for Allianz, a renowned institution in the insurance industry, where he learned the challenges of building a digitally native insurance company. When the pair noticed the impact that fintech was making on the financial-services industry, the former classmates saw an opportunity to leverage their knowledge to create a one-of-a-kind company.

Qover now covers more than fifty thousand individuals across seven nations through its business-to-business model, protecting, for example, all Deliveroo riders in Europe. It matches its partners’ requirements through the creation of personalized end-to-end insurance products available as an API that can be easily integrated into any digital business platform in real time. As a result, Qover is a flexible, transparent option for businesses. Qover has gained considerable insights into ways to disrupt its industry as a result of these close partnerships. For instance, it realized the untapped value in unpaid rent insurance through its partner Immoweb, which is Belgium’s largest real-estate platform. Connections are a concurrent theme at Qover, which prides itself on its people. Creating personalized services alongside clients is demanding work for Qover’s carefully chosen team, but in the words of Jean-Charles, they’re “people that get things done regardless of the obstacles.”

[Funding History]



Pre-Seed



Seed



External

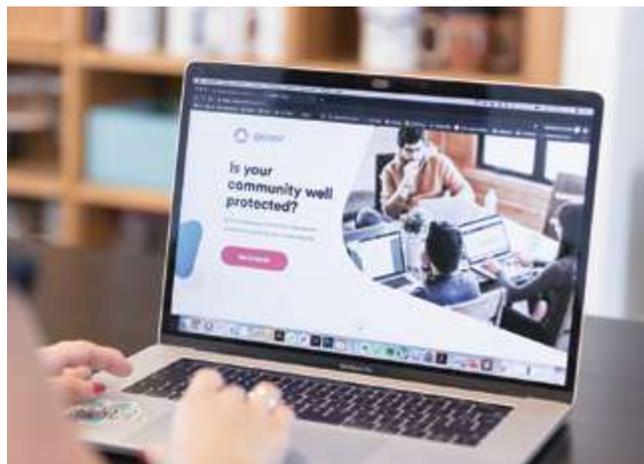
Qover held an initial seed round in April 2016 and a Series A investment round in April 2017. In June 2019, it held its first venture round, gaining three investors and €8 million (\$9 million).

[Milestones]

- Becoming a coverholder at the prestigious Lloyd’s of London.
- Expanding to seven countries with Deliveroo.
- Growing our team of “ninjas” to thirty-three strong.
- Partnering with companies like PoppyDrive and Immoweb, who’ve given us great insight into adjacent industries.

[Links]

Web: qover.com Twitter: [@Qover](https://twitter.com/Qover)



[Name]

Simone a Soif!

[Elevator Pitch]

“We make a healthy alternative to sodas and juices: a selection of organic, fruity, aromatic water, free of any additive or added sugar.”

[The Story]

Simone a Soif! is an innovative product that's honest about its ingredients. It grew from an idea in 2013, when Agnès Bonfond was struggling to find healthy beverages for her younger daughter's birthday party, so she decided to make her own. She created a mixture with water, juice and hydrolat (also known as plant essential water). The product was a hit, and she realized there was a market for a healthy and organic beverage that didn't contain preservatives, harmful chemicals or added sugar. Agnes formed the startup in 2016 with two other cofounders – Alexandre Van Der Vaeren and Antoine de Menten – and they had the product on the shelves the same year.

Antoine de Menten, head of communications and marketing, explains, “Every time you see a new natural drink coming out, claiming to be natural, you'd check the ingredient list and see added concentrates, chemicals or sugar.” Simone a Soif! entered the startup development process by researching the market, developing the products and aiming to stay as close to nature as possible via fresh fruit ingredients and low-impact packaging. For example, the beverage is available only in glass bottles to avoid the plastic waste and health issues associated with PET bottles.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Seed

Simone a Soif! started off with bootstrapping and pooling together funding from the cofounders. In late 2017, the startup reached out and secured five private investors who provided approximately €250,000 (\$280,000) to support the venture into supermarkets. More important than just finding funding, Simone a Soif! wanted to find investors with values that aligned with the brand's ethos.

[Milestones]

- Getting our organic certification in 2016.
- Selling our product at Delhaize, a major supermarket chain in Belgium.
- Redefining the brand and undergoing a change in 2019.
- Launching our first test in France this summer.

[Links]

Web: simoneasoif.be Facebook: [simoneasoif](https://www.facebook.com/simoneasoif) Twitter: [@SimoneaSoif](https://twitter.com/SimoneaSoif)



[Name]

Sortlist

[Elevator Pitch]

“Sortlist connects you with top marketing providers, locally and globally, around the clock. Our database of forty thousand agencies verified by our team and unbiased customer reviews makes it easy to find the right partner for your needs.”

[The Story]

“We’re the cliché of a startup – we started out of a student room,” says Sortlist cofounder Nicolas Finet as he tells the story of his business. The four young founders (three of whom were students at the time) couldn’t help but notice that the marketing industry was in a state of unprecedented change. They formed a consultancy and began to lend their skills to companies anxious to thrive in an increasingly digitalized world. As their network expanded, they found that one of their collective strengths was connecting businesses to the experts who could help them with specific needs, and so Sortlist took on its present form.

Through expansion – and the acquisition of a competitor – Sortlist now has a presence as far afield as South Africa, Madagascar, France, Romania and Spain. “Our worldview is ‘the world is a village,’” says Nicolas. He explains that his number one goal is building (as demonstrated by the company’s 2,400 percent growth over the last four years) but that he won’t compromise the happiness of his team to achieve this. “As a founder, you do a bit of everything; my role is to ensure that we keep up the pace, but in a healthy way. It’s a human adventure.”

[Funding History]



Seed



External

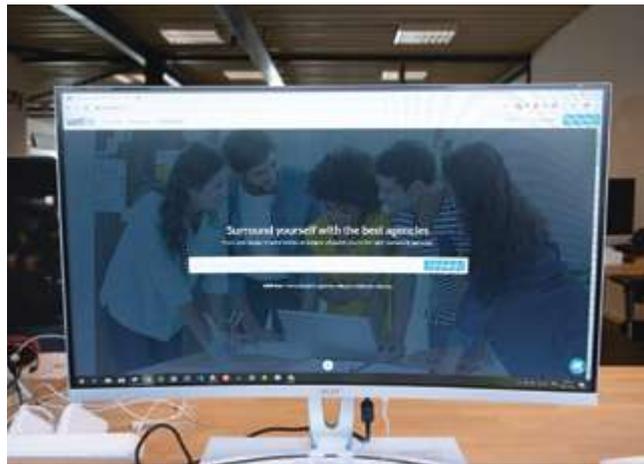
Sortlist initially raised €550,000 (\$620,000) of seed funding from private individuals and early-stage investor Lean Fund in 2015. More recently, in early 2019, it raised €2,000,000 (\$2,300,000) in its Series A funding round.

[Milestones]

- Expanding offices beyond Belgium’s borders to France, Romania, Madagascar, the Philippines and South Africa.
- Acquiring our Spanish competitor, The Briefers, in 2017 and opening our office in Madrid.
- Expanding our team from twenty-six employees to forty-two in 2018.
- Ranking first on 2019’s Deloitte Fast 50 list of fastest-growing software companies in Belgium.

[Links]

Web: sortlist.be/en **Facebook:** [wearesortlist](https://www.facebook.com/wearesortlist) **Twitter:** [@sortlist](https://twitter.com/sortlist) **Instagram:** [sortlist](https://www.instagram.com/sortlist)



[Name]

Spentys

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are revolutionizing the orthopedic-immobilization-device industry by shifting to processes containing 3D scanning, 3D modeling and 3D printing technologies. Our mission is to improve the quality of life of people suffering from orthopedic disabilities.”

[The Story]

Spentys began with the idea to apply an innovative new technology (3D printing) to revolutionize a medical device: a cast for a broken forearm. Nowadays, its solutions enable 3D scanning, modeling and printing of tailor-made orthopedic-immobilization devices, giving medical professionals, their patients and their practice access to the added value of 3D technologies. Growing to the stage where such a comprehensive service can be offered hasn't been easy for the Spentys team, but it has been rewarding. Asked what he's most proud of, cofounder Louis-Philippe Broze says, “Being able to improve the quality of life of children with complex congenital pathologies, such as clubfoot, which affects one in one hundred people.”

The medical market is a challenging space for emerging businesses, and although the benefits of 3D printing are easy to grasp, it can be difficult to put such an innovation into action. “Medical professionals have their practice, their rituals and way of working,” says Louis-Philippe. “To face this challenge, we're trying to engage them as much as possible in our research and development processes and to publish medical papers with key opinion leaders.” Spentys empowers medical professionals with technology they use, so helping them to understand the impact it can have is instrumental in achieving the ultimate goal: helping more people to rehabilitate better and to have a greater social impact.

[Funding History]



Pre-Seed



Seed

Spentys began with €6,000 (\$6,800) from the founder, €12,000 (\$13,600) from government grants and €7,000 (\$7,900) from startup contests. It received €100,000 (\$110,000) from an angel investor in 2017, then €545,000 (\$615,000) from several angel investors in a second funding round in 2018 and €200,000 (\$220,000) in a convertible loan from the Brussels government.

[Milestones]

- Helping to rehabilitate more than seven hundred patients across five countries.
- Introducing a medical device into the EU market in less than two years while meeting complex regulatory requirements.
- Convincing opinion-leading orthopedic surgeons from main international reference centers to integrate the devices in their practices.
- Having active medical professionals order our products on a weekly basis.

[Links]

Web: spentys.com **Facebook:** [spentys](https://www.facebook.com/spentys) **Twitter:** [@spentys](https://twitter.com/spentys) **Instagram:** [spentys_polycast](https://www.instagram.com/spentys_polycast)



[Name]

Tricount

[Elevator Pitch]

“We’re a simple-to-use, transparent and collaborative expense-management app. Ideal for groups or even individuals to manage accounts, our apps make it easy to keep track of money that you share with others and to answer, ‘Who owes what to whom?’”

[The Story]

Like many great ideas, Tricount started small. Two friends, Guillebert de Dorlodot and Jonathan Fallon, were living together and having trouble keeping track of shared expenses and who owed whom money. Extensive Excel sheets and laborious monthly accounting caused confusion and cost them time, so they resolved to find a solution. After assessing their specific needs, the pair (one of whom is a software engineer) developed a digital cost-sharing product that later became Tricount. The app alleviated the initial pain point of time-consuming calculations, providing a transparent way to avoid financial conflicts between friends or family.

For five years, Tricount served as a side project, undergoing minor refinements in response to user requests, but when a group of angel investors approached the founders, they were looking to rebuild Tricount for a far larger user base. From the formal founding of the company in 2015, Tricount grew rapidly year after year with no spending on marketing, soon becoming one of the most used finance apps. Now, Tricount is used across the world by millions of individuals and has been translated into nine languages. Although Tricount’s team is still small, the guidance of its Belgian angel investors, who have extensive experience in fintech apps, enables it to continue adding new features, such as management of multiple currencies, insertion of images and unevenly split expenses.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Seed



Angel

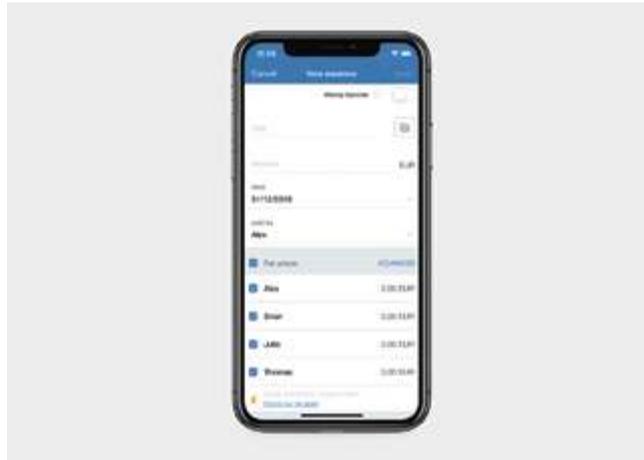
Tricount’s first iteration was built with a bootstrapped budget. A seed round in 2016 garnered it €500,000 (\$560,000). Since then, it has found a local angel investor with experience in the fintech industry.

[Milestones]

- **Launching Tricount to viral success, giving immediate insight into refinements we could make.**
- **Rebuilding the app after five years to be able to better serve a larger user base.**
- **Receiving Google Play Editors’ Choice designation and great feedback, with an average rating of 4.8/5.0.**
- **Becoming the number-one most downloaded financial app in several countries, including France and Belgium.**

[Links]

Web: tricount.com **Facebook:** [tricount](https://www.facebook.com/tricount) **Twitter:** [@tricount](https://twitter.com/tricount) **Instagram:** [tricount.app](https://www.instagram.com/tricount.app)



[Name]

Urbantz

[Elevator Pitch]

“We provide cutting-edge, enterprise-class, last-mile technology for retail, transport and other verticals.”

[The Story]

Formed in 2015, Urbantz is a complete software as a service (SaaS) solution for first-and last-mile logistics. The idea for the business came about when now-CEO Jonathan Weber met Michael Darchambeau, who was operating an eco-delivery company in Paris and looking without success for a solution to help it scale more efficiently. “We believed there was a massive market opportunity to disrupt last-mile logistics and set out to build a modern product from the ground up,” says Jonathan. Urbantz provides a cloud-based, end-to-end, enterprise-ready delivery software that includes a web application for retailers, ecommerce players and transportation companies; a mobile application for drivers; and a real-time tracking page for consumers.

The first two years of the startup’s life were dedicated to R&D, but since launching its product in 2017, it has been growing exponentially. It now has more than one hundred paying customers in more than ten countries, and its customers include major brands such as Carrefour, Auchan, Decathlon and Majid Al Futtaim. It plans to secure venture funding this year for expansion both within and outside of its major markets in Europe and the Middle East. “In the upcoming years, we intend to keep growing rapidly in these markets and expand to North Africa, reinforcing our EMENA presence,” says Jonathan.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Seed

Initially funded by the founders, Urbantz secured a seed round of €3 million (\$3.4 million) in 2018 to help it develop and roll out its product. It’s now looking to close a Series A round by the end of 2019.

[Milestones]

- Forming the business in 2015, which was a big step into the unknown.
- Partnering with our first early adopters in 2016 to validate and test the product.
- Securing our first medium-size-enterprise customers in 2017.
- Winning the Innoviris RISE prize of €500,000 (\$560,000).
- Gaining major enterprises such as Carrefour, Auchan and Majid Al Futtaim as clients.
- Closing our seed round, which helped us complete development of our product and grow the business.

[Links]

Web: urbantz.com **Twitter:** [@urbantz](https://twitter.com/urbantz) **Instagram:** [urbantz.official](https://www.instagram.com/urbantz.official) **LinkedIn:** [company/urbantz](https://www.linkedin.com/company/urbantz)



[Name]

Wooclap

[Elevator Pitch]

“We’re an online polling tool for real-time audience engagement, allowing for the creation of truly interactive presentations that boost audience participation and improve the learning experience.”

[The Story]

As the fastest-moving industry in the world, technology is already changing the way we learn. When the founders of Wooclap thought about how to maintain engagement in an educational environment, it struck them how underutilized mobile phones had been as a learning tool. Through Wooclap, teachers can integrate real-time interaction into their classes with vital feedback, allowing them to correct gaps in knowledge and better instruct their students as a whole. Although studies have shown that student attention span decreases significantly after about ten minutes, Wooclap allows educators to monitor their pupils’ concentration and keep them driven towards their goals by using features like competitive modes to incentivize them to excel.

The application itself is designed to be as accessible as possible. No matter the device type or the student’s level of technological understanding, Wooclap provides a simple-to-understand interface and even goes as far as providing a text message service. Contributors, such as professors, upload content and create interactive material (for example, quizzes) to keep students seamlessly engaged with the work at hand. The company has now collaborated with more than 100,000 professors across the globe. All have contributed to the broad range of content available. By integrating into platforms that educators already use, like Microsoft Powerpoint and learning management systems, Wooclap has turned smartphones from an educational obstacle into a teaching tool.

[Funding History]



Bootstrap



Seed

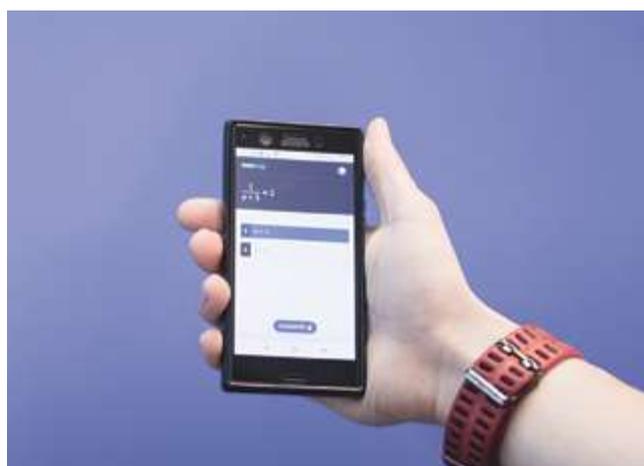
In 2015, Wooclap was founded through bootstrap funding. After deciding to seek funding internationally, Wooclap raised €350,000 (\$400,000) by July 2017. Wooclap currently has €1.4 million (\$1.6 million) in funding through private investors.

[Milestones]

- Collaborating with Microsoft and integrating into the platforms that universities already use.
- Partnering with industry giants, such as Deloitte, and universities, such as Université Paris Dauphine.
- Reaching 100,000 educators worldwide using our app in their classrooms.
- Expanding our reach to have a presence in more than one hundred countries.

[Links]

Web: wooclap.com Facebook: [wooclap](#) Twitter: [@wooclap](#) Instagram: [wooclap](#)





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MAD Brussels - TRIAXES 70

In partnership with Orange Fab 72

Réseau Entreprendre Bruxelles 74

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Start.LAB 78





- **Identify or create a social innovation.**
The focus of our program is finding great ideas that benefit society as a whole. We expect you to have an idea of how to have more impact on the city.
- **Operate in and impact the Brussels region.**
We require program participants to be based in Brussels and for your business to operate within and meaningfully impact the local community.
- **Be committed to the project.**
Many of our programs take place over multiple years, and we expect all participants to put in the requisite work to achieve results by the end of them.
- **Adhere to the principles of social entrepreneurship.**
We are looking for businesses that empower their communities by pursuing a social goal through democratically decided business choices.

[Name]

COOPCITY

[Elevator Pitch]

“Our mission is to support social entrepreneurship through the development of programs that meet the needs of our projects, whatever their stage of development. Our integrated support program is unique to Belgium and offers training, coaching and expert help.”

[Sector]

Social enterprises

[Description]

COOPCITY offers unique acceleration programs to social enterprises throughout the various stages of their development. What makes COOPCITY different is its focus on social entrepreneurship and innovative ideas that will have a meaningful impact on local communities. Sabrina Nisen, the program coordinator of COOPCITY, says, “Social entrepreneurship is attracting more and more new entrepreneurs as well as existing companies that are seeing a way to create a fairer economy that combines a social purpose, an economic project and greater autonomy of entrepreneurs.” This influx of new minds means more ideas and more innovations that benefit all, something that COOPCITY is keen to tap into.

COOPCITY offers four separate programs (Seeds, Blossom, Pollinize and Innovate) designed to meet the needs of participating companies at different stages of growth. Seeds offers eight months of support to entrepreneurs looking to launch a project to meet a social need in Brussels. Blossom is a two-year support program for existing social enterprises wishing to develop their business and their impact in Brussels. Pollinize provides eighteen months of support for existing structures wishing to solidify their multistakeholder projects in the personal services sector. Finally, Innovate is a tailor-made program that enables entrepreneurs to explore all facets of social innovation in developing projects that serve the needs and aspirations of Brussels’ residents.

“Brussels is at the center of the debate on new business models,” says Sabrina. “With its central geographic location, multiculturalism and opportunities for economic development, it can play an exemplary role in this area.” COOPCITY strives to lead the charge for a more equitable and socially responsible economy through collaborative, as opposed to competitive, effort. At this accelerator, all innovators are encouraged to work closely with one another. This fosters a future ecosystem of entrepreneurs in the region and also allows sparks to fly between bright minds, with great new projects emerging as a result.

[Apply to]

coopcity.be/accompagnement

[Links]

Web: coopcity.be **Facebook:** [coopcity.bxl](https://www.facebook.com/coopcity.bxl) **Twitter:** [@coopcitybxl](https://twitter.com/coopcitybxl)



- **Start the activity in Brussels.**
We're proudly Brussels based, so whether you just have a great idea or a prototype already, you should be too.
- **Have a sustainable or circular purpose.**
We support businesses from sectors as diverse as fashion and construction, but they all have sustainability at their core so a passion for creating a green startup is a must.
- **Be innovative.**
The more imaginative and original your business idea, the better!
- **Create jobs in the middle to long term.**
We want to see your idea grow into a flourishing business, so you should have your sights set firmly on the future.
- **Have a great entrepreneurial spirit.**
Big dreams reap big rewards, and we want to see your dreams become reality.

[Name] greenlab.brussels

[Elevator Pitch] *“We will help you create your own sustainable startup in Brussels in six months. We’ll also introduce you to our network of circular entrepreneurs and connect you with investors so you can flourish in the long run.”*

[Sector] Sustainable, various

[Description] greenlab.brussels, run by hub.brussels, supports entrepreneurs and early-stage startups that need to build a business model and test ideas before they can be legally founded and get the necessary financing. Most of the participants in the greenlab.brussels program – known as “greenlabbers” – begin with just an idea. Sometimes they already have a preliminary market study or even a prototype, but from those early beginnings, the program fosters the planning, networking and financial thinking to help them grow and flourish. Over a six-month period, the program organizes collective workshops, networking events and individual support with coaching and experts, after which greenlabbers will have a solid business and financial plan, strong skills in circular economy and access to an extensive network of green entrepreneurs and investors. Occasionally, greenlab.brussels participants start the program as already-established startups, but these remain the exceptions.

According to project coordinator Virginie Smans, the participants summarize their feelings about greenlab.brussels in just two words: “It works!” She stresses that the program is extremely useful and the atmosphere is a rich, enjoyable ecosystem consisting of a diverse mix of people who are passionate about green entrepreneurship. During their time with greenlab.brussels, many participants meet future business partners, connect with cofounders and make friends for life. Examples of startups that have found success with this program include organic-beverage makers Simone a Soif!, maternity and children’s clothing brand Tale Me, and logistics firm SUMY.

As an entrepreneur or startup, you can apply to the next greenlab.brussels program via the website whether you already have a project or not. Once accepted, you’ll have the opportunity to prepare a convincing business plan for investors, acquire lasting entrepreneurial skills and reduce risk by testing your products. When asked what the most common piece of advice given to greenlabbers is, Virginie says, “Green startups can also be economically viable, so work on your business model and test your ideas as soon as possible!”

[Apply to] hub.brussels/greenlab

[Links] [Web: greenlab.brussels](https://greenlab.brussels) [Facebook: brusselshub](https://www.facebook.com/brusselshub) [Twitter: @Brussels_hub](https://twitter.com/Brussels_hub)



- **Be ambitious.**
To become successful with imec.istart, you must be ambitious in your overall vision and have the aim to internationalize your business.
- **Have a complementary team.**
When you apply, it is highly recommended that you have a complementary and dynamic embryonic team of at least two cofounders. You must be able to present your team and company with maturity.
- **Be at the right stage.**
imec.istart invests in early-stage startups, but you should have a first prototype or proof of concept for your tech product ready.
- **Your company has a link with Belgium.**
Don't worry if your startup isn't based in Belgium. As long as you can demonstrate a link with the region (e.g., collaboration with a local research institute, sales office, development team and so on) or commit yourself to building such a link, you will be welcome.

[Name] **imec.istart**

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are here to help you launch your tech startup successfully. Our program – imec’s business accelerator – offers you an initial financial injection of €50,000, professional coaching, mentoring, access to working facilities, technology and a global partner and investor network.”*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic**

[Description] Launched in 2011, imec.istart is a leading tech accelerator in Europe that helps startups develop from their first proof-of-concept or prototyping stage to become full-fledged businesses. The accelerator, which focuses on early-stage startups, is backed by nanoelectronics and digital-technologies company imec. The program supports startups with innovative products or business models and reinforces them with imec’s technological knowhow wherever relevant. No link to imec research is required. Though the accelerator is sector agnostic, it offers more elaborate support in certain industries, such as healthcare and telecommunications.

imec.istart offers startups coaching and mentoring, office space, opportunities to connect with a broad range of corporate partners and investors, and access to technology. In addition, the accelerator gives participants an initial preseed investment of €50,000 (\$56,000) to €150,000 (\$170,000). Startups follow the program for twelve to eighteen months, so they can get their fundamentals right and experience a full sales cycle. Each company that joins the program is assigned a venture acceleration manager, who helps assess the needs of the startup to offer customized support. The program strives to help startups become market-ready, growth-ready and investor-ready, so by graduation, enrolled startups ideally have their first paying customers, a growth-ready team and the ability to find the right follow-up financing for their venture. In return for the support and investment, imec.istart asks for a 6 percent equity stake.

After graduation, startups can expect continued support from the accelerator, including additional fundraising help, access to talent, invitations to networking events and introductions to new markets, partners and customers. Twice a year, the accelerator holds investor days for startups to pitch to an international network of over one thousand investors and financiers. Along with its connection with imec, imec.istart has close relationships with other big research institutes and around forty corporate partners such as Pfizer, UCB and ING, who offer industry-specific services and networks. To get into the accelerator, prospective participants must be able to give a short pitch about their concept and vision.

[Apply to] imecistart.com / Email: istart@imec.be

[Links] **Web:** imecistart.com **Facebook:** [imec.istart](#) **Twitter:** [@imecistart](#) **Instagram:** [imec.istart](#)



- **Be based in Brussels.**
To be considered for TRIAXES, you must be an SME, startup or spinoff registered with a VAT number in Brussels. A deposit of €3,300 is requested at the start of the project to guarantee the involvement of the designer.
- **Thrive in a collaborative environment.**
TRIAXES is all about working together from day one. Openness to collaboration and a willingness to get to know each other's expertise is key. The project itself is the lead, not one of the experts.
- **Respond to a market need.**
Your product or collection needs to respond to a market need in a meaningful and sustainable way.
- **Create an industrial product or a fashion collection.**
Only products intended for large-scale production and innovative fashion collections are supported by TRIAXES.

[Name]

MAD Brussels - TRIAXES

[Elevator Pitch]

“We offer an integrated and collaborative approach that accompanies entrepreneurs during their research and development process in order to define their concept, target market, required production and materials with a focus on sustainability.”

[Sector]

Creative (fashion and design)

[Description]

MAD is a self-proclaimed “Home of Creators.” Its aim is to support and promote designers based in Brussels as well as stimulate entrepreneurship in creative sectors. It offers business coaching to product and fashion designers, produces specialized content and talks focusing on the future of these industries, and runs residency programs in its creative hub, MAD Lab, where designers can develop projects focused on sustainability and social design in programs such as TRIAXES.

The core concept of TRIAXES, initiated by MAD in 2017, is to bring together three experts in the research and development (R&D) fields for the creation of products or collections. The skillset of each expert varies depending on the product and its needs, so professionals such as engineers, product designers and business managers take part in guiding young entrepreneurs’ development. This integrated and collaborative methodology resulted from a perceived contradiction: major international industries work with teams of engineers, business managers and industrial designers, while students and small companies are often not taught to work in synergy with other disciplines. MAD discovered that many SMEs, startups and spinoffs that want to develop products don’t internally collaborate or mix skills, which is exactly what TRIAXES considers essential.

Should a Brussels entrepreneur want to develop an industrial product or fashion collection intended for mass production, the program allocates them a trio of experts who then conduct an audit of the project by establishing the complete ecosystem of the product. This six-month, intense R&D support leads to a clear definition of the target market, the concept and its required materials and production techniques, with a focus on sustainability. This approach stimulates collaboration, time-efficient working and network exchanges, and reduces the risk of returning to the R&D process at a later stage. Thanks to its track record of excellence, TRIAXES is supported by the Brussels Capital Region and the ERDF.

[Apply to]

jean.paternotte@mad.brussels

[Links]

Web: mad.brussels **Facebook:** [MADBrussels](#) **Twitter:** [@Madbrussels](#) **Instagram:** [madbrussels](#)



- **Be tech based.**
We are looking for innovative tech solutions.
- **Have existing traction.**
We partner with mature startups that have proven traction and an existing customer base.
- **Develop a strong team.**
We like complementary teams that are working on projects full time.
- **Add value to Orange customers.**
Your solution should be something that adds value to our existing customer base or brings new business into the company.

[Name]

Orange Fab

[Elevator Pitch]

“We offer promising startups access to a customized program to make their business grow, with the aim of building a commercial partnership between Orange and the startups.”

[Sector]

IoT, AI, big data

[Description]

The startup accelerator program of mobile operator Orange, Orange Fab is active in seventeen countries with the goal of connecting startup innovators to the company. The chapter focused on Belgium and Luxembourg has had three cohorts so far. Each year, Orange Fab seeks startups in areas such as IoT, big data, AI and 5G to partner with. “Our aim is to support the Belux startup ecosystem while boosting innovation within Orange and for our customers,” said Juliette Malherbe, who runs the program. “It helps us accelerate internal innovation through working with startups.”

Orange Fab is looking for slightly later-stage startups that can prove traction with customers and are looking to accelerate through a corporate partnership. Each year, two or three companies are selected to work on a proof of concept for Orange or one of its customers. Juliette says this is a win-win scenario for the mobile operator and the startup in question. “Through the acceleration, Orange develops a prototype with the startup in collaboration with internal employees,” she says. “On the other hand, we open doors to the startup by introducing it to our organization but also to our B2C and B2B customers.”

Aside from the specific project, startups are also offered access to Orange’s network and distribution channels. For example, B2C products can be made available in Orange stores, or B2B services can be introduced to potential customers. The main thing is offering Orange customers access to innovative services. Orange Fab also invites startups to international events and gives them mentoring and training. “We can help with very specific topics, such as legal or marketing,” says Juliette. “A very important thing for Belgian startups is internationalization. Thanks to our international network, we can help them to easily get in contact with our seventeen Fabs present in Silicon Valley, Asia, Europe and Africa.”

[Apply to]

orangefab.be/applynow

[Links]

Web: orangefab.be **Twitter:** @OrangeBENL/@OrangeBEFR **Instagram:** orange_belgium



- **Be very clear with your value proposition.**
A clear business model and an understanding of where your value lies are essential for building a strong foundation for your business.
- **Have ambition and growth potential.**
We expect our startups to hire at least five full-time employees in the coming three years.
- **Own a majority share.**
Entrepreneurs joining the Réseau Entreprendre network must own the majority of their company's shares.
- **Be 100 percent engaged in your business.**
Our program is hands-on, so you must be active and ready to take action on your project.
- **Ensure your business's legal entity is already created.**
Although we admit very young companies to our program, they must be legally ready for business.

[Name]

Réseau Entreprendre Bruxelles

[Elevator Pitch]

“Through our mentoring program, we offer entrepreneurs a full support network to help them grow, develop their potential and become resilient.”

[Sector]

Various

[Description]

For more than thirty years, Réseau Entreprendre has offered project owners and entrepreneurs tailored mentoring by experienced business leaders. It is a network of entrepreneurs who support each other with the spirit of reciprocity. Beneficiaries of its program are asked to give back what they have received, and in paying it forward they create a network that works together with the shared goal of job creation. “It’s hands-on, pragmatic and solution oriented,” says managing director Aurélie Dekegeleer. “We are the only network composed solely of entrepreneurs – it’s our biggest asset!” Réseau Entreprendre’s Booster program lasts for two years, during which time participating startups are assigned an experienced entrepreneur from the network as their designated mentor. Together they build a trusting relationship and meet at least once a month to discuss the evolution of the startup and tackle potential pitfalls. In addition, startups have access to Réseau Entreprendre activities that include speed coaching (where four to five experts help them with specific situations), networking events that allow them to make new connections, workshops to share technical competences among the network related to topics such as digital marketing, sales and recruitment, and much more.

Most of the startups admitted to Réseau Entreprendre are less than two years old. “They must already generate revenue and have created their legal entity,” Aurélie says. “Sometimes they’re a bit older but are at a key point in their ‘life’ as a business and need support to further develop. Our program also aims to help entrepreneurs who have recently bought an existing business.” In addition, Réseau Entreprendre’s Ambition program helps startups that have found their market fit and generate revenue of more than €500,000 (\$560,000) to scale up. The ethos of reciprocity that is central to Réseau Entreprendre rings clear through the advice given to its startups. “The more you share, the more you grow,” says Aurélie.

[Apply to]

reseau-entreprendre.org/entreprendre/formulaire-porteur-projet

[Links]

Web: reseau-entreprendre.org/bruxelles **Facebook:** [rebruxelles](https://www.facebook.com/rebruxelles) **Twitter:** [@re_bruxelles](https://twitter.com/re_bruxelles)



- **Be receptive to help.**
Start it @KBC is a program for entrepreneurs who want to help each other. Make sure you're comfortable with reaching out for advice when you need it, and listen to what the coaches and experts have to say.
- **Pay it forward.**
If you've gained skills along the way that could be useful to someone else, then share your expertise with others in the Start it @KBC community.
- **Be ambitious and realistic.**
We like to see startups that have international ambitions. Show us that you're ready to conquer the world.
- **Gather the right competencies in your team.**
A startup's team is everything. Having the right range of skills and expertise is essential for business growth.

[Name] **Start it @KBC**

[Elevator Pitch] *“We support and promote entrepreneurs with innovative ideas and scalable business models. As such, Start it @KBC is Belgium’s largest community of startups.”*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic**

[Description] Start it @KBC, Belgium’s largest startup accelerator, offers an entirely free, no-strings-attached program for startups of all stages. Operating across six different hubs in Belgium, Start it @KBC’s one-year program helps propel the growth of startups by enabling enthusiastic entrepreneurs to grow their skills and networks.

The program kicks off with a two-day bootcamp where startups are introduced to the partners and mentors of Start it @KBC. This is followed by a three-month acceleration period during which coaches provide custom-made workshops on everything from sales and marketing to finance and fundraising. “After this stage, we invite our startups to join The Boardroom,” says Laura Lumingu, community manager at Start it @KBC. “This is where we ask companies to update us on their status and the hurdles they face, and the Board then provides them with feedback and hands-on advice.” Startups that pass the Boardroom stage are offered another nine months in the program to further grow their businesses and expand their networks. Throughout their one-year journey, startups also have access to free coworking space at one of the six locations in Belgium, where they can attend events and pitch nights and participate in informative workshops.

Start it @KBC wants its community of entrepreneurs to be as diverse as possible and strongly encourages more female founders to participate in the program. “More and more women are becoming inspired to start their own businesses, and support for them is increasing worldwide,” says Laura. “We want to be a part of creating that same movement in Belgium.” Today, 28 percent of all startups in the program have at least one female founder, and the numbers are increasing every year. Among the companies that have successfully passed through the program is CitizenLab, an online citizen-participation platform whose female cofounder, Aline Muylaert, made it to the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list in 2018.

[Apply to] grow.startit.be/applynow

[Links] **Web:** startit.be **Facebook:** [startitkbc](https://www.facebook.com/startitkbc) **Twitter:** [@startitkbc](https://twitter.com/startitkbc) **Instagram:** [startitkbc](https://www.instagram.com/startitkbc)



- **Have a complementary team.**
Your team members should have backgrounds, interests and skills that complement each other.
- **Dedicate your time.**
Your business can be a side one, but you must be motivated and willing to put in the hours.
- **Build a product that a client actually wants.**
We will work on ensuring your startup has product-market fit.
- **Look for impact.**
Solve a problem and be conscious of the impact that your business has.

[Name] Start.LAB

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are an incubator for ambitious and innovative entrepreneurs trying to build sustainable, impactful businesses.”*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic**

[Description] Founded in 2016 and affiliated with Solvay Entrepreneurs, the Start.LAB incubator runs two distinct accelerator programs: the four-month Test.LAB helps entrepreneurs establish product–market fit for their solutions, validating the strength of innovative ideas when it comes to meeting market needs through lean-startup methods; and the six-month Launch.LAB helps them accelerate the launch of solutions, structure their approach and become sustainable. Though not focused on any particular sector, the potential impact of startups, whether socially, economically or environmentally, is at the heart what Start.LAB does. “We have the ability to offer expertise to any startup, but their level of impact is very important,” says project manager Virginie Robe. “We are looking for entrepreneurs that have a vision and are motivated by what good they can do.”

Assistance provided by the two programs comes in a variety of forms. Both provide specific training modules that help entrepreneurs address and activate key business methodologies for their startup, and participants are assigned an experienced entrepreneur for mentorship. One-on-one expert hours provide advice on financial planning, digital marketing, legal issues and taxes. Participants also have access to a coworking space, meeting rooms and relevant events. Becoming part of the Start.LAB community is another benefit. “Our dynamic community is really important to us,” says Virginie. “When you launch a business, it can be very lonely. We want to help with that.”

Start.LAB currently hosts around two hundred entrepreneurs working on one hundred projects. As a nonprofit, it offers student or recent-graduate entrepreneurs access to some subsidized programs, and it charges program fees to those who graduated longer than two years ago. In addition, it applies a success fee if startups reach certain sales targets within eighteen months of completion. “The idea is that it’s a win-win,” says Virginie. “That money is being given back to the community to help other companies grow in the same way you have.”

[Apply to] startlab.be

[Links] **Web:** startlab.be **Facebook:** [startlab.be](https://www.facebook.com/startlab.be) **Instagram:** [startlab.be](https://www.instagram.com/startlab.be) **LinkedIn:** [company/start-lab](https://www.linkedin.com/company/start-lab)



spa





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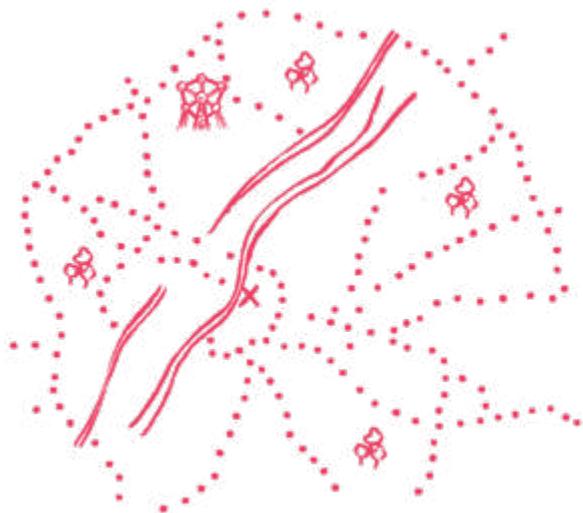


[Name]

BeCentral

[Address]

Cantersteen 10/12, 1000 Brussels



[Total Area]

4,000M²

[Workspaces]

250

[The Story]

BeCentral is a digital campus in the heart of Brussels where anyone can learn digital technologies, grow a digital company or launch nonprofits. With the goal of creating impact-based societal changes enabled by tech, twenty-eight cofounders came together to form a community that included schools, NGOs, startups and scaleups. Sixty organizations are currently in occupation and benefit from the network of knowledge and experience available at BeCentral, tapping into the concept at the core of this coworking space: an experimental, bottom-up approach operating at scale. An understanding of every entrepreneur's need for freedom to innovate is what fuels this self-described "factory for talent." Since its launch in 2017, BeCentral has lived up to the promise of its name, placing itself at the center of Brussels' tech ecosystem.

The building itself is easily accessible and ideally situated above the train tracks of Central Station, one of the busiest transportation hubs in Brussels. It was designed by famous Belgian architect Victor Horta in 1910, but despite its rich history, the building had fallen into disrepair until the founders of BeCentral saw an opportunity to reimagine and reinvigorate this architectural icon. Now it's a hub for impactful tech entrepreneurship, where talented minds of all ages, origins and genders seek solutions to the most pressing concerns of today's society under high concrete ceilings nearly a century old.

[Links]

Web: becentral.org **Facebook:** [becentral](https://www.facebook.com/becentral) **Twitter:** [@BeCentralBxl](https://twitter.com/BeCentralBxl) **Instagram:** [becentral](https://www.instagram.com/becentral)



Face of the Space:

Managing director Laurent Hublet is a cofounder of BeCentral. He highlights the inclusive DNA of the campus, its collaborative model and its ambitious impact targets. His work at BeCentral connects with two of his passions: "learning throughout life and having a tangible impact on society through entrepreneurship."



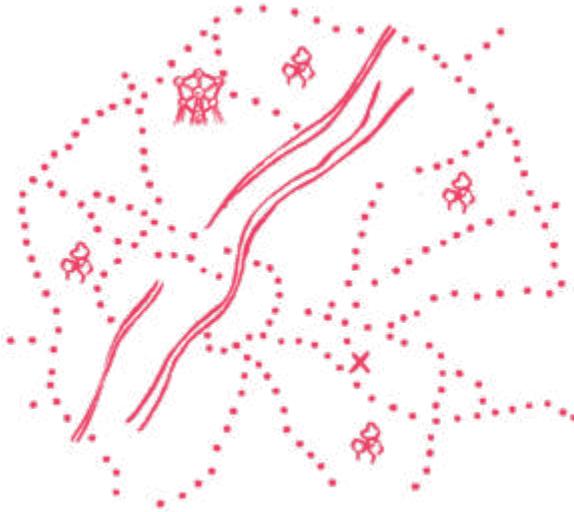


[Name]

Betacowork

[Address]

Rue des Pères Blancs 4, 1040 Etterbeek, Brussels



[Total Area]

1,000 M²

[Workspaces]

75

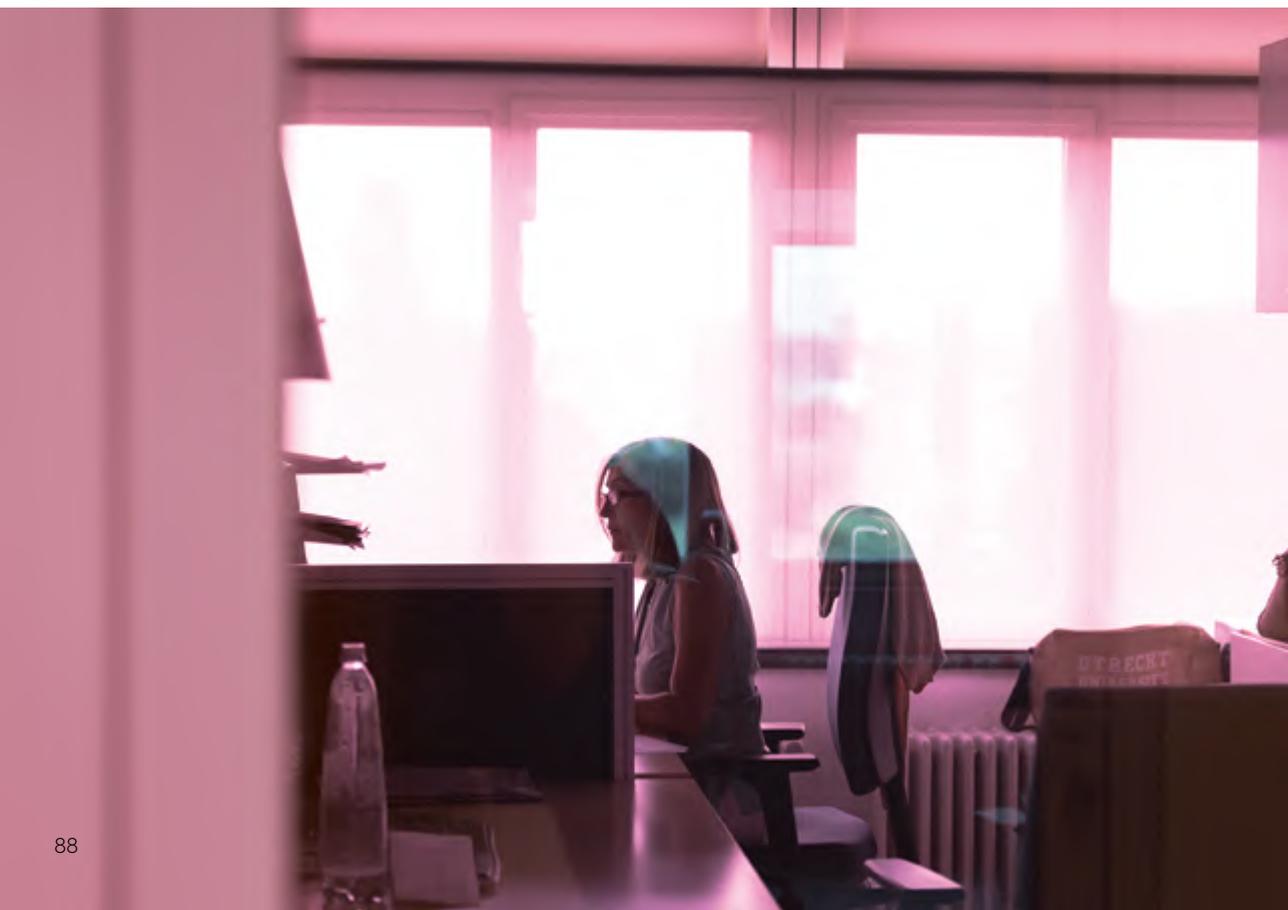
[The Story]

Betacowork originated in 2001 as a network of people interested in or involved with the tech industry that met regularly. As the group (named Beta Group) grew, founder Ramon Suarez chose to solidify their network through a coworking space, a concept quite new to Brussels at the time of the space's founding in 2010 but already growing rapidly in popularity. In 2017, it was sold to three entrepreneurs who had been members of Beta Group since the beginning: Toon Vanagt, Eric Rodriguez and Erik De Herdt. They've taken Betacowork from strength to strength, building a strong community where the average worker has been a member for a year or more.

Betacowork is located in the ICAB business and technology incubator, which houses more than forty innovative startups in the ICT and engineering sector alongside Betacowork's 150 members, including freelancers and remote workers. In addition to the unlimited free coffee, members enjoy free workshops covering a wide range of industry-relevant topics. Having recently received funding from Brussels' Next Tech initiative, Betacowork is now looking towards the potential of big data and is running both beginner and advanced courses focused on this topic.

[Links]

Web: betacowork.com **Facebook:** [betacowork](#) **Twitter:** [@betacowork](#) **Instagram:** [betacowork_brussels](#)



[Name]

Brussels Life Science Incubator (BLSI)

[Address]

Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs 30, 1200 Brussels



[The Story]

The Brussels Life Science Incubator is the Brussels-Capital Region's incubator for entrepreneurs in the life-sciences sector, providing a host of services to help develop companies working on biotechnology, medical devices and IT solutions for the health sector. The incubator's founders saw a need for a coworking space to accommodate business projects including brand new businesses whose business plans need reflection and verification. Launched in November 2018, the space is still young and relatively small in size, with only a handful of tenants. Based on the sixth floor, it has one of the best views in Brussels and features multicolored windows, four meeting rooms, a brainstorming room, cafeteria, kitchenette, acoustic booth, lounge space and printing room.

While residents of the incubator are generally people with lots of experience in the life-sciences industry who have decided to launch their own businesses, the coworking space attracts a younger audience of recent graduates starting their own businesses. "The objective here is to verify the feasibility of creating and starting entrepreneurial activities based on an innovative business plan," says CEO Gianluigi Arialdi. "Like the incubator, our space will probably have more added value for innovative or even technological projects. While open to any type of innovative activity, we focus our communication on health-related technologies to encourage the presence of related and complementary projects."

[Links]

Web: blsincubator.com **Facebook:** [blsi.brussels](https://www.facebook.com/blsi.brussels) **Instagram:** [blsi.brussels](https://www.instagram.com/blsi.brussels)

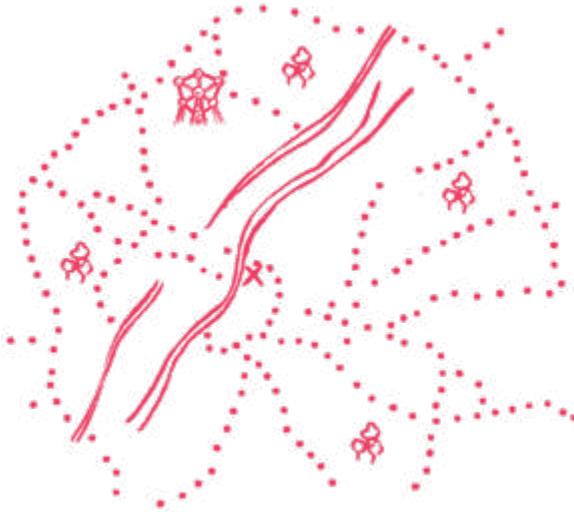


[Name]

Co.Station

[Address]

Parvis Sainte-Gudule 5, 1000 Brussels



[Total Area]

4,500M²

[Workspaces]

399

[The Story]

In 2014, the ecosystem in Brussels was only just starting to take off and there were few coworking spaces catering directly to the tech community. Co.Station was founded to provide a space for tech startups, scaleups and corporates to grow together in an inspiring setting. Today, it's a lively hub for tech startups looking to scale fast and for corporates seeking inspiration. "Beyond just offering office space, Co.Station acts as an accelerator," says Béatrice de Mahieu, CEO. "We provide innovative programs to help small and large businesses gain commercial traction."

Spread across two floors, Co.Station has both flex and fixed workspaces as well as meeting rooms and office space for larger teams. These are all linked together via a plant-filled terrace in the center of the building. In addition to a coffee station, the space offers a self-service Italian buffet at lunchtime to encourage its coworkers to pull up a seat and chat with someone new. There's even a pitch theater for companies brave enough to take their business idea to the stage, with seating for at least one hundred audience members. "Co.Station has been running for five years now and in each of our four locations in Belgium you will find an engaged community," says Béatrice. "Our aim is to help people connect, learn and, ultimately, start something."

[Links]

Web: co-station.com **Facebook:** [COSTATIONBXL](https://www.facebook.com/COSTATIONBXL) **Twitter:** [@co_station](https://twitter.com/co_station) **Instagram:** [co.station](https://www.instagram.com/co.station)



Face of the Space:

Béatrice de Mahieu kicked off her career at Co.Station as the company's Chief Innovation Officer and later became CEO in the summer of 2019. An investment expert, Béatrice mentors startups at Co.Station in their search for funding and their drive for sustainable growth.



STARTUP FACTORY

STUDIO



[Name]

DigitYser

[Address]

Boulevard d'Anvers 40 1000 Brussels



[The Story]

DigitYser, the Brussels clubhouse, operates as a data-innovation hub for entrepreneurs, startups and decision-makers. Conveniently located near the city center, the coworking space is only a minute's walk from Yser metro station. With its towering modernist ceilings brimming with natural light, it soars with ambition. The inspiration for the coworking hub came from a data-science Meetup group in 2014, where Philippe Van Impe, founder and CEO of DigitYser, and four peers created a new space for their community. "We were excited by the enormous growth of artificial intelligence startups in Brussels and wanted to create an innovation hub specifically for this market," says Phillippe. "One where corporates, local entrepreneurs and startups could innovate and work together."

Uniting the IoT, VR, AI and blockchain communities in Brussels, the coworking space was cofounded as a public-private initiative by the Brussels Data Science Meetup Group, Region of Brussels, Sofina and Engie. With its inclusive atmosphere, members immediately feel at home in the modernist atrium, where everyone from digital nomads to CEOs can socialize together through meetups and hackathons. DigitYser is continually looking to help actors of the Belgium tech community grow and scale, by providing an accessible environment where they can share, learn and innovate together.

[Links]

Web: digityser.org Facebook: [digityser](#) Twitter: [@digityser](#) Instagram: [digityser](#)

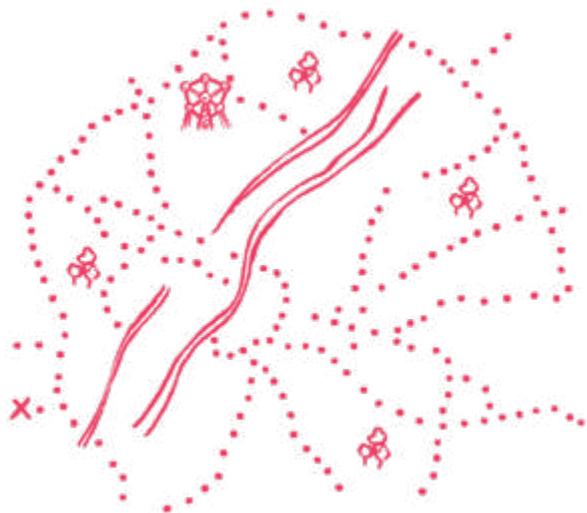


[Name]

EEBIC

[Address]

Allée de la Recherche 12, 1070 Brussels



[Total Area]

2,500 M²

[Workspaces]

60

[The Story]

Created in 1992 as an initiative of the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and Brussels-Capital Region, EEBIC is an incubator and financing partner as well as an active player within the Belgian startup ecosystem. It offers both flexible office space for innovative startups and more permanent spaces for established businesses, with packages including “all in one price” and “easy in/easy out” options. EEBIC’s building is located two hundred meters from the Erasmus metro station and has a bike parking facility. “Tenants have access to a fitness and yoga room with showers,” says Cecile Broekhoven, the COO at EEBIC. “There’s also a cafeteria, La Cantina du Fresh, that provides a healthy and varied buffet every day.”

The EEBIC space is used by sixty startups comprising around 250 people, whom it provides with a host of business-support services on top of coworking and private office space. The company’s venture department assists businesses with the implementation of their business plans and provides consulting services as well as financing-procurement-assistance services. It also has more than €95 million (\$110 million) under management, invested in more than 550 companies through various funds and two programs. The space and the venture initiative are focused on a variety of sectors, including biotech and digital innovation, but the recipients of support are always early-stage Belgian startups.

[Links]

Web: eebic.be LinkedIn: [company/eebic](https://www.linkedin.com/company/eebic) Twitter: [@eebic](https://twitter.com/eebic)

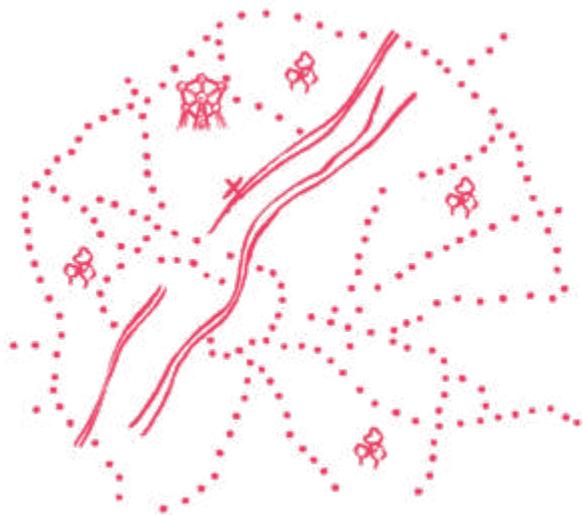


[Name]

Greenbizz

[Address]

Rue Dieudonné Lefèvre 17, 1020 Brussels



[Total Area]

7,800M²

[Workspaces]

110

[The Story]

Opened in April 2016, the publicly funded Greenbizz is the first hub in Belgium dedicated to the sustainable economy. The space hosts green-economy startups and assists them in their development. It's home to around forty startups, comprising about 150 people, and boasts thirty-six private offices, a coworking zone, five meeting rooms, a giant atrium, a terrace with a view of the city, a fablab and amenities such as reception, wifi, printers and parking. Aside from this incubator space, it also has a large area of production workshops for startups active in sustainable production. "Greenbizz is located in a brand new passive building, which was built using the most advanced technologies of sustainable construction," says director Jean-Marc Bryskere.

The bright, open coworking spaces are designed for collaboration and cross-pollination, with members also gaining access to free coaching from specialists in the sector. The green economy and its development are at the heart of Greenbizz, and with all startups and entrepreneurs based there sharing the same interest, there is a lot to be gained. "Talking with each other, sharing their experiences and doing business together is perceived as a unique added value," says Jean-Marc. "Greenbizz has become the place to be of the sustainable economy in Brussels, gathering all the major actors. This has created a unique ecosystem and great networking possibilities highly valued by our startups."

[Links]

Web: greenbizz.brussels **Facebook:** [greenbizzbrussels](https://www.facebook.com/greenbizzbrussels) **LinkedIn:** [company/greenbizz](https://www.linkedin.com/company/greenbizz)

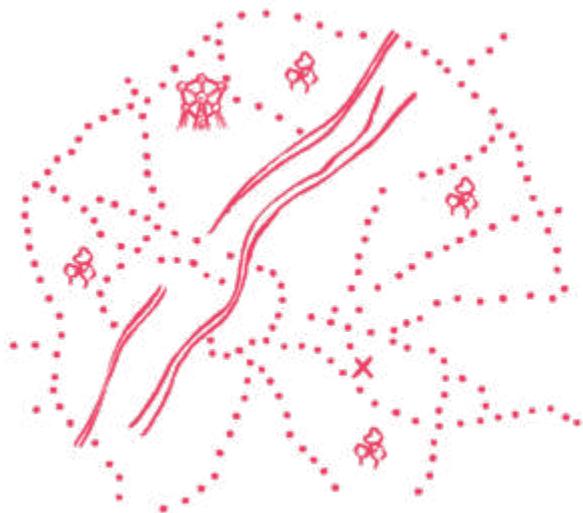


[Name]

ICAB Incubator

[Address]

Arsenal Site, Witte Patersstraat 4, Rue des Pères Blancs, 1040 Brussels



[Total Area]

4,000M²

[Workspaces]

75

[The Story]

Twelve years ago, the Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB) was looking for a location to develop and grow its spinoff companies. It acquired a nearby military site and renovated an old vehicle-repair building, creating the ICAB Incubator and coworking space (the latter offered through its partner Betacowork). Complete with mezzanine structure and large glass areas of roof, it provides an inspiring setting. Its open architecture, huge atrium and general vibe combine to promote collaboration. “The open-plan nature of the space leads to lots of interaction between members,” says ICAB’s CEO Marnix Housen.

This startup facility is full service, offering its members access to office equipment, printers, high-bandwidth wifi, meeting rooms, conference rooms, kitchens and vending machines. There’s no in-house catering, but the surrounding area offers various cafes, bars and restaurants. In all, 40 startups and 150 self-employed coworkers are based out of the space, which is also home to ICAB’s flagship incubation program, Amplitude+, which is run in partnership with Microsoft Innovation Center Brussels and open to internal and external companies. Marnix says ICAB has worked hard to establish itself as a key cog within the wider Brussels startup ecosystem. “People can find all the context and connections they might be looking for here, be it VC investors, partners or customers; they can meet them all here,” he says.

[Links]

Web: icab-brussel.be **Facebook:** [icabincubator](https://www.facebook.com/icabincubator) **Twitter:** [@ICABincubator](https://twitter.com/ICABincubator) **Instagram:** [icabincubator](https://www.instagram.com/icabincubator)

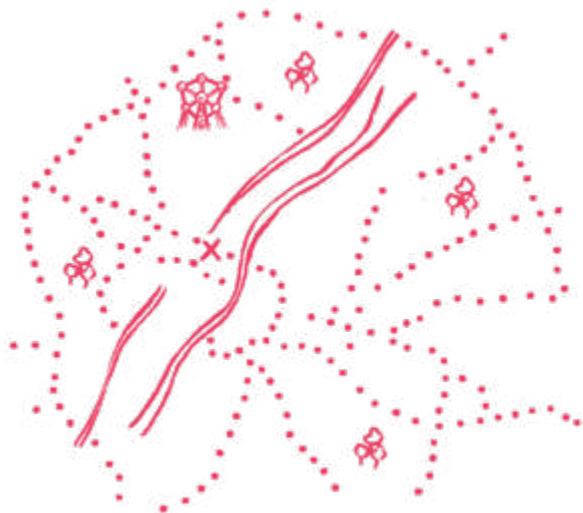


[Name]

MolenGeek

[Address]

Place de la Minoterie 10, 1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean



[Total Area]

1,000 M²

[Workspaces]

250

[The Story]

The MolenGeek space has its origins in 2015, when Ibrahim Ouassari and friends were looking for a space to host a locally focused hackathon. The event was so successful, they decided to launch a coworking space and incubator the next year. What began as a tiny office in a shared space has grown to fill two floors, which are adorned with graffiti-covered walls and tech-relevant artwork. It has seven classroom spaces, one conference room, a “chill room” and two communal kitchens. The entire space has an open plan, with no isolated offices. “The open space is part of what makes our vibe so inviting,” says Ibrahim. “Whether you’re a student, new startup or experienced entrepreneur, you’re working from the same desks and chatting together over lunch.”

At any given time, MolenGeek has around one hundred members, most running or working for tech-focused startups. There is also a host of students taking part in the hub’s Coding School and Marketing Lab. The space is open most hours (until around 10 PM on weeknights) and the membership doesn’t require a fixed-term contract. The space even provides members with a laptop if they don’t have one. “We do our best to remove excuses from our members by giving them the resources and flexibility they need to succeed,” says Ibrahim. “We think of MolenGeek as a tech ecosystem rather than an office space.”

[Links]

Web: molengeek.com **Facebook:** [molengeek](#) **Twitter:** [@molengeek](#) **Instagram:** [molengeek](#)



Face of the Space:

Ibrahim Ouassari is the founder and CEO of MolenGeek. He is also the founder of Urbantech, a development company with some of Belgium's biggest industries as clients, and Crowdify, a recruitment platform for consultants and high-skilled professionals.





[Name]

Silersquare Triomphe

[Address]

Avenue Arnauld Fraiteur 15–23, 1050 Brussels



[Total Area]

5,000M²

[Workspaces]

500

[The Story]

Axel Kuborn and Alexandre Ponchon launched their first coworking center, Silersquare Louise, in 2008. Since then, they have opened five more coworking spaces in Belgium and Luxembourg and have increased their staff from two to thirty-eight. Silersquare Triomphe was launched in 2018. The building, located just outside Brussels' city center, is easily accessed by the city's ring road and conveniently situated near metro, train, tram and bus lines. The interior of the space is a marvel of design. The famous Belgian interior architect Lionel Jadot consulted with the Silersquare staff to design a space that would be inspirational to its members. The result is a dazzling environment of rich colors, unique materials, varying textures and interesting shapes. Extensive use of glass in the building is the hallmark of architect Phillippe Samyn, who originally designed it for Levi Strauss.

In addition to private offices, there are shared spaces, meeting rooms, a restaurant, a nap room, a roof terrace, alcoves and cockpit booths to hide away in. Silersquare offers its diverse members a variety of package deals, from private offices to daily passes. The defining characteristic of Silersquare Triomphe's neighborhood is its two major universities, and the space has made efforts to bring together students and entrepreneurs through its uStart and MySherpa programs. Great restaurants, shops and bars are also located nearby.

[Links]

Web: silersquare.eu/location/triomphe **Facebook:** [silersquare.triomphe](https://www.facebook.com/silersquare.triomphe) **Twitter:** [@silersquareEU](https://twitter.com/silersquareEU)



Face of the Space:

Marie Brouwez joined the Silversquare team in 2013. As a business developer, she helped to grow many of Silversquare's spaces, including Silversquare Triomphe. Silversquare plans to open thirty more coworking centers over the next five years, and Marie will continue to coach new employees and ensure that all the centers operate with the same good vibe. "I'm surrounded by great and successful people, and I love it!" she says.



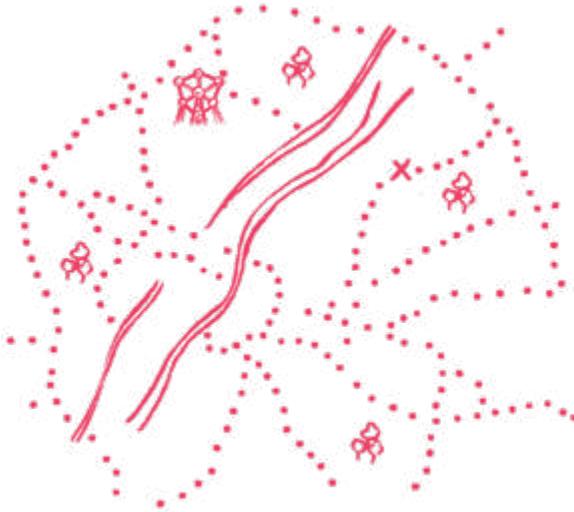


[Name]

transforma bxl

[Address]

Avenue Jules Bordet 13, 1140 Brussels



[Total Area]

3,100M²

[Workspaces]

130

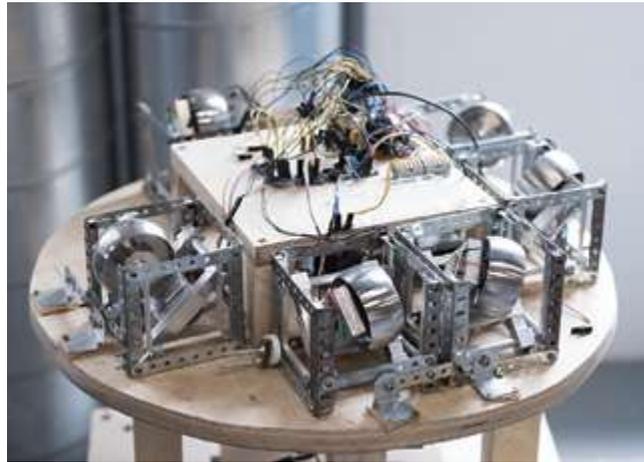
[The Story]

As a space with sustainable innovation at its heart, transforma bxl has built an ecosystem for startups and individual entrepreneurs who contribute to a community that is coworking, innovating, experimenting and finding sustainable solutions to the problems facing twenty-first-century society. Embracing bottom-up innovation, transforma bxl is able to shed the constraints that a traditional office hierarchy can put on a young business, allowing team members to collaborate and collectively lead the company towards a shared vision. The space is able to share this core ideal through cocreation events and programs that feature world-class partners and experts. The idea is that contributing and sharing ideas with each other might lead to the technologies that shape our collective future.

The design of the space itself is conducive to these ideals, with expansive open areas and abundant amenities, as well as facilities for experimentation, such as its fablab. There is also a podcast studio and, for those ready to turn an idea into a reality, warehousing space for physical products. As it has grown, it has expanded its services; for example, it added an accelerator for tech-driven solutions and entrepreneurial programs that actively encourage new and exciting business models. All of this is provided within its own stringent environmental sustainability guidelines.

[Links]

Web: transformabxl.be **Facebook:** TransformaBxl **Twitter:** @transformabxl **Instagram:** transformabxl



Face of the Space:

Anis Bedda is a cofounder of transformaxl, having also founded BottomUp Innovation, a company helping organizations innovate using the principles of intrapreneurship, open innovation and crowdsourcing. Originally from Tunisia, Anis has traveled the world, and his experiences abroad gave him insight into a variety of cultures, inspiring him to become an entrepreneur in his own right.



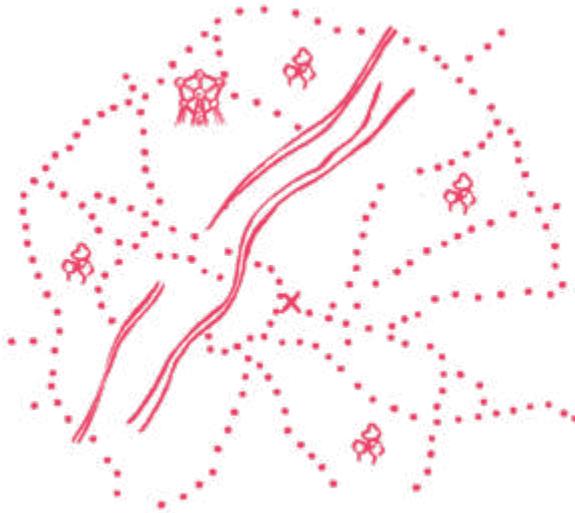


[Name]

WeWork Belmont Court

[Address]

Rue Belliard 51–53, 1000 Brussels



[Workspaces]

1,000

[Floors]

14

[The Story]

Located in the European Quarter of Brussels, WeWork Belmont Court became the company's first location in the city in September 2019. Its position enables its members to engage with the business-focused neighborhood and make meaningful connections. "In Brussels, a key city in regards to Europe and business transactions, we feel that having a space to host events, networking opportunities and flexible office workspace is beneficial," says Virginia de Craecker, the community manager at WeWork Belmont Court. The site hosts events to foster belonging among its members, ranging from Monday-morning breakfast to "lunch and learns," as well as wellness activities, happy hours and more.

Letting in plenty of natural light with almost-floor-to-ceiling windows, the building itself is conducive to connection and creativity. "The design of Belmont Court is based around productivity and motivation for our members," says Virginia. Informed by an understanding that members feel empowered by different environments, "Belmont Court provides our members with a variety of spaces to focus. They can relax on our soft seating in the communal area, close to our pool table, with the option to socialize. Alternatively, they can find a quieter area with a more traditional desk set up to work. However our members like to work, they're able to find a space to suit their needs and particular tasks for that day."

[Links]

Web: [wework.com/buildings/belmont-court--brussels](https://www.wework.com/buildings/belmont-court--brussels) **Facebook:** WeWork **Twitter:** @wework



Face of the Space:

"I knew I wanted to be part of the adventure," Virginia de Craecker says of learning that WeWork was launching in Brussels. Having worked in the hotel management industry around the world from Hong Kong to Aix-en-Provence, she was well-equipped for her role as community manager. "I've enjoyed connecting with our members, including international companies like Deliveroo and Belgium start-up Tyro, and look forward to supporting grow their businesses in our space."





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In partnership with:

Beyond Law Firm 120

hub.brussels 126

Proximus 132





Moana Colaneri and Thomas Daenen / Beyond Law Firm

Founding partners

[Sector] Legal services

As your company grows, there will inevitably come a point when you'll be faced with complex legal issues. Beyond Law Firm, founded in 2016 by Moana Colaneri and Thomas Daenen, focuses on the key areas of business law across various sectors, such as technology, digital media, fashion and life sciences. Moana focuses on the areas of IP, ICT, privacy and commercial law, while Thomas specializes in the areas of corporate law (mainly M&A and private equity) and commercial law.

"Startups often avoid getting legal counsel because they think it'll be very expensive or that lawyers are going to make things more complex than they actually are," says Moana. "This isn't always the case. To make it less intimidating for entrepreneurs to approach us, we offer a first meeting free of charge to understand and identify their legal needs and concerns."

"We want to work with startups and scaleups as early as possible so we can help them set up a good legal framework to support their growth and allow for a smooth exit," says Thomas. "Generally, the earlier we begin working with a startup, the more likely it is that we can help them avoid issues that will lead to expensive legal costs later."

Building a startup is undoubtedly exciting but it also requires a lot of juggling. Oftentimes, there are so many tasks and so many things to consider that legal matters are put on the back burner. That's where lawyers can help. However, working with a law firm can also seem daunting, especially if you don't have any experience in this realm.

Moana and Thomas offer three pieces of advice on how to find and work with the right lawyer for your startup. First and foremost, founders should not think about their legal strategy as something separate from their business strategy. "The two complement each other, and legal counsel can actually enhance your business strategy," says Moana.



Most important tips for startups:

- **Think about your legal strategy and business strategy as going hand in hand.** Instead of looking at these two things as separate, consider how they can complement each other and how legal counsel can boost your business.
- **Find a lawyer who understands your challenges.** This means choosing to work with someone who is well versed in the industry your startup or scaleup operates in and has a lot of experience under their belt.
- **Don't forget that online legal templates are not a substitute for professional legal services.** While templates can be helpful in some instances, a legal expert is needed when it comes to offering advice that relates to strategic business decisions.



Secondly, it's crucial to find a competent and experienced lawyer who is knowledgeable in the industry your business operates in. "There are so many lawyers out there," says Thomas. "Choose a lawyer that you trust, who understands your business and your challenges, and that you could see yourself working with on a long-term basis."

Finally, remember that filling in templates you find online is not a substitute for professional legal services. "Of course, for some simple documents, you can use online templates," says Moana, "but for strategic decisions, it's necessary to have an expert that understands your specific situation, helps you consider all the options available and offers concrete pieces of advice."

To support entrepreneurs in Belgium, Beyond Law Firm is involved in an array of different programs and initiatives. On the French-speaking side, the firm is, among other things, a legal partner of VentureLab in Liège, where it offers startups a certain number of hours of free legal assistance, and of Start.LAB in Brussels, where it provides primary legal assistance to startups once a month.

On the Flemish-speaking side, Beyond Law Firm has teamed up with IusStart at the university KU Leuven, where it works alongside students in their last year of the Master of Laws program to provide free legal advice to selected startups. In addition, the legal firm has recently started a collaboration with Start.VUB to provide startups with workshops on relevant legal issues as well as a number of hours of legal assistance.

In addition to its headquarters in Brussels, Beyond Law Firm has a second office in Hasselt that's located in the MIA.H incubator for fashion-and-accessories startups, where they provide primary legal assistance to designers on request.

About

Beyond Law Firm focuses on the main areas of business law. The firm assists clients in their strategic decisions, establishing strong partnerships. Beyond Law Firm challenges its clients continuously by providing them its specific point of view looking beyond the mere application of legislations, since there is more to law than laws.

[Contact]

Email: info@beyond-lawfirm.com

Telephone: Moana: +32 474 40 69 35 / Thomas: +32 472 56 14 44

[Links]

Web: beyond-lawfirm.com Facebook: [beyondlawfirm](https://www.facebook.com/beyondlawfirm) Twitter: [@beyond_lawfirm](https://twitter.com/beyond_lawfirm)



“Choose a lawyer that you trust, who understands your business and your challenges, and that you could see yourself working with on a long-term basis.”



Arnaud Texier, Emmanuel de Beughem, Marie Alexandre / hub.brussels

Arnaud Texier - Director of Sectoral and Thematic Support
Emmanuel de Beughem - Head of Business Unit Invest
Marie Alexandre - Advisor of Economic Coordination Council

[Sector] Business support

“We’re here to make entrepreneurs’ lives easier and smoother,” says Arnaud Texier, director of Sectoral and Thematic Support for hub.brussels, a large-scale agency that provides free expert advice to entrepreneurs and startups who want to start up or scale up in the Belgian capital. According to Arnaud, hub.brussels was created “to ensure that the Brussels economy grows and thrives in a sustainable way.”

For startups coming into Brussels to scale, “nearly ninety internationally based economic and trade commissioners provide free guidance and personalized information about the Brussels market,” says Arnaud. “We can put you in contact with our sectoral experts and clusters before you even arrive.”

Arnaud, who has a background in management and development of private and public companies, joined hub.brussels to help entrepreneurs and startups face financial and administrative hurdles in the Brussels ecosystem. At hub.brussels, he works with Emmanuel de Beughem, who joined the organization to support the city in an international environment and focuses on creating opportunities for foreign companies; and Marie Alexandre, who leverages her urban-planning background to bring promising projects in the ecosystem to life.

The main challenge Arnaud, Emmanuel and Marie see in entrepreneurship is how administrative, legal and regulatory hurdles can stop entrepreneurs in their tracks. This being the case, they advise you to get help with these challenges so you can focus wholly on your vision.

Emmanuel recounts having helped Zahra Khani, a cyber-security entrepreneur originally from Iran, to successfully found her company Firmalyzer in Brussels. “We helped her in all the issues not immediately related to her business so she could concentrate on her core business,” says Emmanuel. hub.brussels helped Zahra get the right visa and work permits, find a suitable office location, register with the municipality and make the best network connections.



Inspiration



Most important tips for startups:

- **Take advantage of the services in your ecosystem.** To be able to focus on your business vision (as well as your research and development and other content-related challenges), you should be open to receiving support from an organization such as hub.brussels. With administrative and other hurdles out of the way, you are freed up to tackle core business work.
- **Listen to others.** To be successful, you must communicate your story in the clearest way possible. The best way to know if your business story is coherent and compelling is to practice showing it to others and really listen to their feedback. Other people may not know the business as well as you, but they'll be able to tell you if you're being understandable.
- **Be persistent.** Entrepreneurial success does not happen fast. You must be persistent in every step in your journey, especially when you encounter failure. If you have to approach the same VC four or five times, it will be worth it in the end. So, don't abandon your projects, and stay strong.

“It’s important that startups are open to being taken by the hand with these processes,” says Emmanuel. He explains that if these administrative and regulatory processes pose too much of a challenge, then promising entrepreneurs with amazing projects can feel discouraged. “We know the pitfalls, so we help companies avoid wasting their time.”

Entrepreneurs and startups can be housed in hub.brussels’ incubator and benefit from complementary information provided by in-house team members. “Before, during and after they establish operations in the region, we’ll help them in matters including taxation and legal issues, company registration, contacting public authorities, suitable office space, public grant and incentive access and employment contract legislation,” says Emmanuel.

Entrepreneurs and startups should also be willing to listen to expert advice and actively use feedback. For companies ready to seek funding, for instance, hub.brussels organizes practice presentations and pitch sessions with VCs. “We have the companies present their business cases and financial plans, and we challenge them and help them improve them,” says Arnaud. “We make sure companies are ready for real investors. We ask all the annoying questions they are afraid of confronting.” The more you practice and trust in advisors, the better prepared you’ll be.

Starting a company takes a lot of time and even more effort, and having the patience and ability to listen and appreciate honesty is absolutely necessary to face the challenges of being an entrepreneur. “If we think their business isn’t sound, we tell them,” says Arnaud. “We’re not there just to please them when their business isn’t great.”

Finally, you should be persistent. If you have a support organization on your side helping you with administrative, regulatory and legal issues, there’s nothing stopping you from excelling at the main purpose of your business. If your project is great, you shouldn’t abandon it. Marie illustrates this point by speaking about the Brussels Beer Project. To bring their microbrewery to life, the cofounders Olivier de Brauwere and Sebastien Morvan worked with many hub.brussels experts who helped with public subsidies and grants, lease agreements and business relationships. The cofounders were able to persist in achieving their vision in part due to their openness to expert advice.

About

hub.brussels is a large-scale agency for business support that offers a wide array of free advice, services and tools to ensure the success of entrepreneurial projects. hub.brussels supports entrepreneurs, startups, scaleups, SMEs and even big companies with challenges ranging from setting up a legal entity to finding the right funding sources. hub.brussels works hard to make innovation and entrepreneurship accessible to people in Brussels and to create an urban economy capable of supporting innovation, internationalization and socioeconomic impact.

[Contact] Email: info@hub.brussels Telephone: +32 2 422 00 20

[Links] Web: hub.brussels/en Facebook: [brusselshub](https://www.facebook.com/brusselshub) Twitter: [@Brussels_hub](https://twitter.com/Brussels_hub)



“We make sure companies are ready for real investors. We ask all the annoying questions they are afraid of confronting.”



Hilde Van De Kerckhove / Proximus

Innovation Strategy Manager

[Sector] Telecommunication and ICT

No matter what industry you look at, there's an increasing number of startups teaming up with corporates to solve business problems and tackle societal issues. When the collaboration is successful, both parties win. For startups, potential benefits include access to market knowledge, experienced mentors, a large network and resources. On the other hand, larger companies can gain new ideas, tap into emerging innovations and technologies, and rejuvenate corporate culture by getting a taste of the entrepreneurial mindset.

"We collaborate with startups, scaleups and the academic world to help achieve our business and sustainability goals, particularly those enabling a better digital life by building a future-proof infrastructure with high-quality networks and digital platforms," says Hilde Van De Kerckhove, Innovation Strategy Manager at Belgian telecommunications and ICT company Proximus.

There's no doubt that when a startup joins forces with an established company, it can lead to immense opportunities. The question is: How can these two different entities overcome common challenges that inevitably arise and how can they align with one another to make a partnership work? Hilde shared some key pieces of advice on how startups can reap the benefits of a successful collaboration with a larger company, such as Proximus.

Startups tend to be willing to take risks and innovate faster and have a more flexible approach to business, while corporates are typically more risk-averse and take longer to make decisions and come up with established governance. There are countless differences in the way each operates. "When reaching out about a collaboration, make sure you know how the specific corporate works and its business DNA," says Hilde. "This will help both parties avoid wasting each other's time."

To make it easier for startups to reach out with collaboration opportunities, Proximus launched an initiative in 2017 called #ThinkChallenges, which connects entrepreneurs with a team of experts from all of the company's business units. Basically, startups can submit solutions that address one of three categories relating to Proximus' innovation strategy, such as new business, operations or sustainability. Domain experts will quickly provide feedback on whether the value proposition is a good enough fit and can lead to concrete collaboration projects.





Most important tips for startups:

- **Understand how the corporate you want to partner up with works.** Be aware of the key differences in how startups and larger companies operate. Do some research on the corporate you'd like to approach and get a sense of their business needs and goals.
- **Clearly communicate why you want to enter into the collaboration from the very beginning.** It's important that both the startup and corporate are transparent about their intentions and expected outcome for the collaboration. This will help ensure both parties are on the same page.
- **Be realistic about the promises you make during the negotiation process.** To avoid frustration and burning a good bridge, make sure your startup commits to an end-result that can realistically be achieved.

A healthy startup–corporate relationship requires that each party communicates honestly about its objectives from the very beginning. “It’s important to be transparent about why you want to enter into this kind of collaboration and to be clear about it with every stakeholder involved,” says Hilde. “It’s also helpful if founders can tell us the specific areas of their business that they need our support.”

Finally, Hilde advises entrepreneurs to be realistic about the promises they make when negotiating the terms of a partnership. She shares a learning experience where a startup committed to a certain end result in order to win the deal, but eventually it became clear to both parties that the startup team wouldn’t be able to deliver. In the end, both parties were frustrated and unhappy with the arrangement. “Ultimately, it’s about creating trust,” she says.

Since 2017, Proximus has been a shareholder of Co.Station, a Belgian innovation community and campus with locations in Brussels, Ghent and Charleroi. Co.Station brings together a wide variety of tech startups and scaleups. Additionally, Proximus has supported various Co.Station events to promote knowledge and idea exchange around the topics of IoT, GDPR, blockchain and social innovation. Furthermore, each year Proximus organizes the Think Things event for its partners and enterprise customers to demonstrate the opportunities for IoT and data analytics and encourage businesses to launch innovative projects.

About

Proximus Group is a telecommunication and ICT company operating in the Belgian and international markets, providing services to residential, enterprise and public customers. It is the leading provider of telephony, internet, television and network-based ICT services in Belgium through the Proximus and Scarlet brands. Proximus’ ambition is to become a digital service provider, connecting everyone and everything so people live better and work smarter.

[Contact] [Web: proximus.com/thinkchallenges](http://proximus.com/thinkchallenges)

[Links] [Web: proximus.com](http://proximus.com) [Facebook: WeAreProximus](#) [Twitter: @Proximusgroup](#)



“When reaching out about a collaboration, make sure you know how the corporate works and that you understand its business DNA.”



foun





ders

Isabella Lenarduzzi / JUMP 140

Jean-Charles Vanderlinden / CentralApp 148

Karim Slaoui / Cowboy 156

Stijn Christiaens / Collibra 164



Isabella Lenarduzzi

Founder and Managing Partner / JUMP

Isabella Lenarduzzi is the founder and managing director of JUMP, a social enterprise dedicated to equality between women and men at work. The Belgian-born entrepreneur has long wanted to transform society, even from a young age. She takes inspiration from her father, Domenico Lenarduzzi, the son of a migrant coal mine worker who, in 1987, created the Erasmus program, which helps millions of students live and study across the EU. Even before graduating with an economics master's from Université Catholique de Louvain in 1987, Isabella was an entrepreneur running multiple firms. Her experience as a woman in business led her to found JUMP, a social enterprise that actively supports women in reaching their full potential, in 2006.

Could you tell us why you founded JUMP? What inspired you to create your social enterprise?

One of the inspirations behind founding JUMP was the equality gap I experienced while working in business. Having worked with many companies, I realized that the corporate world was still very masculine and encouraged women and men to adopt specific behaviors, values and manners that are not inclusive.

Having run my own business for over fifteen years, I understand the pressures that come with being a woman in business and how lonely you can feel. I believe that women, with the help of conscious men, can change the world. But to make these changes, women need to share control of the economy.

We changed our slogan from being "JUMP for Active Women" to "Promoting Gender Equality Advancing the Economy." Our goal here was to make companies act and behave more inclusively towards women and minorities. Only by rewriting traditional rules can we change the workplace once and for all.



Before founding JUMP, you worked for many years as an entrepreneur and managing director in Belgium. Were you ever treated differently as a woman in the boardroom during this period?

Growing up in Belgium, I didn't believe that women were subject to discrimination in the workplace or society as a whole. It was only when I entered the business world that I realized integrating into a male-dominated world wasn't going to be easy, despite me having a supportive family and going to a fantastic school. I realized I was working in a society that has different expectations for women. For example, when I founded my first company with my male cofounders in the early 1990s, we were bought out by a male-dominated firm. They were around twenty years older than me, and I was not treated with the same respect as my partners, even though I was a cofounder like them. They were looking at me and talking to me differently. At times, I felt they were treating me like an executive assistant.

I felt agitated, as I found it challenging to handle this type of behavior, and that was a critical moment for me. Initially, that experience affected me, and I tried to adapt to how I thought a managing director should behave. I began to adopt traditional masculine behaviors and suppressed my authenticity. Back in the 1990s, you had to appear hard and resolute, otherwise men would perceive you as weak and judge you negatively. It's only recently that I've learned to celebrate my feminine qualities and support women empowerment through my work with JUMP.

Do you think, as a society, things have changed in the workplace for women since the early 1990s?

Yes, to a certain extent. I certainly think it's no longer politically correct for men to discriminate and make sexist remarks in big companies. However, we haven't fundamentally changed the configuration between men and women when it comes to promotions, so I'm unconvinced we've made much progress. This is especially the case in smaller firms, where women are still subject to discrimination. While there's been social and political progress since the nineties, there's still gender discrimination at the top level. Women only make up fifteen percent of executive committees, which is shocking if you consider that almost sixty percent of graduates in Europe are women.

*“ I believe that women,
with the help of
conscious men, can
change the world. ”*



Can you tell us how JUMP has made tangible changes in the workplace that have benefited women and men?

JUMP works with hundreds of companies on this issue. Let me give you two examples: We have trained more than three hundred managers at Orange France (formerly France Télécom S.A.) on how to prevent discrimination in the recruitment process, and we have helped them become thought leaders in corporate diversity. Recently, we've worked in partnership with Pierre Wunsch, the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium, on making the bank more diverse and inclusive. We even recorded a video with him on this subject, to help the bank reach their target of forty percent of female-led promotions and recruitment in senior areas.

These are just a few examples of the difference we're making with regards to diversity and changing corporate culture to make companies become more inclusive.

Since founding JUMP in 2006, is there anything you would have done differently?

When young entrepreneurs today have a business idea, they go to the VC market and receive financial support. I've always preferred to keep full control over my companies and to be financially independent, so nobody influences my decisions. I prefer to be free to decide on my strategy. In retrospect, I sometimes question whether this was the right decision for JUMP. Perhaps we could have grown quicker if we had received funding at the beginning.

I think this hesitancy is typical for women and for my generation, as you sometimes don't feel comfortable asking for money because of "imposter syndrome." You start questioning yourself and feel you're not worthy of funding, which is deeply unhelpful, and this attitude has held women back for decades.

Imposter syndrome has had an enormous impact on my life. The more I think about it, the more I understand how it has impacted my career. If I had acknowledged this feeling when I was younger, I would have rejected it and done things differently.

What has been the best decision you've made and why?

As an entrepreneur, I have a mission in life to achieve my goals and dreams. Founding JUMP has been a wonderful experience for me, and this is arguably the best decision in life. I don't have much time to sleep or do sports, which affects my health, but honestly, I'm so happy because I feel that I am thus fulfilling my life's mission.

I'm delighted, even if sometimes my purpose is complicated and time consuming. I've not made much money, and, unfortunately, I don't think I ever will, but I'm so pleased because I'm achieving what I set out to do. I think I make a difference to the world on a small scale, and I'm very proud of the work I've done with JUMP.

What professional advice would you give to people in the early stages of founding a startup?

You need to find pleasure in what you're doing. If you're running a startup, you're going to work incredibly long hours, so if you don't enjoy what you're doing, then it won't be worthwhile. Another key aspect for me is generosity, especially if I reflect on what I've achieved in my businesses. I've done great things because I'm surrounded by warm and kind-hearted people who are willing to give back to me what I give to them.

As when it comes to networking, it's much more than just meeting people in the transactional sense. It's finding people who want to do something for you. You have to give so much to make that human connection and be true to yourself and others. To get something in return, people need to feel you care about them. It's more than give and take. To be successful, you need to discover pleasure and generosity, in my opinion.

What's it like running JUMP in Brussels? What does the city offer startups?

I founded JUMP in 2006 in Brussels, and, more recently, we opened activities in both Paris and Lyon. Brussels now has much more to offer startups than when I first started in the nineties, although I do feel some hesitancy within Belgian society. Some people still think that you become an entrepreneur just to earn lots of money and that you achieve that by exploiting people. Thankfully, attitudes are changing, and it's much easier to disseminate information and make positive connections in Brussels than it was before.

[About] JUMP is a leading social enterprise working with organizations and individuals to close the gap between women and men at work, achieve sustainable corporate performance and create an equal society.



What are your top work essentials?

My smartphone and laptop.

At what age did you found your company?

I founded my first company at university when I was twenty-one.

What's your most-used app?

WhatsApp.

What's the most valuable piece of advice you've been given?

You can do it!

What's your greatest skill?

Energy, generosity and hard work.



Jean-Charles Vanderlinden

Founder / CentralApp

Brussels native Jean-Charles Vanderlinden began his entrepreneurial career at the Solvay Business School (ULB), where he studied business engineering. However, it wasn't the classroom or lecture hall that fostered his enthusiasm for entrepreneurship; he joined every student association that would have him and worked on projects like creating posters and T-shirts for events, organizing ski trips and business games or preparing arguments for the next faculty council. Now he runs CentralApp with his three cofounders. It is a streamlined solution that helps local businesses manage their online marketing, keeping things simple so business owners can focus on their passion.

How did you arrive at the idea for CentralApp?

The idea came to me during a very unlucky weekend. One Saturday, I'd planned to reconnect with an alumnus I'd met a few years earlier during a university project. I wanted to organize the reunion in a nice setting, so I searched online for a restaurant that was advertised as open and told him I had booked a table for 12:30. You can't imagine how embarrassed I was when he showed up a little early in front of a closed restaurant. The next day was my mother's birthday, and my father had booked a nice restaurant weeks in advance. When we arrived, there was a sign on the door saying, "We're closed today." It was 8 PM, a bit late to find an alternative on a Sunday night in Brussels.

You could say these things happen, but the coincidence kept bothering me for weeks. How was it possible that such restaurants couldn't do something as simple as managing their opening hours online? I called the few people I knew who had local businesses and started to inquire about how they manage their information online, their website and reservations. None were happy with their online presence, and I identified one key issue: having a page with at least the correct business name, address, phone number and opening hours on all the important online maps, listings and social networks. I asked if they'd be interested in me taking care of this for them for a small fee, and most of them were.



That's how it started. There was no product, no company, nothing. It was just me after work, creating web pages, claiming them and updating the information. What I quickly realized was that it became very time consuming to do this in a reliable way for multiple businesses. Some of the updates I'd made were quickly overwritten by other sources of information, some updates that were accepted took weeks to be visible online so I had to re-update the information quite often and keep track of many accounts and passwords. I thought, if there was a way to automate all of these processes, there'd actually be a lot of value in it. That's the idea behind the first CentralApp product, a solution that updates all your listings from one single form. The market seemed to have no limit – there were clients on every street – so I went for it.

Did you make any mistakes in the early days?

I've made a lot of mistakes at CentralApp, but I think the most significant was the decision to outsource our development to an agency without the proper advisors after I failed to find a technical cofounder fast enough. When I realized I needed software to automate what I had started to do manually, I set out to find a technical cofounder. Unfortunately, after months of networking and failed partnership attempts, I still hadn't found someone. I decided to change my strategy and hire a small agency to build the solution I had imagined. The deal was simple. They would develop the first version of the product based on what I was doing manually for a fixed fee and some shares in the newly formed company. In the meantime, I'd continue selling, doing the manual updates and I'd prepare the launch of the product. They were very confident, but a few months down the line the project wasn't on track at all and I realized they had underestimated the work required on their side to get to a working version. The best I got was a website that was faking it well enough to test the market with our initial partners. In the background, nothing was working – and I didn't know anything about programming so I couldn't do anything to fix their code. We launched anyway, and luckily we still had our manual process and good enough traction to fake it. This made us confident enough to continue, but on the tech side everything had to be rebuilt from scratch.

What stage is the business at now?

Right now it is a very exciting moment to be at CentralApp. The team is growing a lot, we have major product updates coming out, and we're launching in new countries. We're at a stage where all the things that we've been imagining for a few months are slowly taking shape, and I'm really confident we have a chance at becoming the number one marketing solution for local businesses in Europe.

“ Building a startup is about building a dream team with the right attitude that shares the same values. ”



If partnering with the agency that failed to build CentralApp was the biggest mistake you made, what was the best decision?

When we only had our local-SEO products, our larger accounts – chains with over fifty locations – all wanted us to scale to a broader local advertising tool, whereas the local businesses we worked with all wanted us to help with their website and community management. We tried for some time to cater to both needs, but rather quickly we became unfocused and had to make a choice.

We decided to stick with the local businesses and develop an ultimate solution for them. This step is one of the most important we ever took at CentralApp. It wasn't a question of making a good or a bad choice – both options made financial sense – but supporting local business was and still is a core value of CentralApp. Everyone in the team shares this love of local businesses. They all know the names of their favorite chefs, their hairdressers and so on. It's very important to us.

Let's talk about your entrepreneurial background. Where did you get your start?

My life as an entrepreneur started at university, in my involvement in the student associations and all the projects you can do around your studies. Those were amazing times for me, and my only disappointment was that sometimes we didn't go far enough with our projects. I was convinced that any student association could deliver the same quality of service as any professional organization, but not many students were ready to give it the time it needed. That's until I met Pablo – one of my cofounders at CentralApp. He had just cocreated the Solvay Business Game, a two-day business-case competition. I was really impressed at how much effort his team was putting into the first edition, so I joined his team for the second. I knew it was the project I wanted to give all my energy to, so when I was offered the chance to lead the organization for the third edition, I couldn't refuse.

Leading the Solvay Business Game for a year was my first real entrepreneurial experience. A new team had to be recruited, and because I had set the objective of doubling the event size, we had to redefine everything from logistics and marketing to finances. It was a year of very hard work for everyone on the team, but, looking at where the event is at today, I think it was really worth it. I'm so proud of the team that made it happen. This experience was life changing for me because, from that moment on, I knew I would launch my own company.

What's some advice you could give young entrepreneurs?

Many people with amazing ideas have come to me for advice on their business, and I feel the only valid advice I can give is "Building a startup is about building a dream team with the right attitude that shares the same values." I say this because unless they are launching something very similar to CentralApp, they probably know their market much better than I do. So my advice is only going to be about gathering the right people – the right cofounders, partners, employees, investors and advisers.

It took me a very long time to get the right cofounding team for CentralApp, with multiple failures along the way. Even today, making sure we find the right talents who share our values is the only thing that keeps me awake at night. When you build a startup, everyone – really everyone – on the team matters.

How do you find working in the Brussels startup ecosystem?

I love Brussels. I think it's one of the best cities to operate a startup in Europe. It's very international, it naturally attracts a lot of talent from around the world, it has great universities and it's well connected; you can be in Paris, London or Amsterdam within a couple of hours. And on top of all that, most people are welcoming and easy to meet. If you just drop them a message, most people will meet you over a coffee or beer.

On the downside, the ecosystem suffers a lot from the fragmentation of resources, language and culture. If you want to scale in Belgium, it's almost like launching in three separate markets, which individually are very small. So you have to factor in that most of your efforts as a startup will be focused on other markets.

[About] **CentralApp** helps local businesses get their online marketing right by streamlining the technology behind it. With simple-to-use tools, it allows business people to focus on their core business while CentralApp's marketing solution takes care of their online presence.



What are your top work essentials?

My laptop and coffee.

At what age did you found your company?

Twenty-five.

What's your most-used app?

Soundcloud.

What's the most valuable piece of advice you've been given?

Don't forget that building a company is a race with no finish line, so try to enjoy the ride.

What's your greatest skill?

Resilience. I never give up.



Karim Slaoui

Cofounder and Head of Engineering / Cowboy

Karim Slaoui is cofounder and head of engineering at Cowboy, a Brussels-based startup that develops innovative electric bikes for urban commuters. Previously, from 2012 to 2016, Karim Slaoui ran the food-delivery startup Take Eat Easy, an early Deliveroo competitor. Despite registering 30 percent monthly growth and its client base going from 30,000 to 350,000, it was unable to raise a third round of funding. Using the experience and knowledge he gained on this venture, Karim and his fellow entrepreneurs Adrien Roose and Tanguy Goretti cofounded Cowboy, a sustainable venture looking to transform urban mobility by making lightweight and user-friendly electric bikes. Founded in 2017, the startup began by selling ebikes in Belgium in April 2018 and hit the €1 million milestone in just four months.

How and why did you found Cowboy? Could you describe the path you took?

In 2016, Adrien Roose and I founded a food-delivery company called Take Eat Easy, which operated with bicycle couriers, and we had to shut down the company. What it did, though, was bring us closer to the issue of mobility in cities. We were surprised to find that very few of our couriers were using electric bikes, despite many of them being paid by the hour, where an electric bike could help them deliver orders faster. So we began to look into the electric bike market in Belgium and started researching who was using them. We found that the market had been targeting older residents with mobility problems, with 90 percent of electric bikes sold to people older than sixty-five. At this point, electric bikes in Belgium, were seen as an assisted mobility device for people who are unable to cycle properly.

It's weird, to be honest, as I didn't have a driver's license in 2016 and nor did many of my friends in Paris and London. I began wondering why so many of my peers were not using electric bikes as they're fast and give you the freedom of a car without the maintenance hassles. Back in 2016, it was mostly old people buying ebikes. They weren't a hit with younger generations – and when I say young, I mean people under fifty!

Why do you think the market for electric bikes took off after 2016?

In 2016, there were signs of change with the “Copenhagenization” of cities and the overall trend towards slower mobility. Since then, local and federal governments have been investing public money in cycle-friendly infrastructure in Brussels and other cities. What followed was a perfect storm with environmental fears and traffic jams colliding with one another.



It's becoming clear that an unsustainable number of cars are polluting our cities. Everyone realizes we cannot keep going on like this, as we're going to kill the planet. Also, people are getting fed up with traffic jams and waiting for hours in their car. It's getting slower everywhere, and we're reaching a point where people would rather walk to work than drive. I think there's a growing realization that we need to rethink our transport policies, and these combined factors have influenced the ebike market for sure.

When it came to branding your product, why did you name it Cowboy?

We needed a name that provoked a strong emotional response from customers. We would much rather have a name that divides opinion than have a name that everyone likes. For some people, "cowboy" is an insult, while for others, it's about freedom. So our goal was to have a name that provokes a reaction. We had a list of titles that we shared with our friends and asked them a week later, do you remember any of them? The only name that stuck was Cowboy.

Cowboy is about taking your freedom back from cars. Like when you're stuck in traffic and not getting anywhere, but then you hop on your bike and become free again. You can travel wherever you want on a bike. We had this image of the Cowboy as a horse chasing cars, where you have the freedom to go wherever you wish and live freely once again.

During the early stages of Cowboy, did you encounter any difficulties? If so, what were they, and how did you overcome them?

I think that the biggest challenge was that we knew nothing about the industry. We were software guys entering a hardware world and, more specifically, the bike sector, so the first thing we did was look for a bike assembler in Europe. We found two and immediately booked a train ticket to visit them. That was an important moment for us, and we spent maybe a year just researching the market. Even today, we're still learning about supply chains and how things work in the bike industry, and the terminology they use, so that was arguably our biggest challenge. We knew that we knew nothing, and that's important for any startup business.

We have a learner's mindset, and we aren't afraid to ask stupid questions as that's what enables you to grow.

“We see the Cowboy
as a horse chasing cars,
where you have the
freedom to go wherever
you want and live freely
once again.”



High costs, poor design and redundant technology have been cited as reasons for why consumers have been reluctant to buy electric bikes. How did Cowboy go about solving these problems?

Since we came from the software industry, we knew what we could do in terms of the smartphone and where we wanted to go. Styling for us was essential, so we invested time finding the right partner. We interviewed forty companies before going with a Swedish company, Propeller, who helped us with the bike's industrial design and packaging. The last part of the prize was online marketing, which is our specialty. We decided that quality was paramount and we're not going to compromise on the product, but, instead, we'll sell it online and save on retail costs.

What makes your electric bikes distinctive from other brands on the market? In your words, what's special and unique about your product?

The first thing is connectivity, as we don't believe in selling just a bike. We believe in providing solutions. You're always connected with a Cowboy bike, as we provide affordable insurance and comprehensive after-sales service, and you can access a network of dealers who can fix your bike if there's an issue. We care about our customers, and the transaction does not stop once you buy a bike from us – it's an ongoing relationship, and our app allows you to maintain contact with our team.

Our customers love the design of the bike, especially its lightness and nimble frame, which makes it urban ready. What's more, it's also extremely fast, with an average speed of eighteen kilometers per hour, which is faster than many cars, especially during rush hour.

Did you learn any lessons from Take Eat Easy when launching Cowboy? If so, what were they?

We knew we didn't want to work in an oversaturated market again. Instead, we began to look for a new marketplace and invent a unique product and gain a substantial share of the market. By entering the ebike sector, we had a fresh opportunity to create a market segment on our terms.

We also wanted to avoid the negative unit economics that we experienced with Take Eat Easy. As with food deliveries, you lose money on every sale you make, so it became a race to see who can raise the most money. If you have more money than everyone else, then you can outlast the competition and enjoy domination when everyone falls by the wayside. Looking back, it's no wonder that Deliveroo and Uber won, because they have the most money, so we were keen to avoid a repeat scenario.

As an entrepreneur that helped cofound two startups, Take Eat Easy and Cowboy, what has been your biggest mistake and best decision?

In my professional life, my biggest mistake was not listening. I think sometimes you think you know everything, and, by doing so, you stop paying attention. When we were launching Take Eat Easy back in 2012, all of us thought we had it worked out. Since that time, I've learned a lot about myself: that I don't know everything and that I need to keep learning and listening to other people. So, looking back, not listening to people is by far my biggest mistake, and if I had done so then, it could have spared me some difficult times.

The best decision was entering the entrepreneurial world. I was studying for a PhD, and I was bored. I had friends – my cofounders – who were starting Take Eat Easy, and I said sure! It's gone pretty well for me since then.

Finally, what makes Brussels stand out as a startup hub?

Firstly, it's the center of Europe, so there's an excellent transport system, and it's easily accessible by train and plane across the continent. So that's great from a logistical perspective. Secondly, the quality of life in Brussels is high, especially when you compare it to places such as Paris. As you know, these megacities are so competitive that you never feel relaxed, while in Brussels it's the opposite feeling. Belgium, as a market, is also very supportive of startups. Local people are generally very enthusiastic when you try something new and also forgiving if you fail.

[About] **Cowboy** is a Belgian startup developing innovative electric bikes for riders, and they are looking to improve urban mobility and take people to their destination more efficiently and sustainably.



What are your top work essentials?

Laptop and phone.

At what age did you found your company?

Twenty-five.

What's your most-used app?

WhatsApp

What's the most valuable piece of advice you've been given?

Don't compromise.

What's your greatest skill?

I get stuff done.



Stijn Christiaens

CTO / Collibra

Stijn Christiaens is a cofounder of Collibra. Previously, he was a senior researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, specializing in application-oriented semantics. Stijn earned two master's degrees in information technology and artificial intelligence in 2003 and 2004 respectively from Catholic University of Leuven. He's a noted speaker at industry conferences on the topics of data governance and semantics. Stijn has also received several patents for his inventions in the field of ontology engineering.

What led you towards creating a startup?

That goes a long way back. Felix Van de Maele, Pieter De Leenheer, Damien Trog and I started Collibra in 2008 out of the lab at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel where we were working as researchers. We felt there was a potential opportunity with the ideas, research and technology we were working with to improve the way businesses thought about their data. The way organizations think about their data is kind of clunky because their businesses are based on models from the industrial age. They're used to dealing with physical goods – electricity and accounting, for example – and the data has always been an afterthought. It's like an exhaust. If you're trying to manage data as an exhaust and be competitive, you're going to choke. The key to us was trying to change the way organizations thought about data by showing them how they can connect the data with the people that need it and also that there's a big social component. If you know who created the data then you're more likely to trust it. We believed that there was a unique opportunity to modernize how data was organized and accessed, and it would not manifest itself in the lab or at a traditional software company.

What were some of the early struggles that you encountered?

Well, that can all be summarized under the umbrella of us not knowing anything. It's not as if we knew how to do a startup. We had barely any professional working experience. Nine months in, we realized we weren't selling because our team was missing enterprise software sales and marketing experience. That's when we brought in cofounder Benny Verhaeghe, who had a lot of experience in the field.



Another problem was that the positioning we took in the early days didn't stick. We were trying to sell something to fix a problem that businesses didn't think they had. Pivoting is always talked about in Silicon Valley, but trusting in that decision is not easy and took us more than a year. It's not like flipping a switch. Data governance is not a new subject, so we had to figure out what we were going to do that was different from everybody else. Technology vendors focused on the IT users, so we decided to focus on the business users because that's where the data ownership lies.

What's the best decision you've made?

Thinking big and deciding to be a category-defining company rather than being a follower in a category that already exists. By focusing on the business users, we've always had a platform play. Also our expansion to the United States in 2014 really helped us accelerate our growth. If you're building a company that's the best in Belgium, somebody global will swoop in and steadily take your market. After we brought on Benny Verhaeghe as a cofounder, he was pretty adamant about going international, specifically to the United States, because it's a large, unified, single-buyer's market and they tend to make software decisions quickly. In Europe, the market is a lot more fragmented and typically slower. But, of course, you need appropriate cash flow to get into the US. So what we did for about five years was prospecting, going to trade shows, setting up a booth with banners and talking to people. We'd stay for two or three weeks at a time, trying to visit people, build connections, network and pipeline. I would definitely recommend to think global in this day and age, unless you're building a website for just your town.

What was the biggest mistake you've made?

Building features that are too driven by a single customer. Everybody knows not to do this, but when you're in the thick of it and your money's running out, it's really hard not to when it's the only deal in your pipeline. This happened to us with a large enterprise, and they were adamant about it, but it turned out to be a mistake. We put a feature in only to take it out years later because it's not being used. It almost even caused us to lose expansion opportunities in accounts because the feature was so specialized for a certain audience.

We also made a lot of mistakes in hiring at different levels across the organization. It's actually two mistakes. The first is that you're typically ignoring your gut feel about hiring a person. You know it's wrong, but it's a collaborative process and you sort of talk each other into it or you're just tired because you haven't found anyone in a year. The second is not firing that person fast enough.

“Don't just look for copies of yourselves. Look for strong people who can help you grow the company. I always say we're as great as the company we keep.”



There are so many stages of growth that necessitate shifts in the dynamics between your cofounders and friends. When you go from a thirty-person team of friends you've been through thick and thin with to a hundred-person team, you have to work differently. We took our time at making that transition because there's a lot of hardship you go through together that creates strong connections, but thinking things were still the same was a mistake. Everyone has to adjust through the growth stages of a company.

What professional advice would you give to people who are in the very earliest stages of their startup?

First of all, don't try to do everything on your own. You have your strengths and your weaknesses, so make sure that you have a team that balances it out. Finding, keeping and growing that strong team is key. Don't be afraid to look for people who are different from you. Don't just look for copies of yourselves. Look for strong people who can help you grow the company. I always say a company is only as great as the company you keep. It's also important to always keep growing and learning. You always have to be trying to figure things out.

Spend time discussing strategy, like three or four times a year. There's a lot of operational stuff, so it's tempting to put it off, but it's really important to remind you where you're going.

It's crucial to recognize what you're doing that isn't working. In the early days, we were trying to sell to everyone, but people didn't want to take meetings with us and when they did, they weren't really interested. We realized our pitch was too complicated and didn't articulate clearly enough the value we'd bring to them. As we refined it, we got a little further and went into competitive sales cycles where we were the small fry but got pulled in alongside big software vendors. As we won and lost deals, we had heated discussions of what we needed to change about the product. These conversations can be hard, but don't shy away from them. That is how diamonds are made.

What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

I manage to explain things well, which is important for the complex industry we're in. I come across as very trustworthy. If I'm trying to play someone or lie, people just see right through me, but if I'm authentic, it comes across very strong. I'm also very driven, but that can cause tunnel vision. I'd get this idea in my mind that we had to do this one thing to be successful, and when I look back on it now I realize we weren't ready to do it even if I thought it was a great idea. It's a big mistake if you don't have a reality check with other people who can catch your blind spots.

What's your daily routine?

I don't have a regular routine, honestly. I'm usually at the office, but sometimes I work from home when we have long management meetings that can go for ten hours until midnight. I just bought a Cowboy bike, so I try to bike to work now.

What do you like about working in Brussels?

I was in New York for four years, originally setting up our office there. I liked its fast pace for both work and recreation. If you have a lot of work to do, which startups typically have, New York is a great place, but it's expensive and exhausting. There are so many companies there, and it's geographically big compared to Brussels. Here, things are smaller and slower in my experience. It's a slower culture, and the quality of life is a lot better. Startups here are more bootstrappy and authentic. There's much less money available here, so you've got to figure things out a little bit more.

[About] **Collibra** accelerates trusted business outcomes by connecting the right data, insights, and algorithms for all Data Citizens. True Data Intelligence allows organizations to unlock the value of their data and turn it into a strategic, competitive asset.



What are your top work essentials?

Trust, hard work, collaboration, asking for help.

At what age did you found your company?

Twenty-eight.

What's your most-used app?

Twitter.

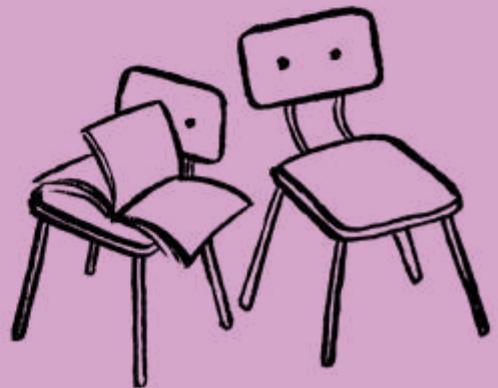
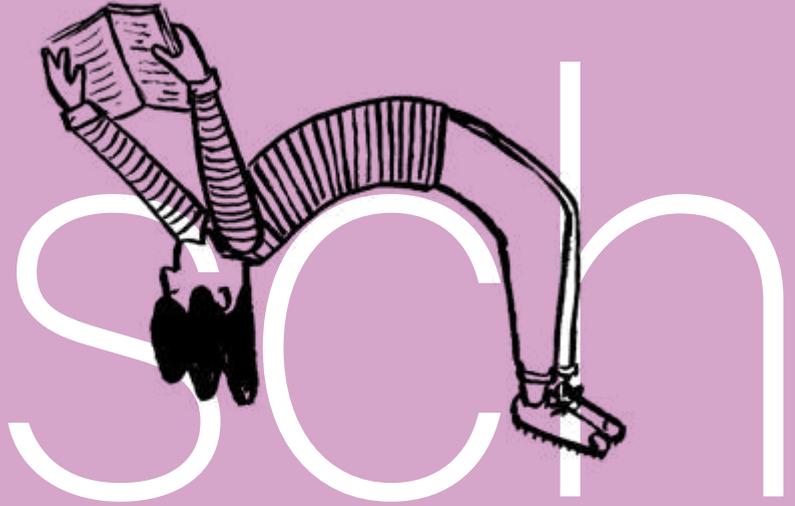
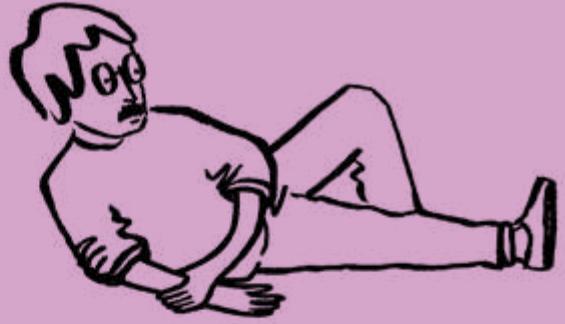
What's the most valuable piece of advice you've been given?

Always talk through ideas. And for important ones: sleep on it.

What's your greatest skill?

I'm a puzzle piece that fits in multiple places.







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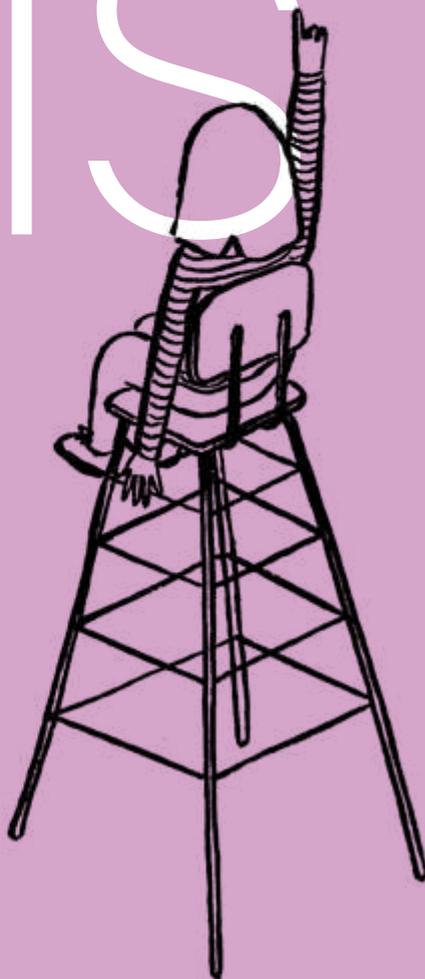
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- **Devote your time to the Piscine.**
It is essential that candidates dedicate as much time as possible to 19 during this crucial four-week time. This process will decide which candidates get admitted.
- **Be disciplined.**
Although everyone is able to advance at their own pace, projects must still be delivered. As there are no teachers, classes or schedules, a certain rigor is necessary.
- **Be invested.**
It is important to be invested in every project, whether on your own or in a group.
- **Be part of the community.**
Make sure to bond with your peers. Participating in events and workshops plays a role in your success at 19.

[Name]

19

[Elevator Pitch]

"We are a tuition-free coding platform that uses a peer-to-peer model to educate aspiring developers."

[Enrollment]

Apprentice developers per year: 150

[Description]

Founded in 2017 by Ian Gallienne and John-Alexander Bogaerts, 19 is a tuition-free coding platform whose teaching method centers around peer-to-peer learning. Modeled on 42 in Paris, the school has no teachers, books or classes. This unconventional approach aims to remove the power dynamic between teacher and pupil and give apprentice coders the opportunity to collaborate with each other on an even playing field. "At 19, the apprentice coders are in charge of their own success and the success of their peers," says Emilie Peeters, communication and events manager at 19. "In order to progress in their projects, the coders have to count on the strength of their group, which involves sharing information, giving constructive feedback and switching between the 'corrector' and the 'corrected.'"

The 19 method is identical to the 42 Paris method and its other partner campuses around the world. Instead of offering a series of specific coding languages and technologies, 19's platform is structured around five major themes, which are divided into seventeen skills. While some projects are mandatory, each student has the opportunity to build their own curriculum based on their unique preferences. "19 makes it possible for coders to understand any programming language and paradigm," says Emilie. In addition, coders of 19 learn how to adapt, think outside the box and propose innovative solutions, which are all essential skills necessary for professional integration.

For aspiring developers looking to apply for 19, no previous training is required. However, as part of the admissions process, online tests for logic and memory must be passed. After this stage, successful applicants will be immersed in a one-month test called the Piscine (meaning "pool" in French), which gives prospective developers the opportunity to explore 19's platform and get a crash course in its curriculum. 19's platform is financed by sponsors and private partners and is entirely free of charge.

[Apply to]

s19.be/processus-admission

[Links]

Web: s19.be **Facebook:** [19network42](https://www.facebook.com/19network42) **Twitter:** [@19network42](https://twitter.com/19network42) **Instagram:** [19network42](https://www.instagram.com/19network42)



- **Be motivated.**
We want students who are very motivated and passionate about all things IT.
- **Show commitment.**
You need to be available full-time for the duration of the ten-month course.
- **Be able to collaborate.**
You should enjoy working as a team to achieve a common objective.
- **Be ambitious.**
Be ready to change your life by kickstarting a career in the IT sector.

[Name]

BeCode

[Elevator Pitch]

"We are a social project that aims to give as many people as possible the opportunity to acquire digital skills."

[Enrollment]

Students per year: 150

[Description]

Focused on spreading access to digital skills, BeCode offers free web development and AI data-analytics training. It focuses on candidates who are without degrees, diplomas or work experience and therefore alienated from many kinds of employment, with the goal being to help unemployed young people access tech-based jobs. Its seven-month-long training courses are followed by up to three months of internship. "We focus on the candidate's motivation to change their life by starting a career in the IT sector, and we use an active pedagogy," says Tom Crohin, communications and marketing manager. "Learning by doing, eighty percent of our learners are back on the employment track after the training." Participants learn by working on real projects, which BeCode believes is more motivating, stimulating and rewarding. This also means they have a good portfolio after only a couple of months in training.

BeCode offers one program that trains participants to be web developers and another that trains AI data analysts, but it's developing programs in other cutting-edge sectors, such as cybersecurity. All this is delivered free of charge, and BeCode can even provide participants with a free laptop for the duration of the program. Depending on their situation, participants may also be able to gain access to financial help from local job agencies for the duration of the training.

Open to all, regardless of nationality or origins, BeCode's primary aim is to stimulate the labor market in Belgium and ensure people lacking in qualifications are able to access the tech-based job market. Yet it also hopes its students go on to form their own businesses and become job creators in their own right. "At BeCode, we encourage our learners to follow their dream, and we put everything in action to help them get closer to it," says Tom. "We invite entrepreneurs to come into our classrooms and share their knowledge and experience with our learners."

[Apply to]

becode.org

[Links]

Web: becode.org **Facebook:** [becode.org](https://www.facebook.com/becode.org) **Twitter:** [@BecodeOrg](https://twitter.com/BecodeOrg) **LinkedIn:** [company/becode.org](https://www.linkedin.com/company/becode.org)



- **Believe in our philosophy.**
In Brussels, we believe that everyone has the right to higher education, which is why we don't have a selection procedure. However, we expect our students to always work to the best of their ability and be passionate about their subject.

- **Be ambitious.**
We encourage our students to pursue whatever it is that excites and motivates them. Set ambitious goals for yourself and work hard to achieve them.

- **Devote enough time for your study.**
To get the most out of your studies at ICHEC, dedicate enough time to developing your skills.

- **Reach out for help when you need it.**
We encourage our students to always ask questions and discuss their concerns with us, no matter what stage of their ICHEC career they are at.

[Name]

ICHEC Brussels Management School

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are a teaching institution with an international reach. Our mission is to uncover the talent of our students and train them to become responsible and open-minded citizens of the world.”*

[Enrollment] **Total enrollment: 2,500 (2019)**

[Description] ICHEC is a teaching-oriented, nonprofit, state-funded school. Founded in 1954, the school is guided by the principles of respect, solidarity and integrity. It aims to inspire academic excellence while educating students to become responsible and open-minded business managers. “ICHEC adopts a rigorous approach to its academic programs,” says Sophie Peters, associate dean of international affairs at ICHEC. “With an emphasis on business practice, our graduates gain the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary to embark on a lifelong learning process.”

ICHEC offers a two-year Master’s in Business Administration, which includes courses in venture creation, SME management and business succession. In the second year of the program, students complete a long-term internship with an established company to gain sound theoretical and practical knowledge of a business environment. In addition to its academic curriculum, ICHEC also has its own incubator called the Start Lab, which aims to support and develop the entrepreneurial talents of students and recent graduates. With specialist mentoring and training sessions, the Start Lab enables students to build sustainable, job-creating companies that are based on positive societal values.

Inspiring the next generation of changemakers to be environmentally and socially conscious is at the heart of ICHEC’s curriculum and is also the leading theme of its summer school. Taking place over a period of three weeks, the summer school introduces students to new and innovative ways of conducting business. It centers around two main themes: regenerative business and regenerative self. Students gain insight into sustainable economic models such as the circular economy as well as lessons on how to maintain a healthy mind and body through yoga and meditation.

[Apply to] [ichec.be/en/enrolment](https://www.ichec.be/en/enrolment)

[Links] **Web:** [ichec.be](https://www.ichec.be) **Facebook:** [ICHEC.Brussels.Management.School](https://www.facebook.com/ICHEC.Brussels.Management.School) **Twitter:** [@IchecBrussels](https://twitter.com/IchecBrussels)



- **Speak English.**
Le Wagon is a worldwide community with English as the preferred language.
- **Demonstrate high motivation levels.**
We're looking for individuals with the strength of mind to stick with the program until the end.
- **Be able to collaborate.**
Engaging in a bootcamp is a shared adventure with fellow students, and you will learn to collaborate within an international team. Together, you'll go further.
- **Learn fast, and a lot.**
Students should be prepared for a challenging experience and trust that the process will teach them something new every day.

[Name]

Le Wagon

[Elevator Pitch]

"We run an intensive nine-week coding bootcamp that teaches participants how to code great tech products."

[Enrollment]

Students per year: 100

[Description]

Founded in Paris in 2013, Le Wagon now runs bootcamps in thirty-five cities around the world and has an alumni network of more than five thousand students. It launched in Brussels in 2015 where it offers a nine-week, full-stack coding bootcamp as well as free evening workshops and entrepreneurial talks. The flagship program, which costs €6,000 (\$6,800), is meant for people with little to no coding background. It teaches participants the whole web stack, from databases to browsers. Students learn how to build robust and beautiful web applications by themselves, from the back-end (Ruby, SQL) all the way to the front-end (flexbox, CSS grid, ES6). "Our students also learn to collaborate within a team of developers and to adopt the technical workflow followed by most successful startups," says Ana Sere, managing director of Le Wagon Brussels.

Le Wagon's students are from Belgium and elsewhere, with classes always packed with many diverse profiles and nationalities. Students come from all walks of life to become developers, entrepreneurs, product managers and freelancers. The program's reputation is built upon its regular curriculum improvements and the offering of tools that meet its students' needs. Ana says it aims to get rid of all friction in the process of learning to code. "Our in-house-trained teachers adapt to every student's pace and level, making sure that nobody is left behind," she says. "Le Wagon brings technical skills to creative people who aim to create their own startup or add a technical know-how to their skillset. We teach our students to turn their ideas into reality."

To broaden access, Le Wagon also now offers the same program as a part-time option during evenings and weekends, allowing those with day jobs to learn how to code in their free time. Companies who want to train their employees can sponsor them to do the bootcamp or request a tailor-made program to meet their needs.

[Apply to]

lewagon.com/brussels/apply

[Links]

Web: lewagon.com/brussels **Twitter:** [@lewagonbrussels](https://twitter.com/lewagonbrussels) **Instagram:** [lewagonbelgium](https://www.instagram.com/lewagonbelgium)



- **Be able to learn.**
We look for students who are teachable and can adapt quickly.
- **Be friendly and funny!**
We literally live with our students for ten weeks, so we're looking for likable people.
- **Speak two languages.**
Our programs are in French and English, so you should speak both.
- **Be creative or analytical.**
Ideally, both!
- **Be motivated.**
Our programs are super demanding so you must be prepared to work hard.

[Name]

Skillsfactory

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are a training center designed to help people acquire new skills to find a dream job, make a career change or develop a business through immersive training in digital marketing and entrepreneurship.”

[Enrollment]

Students per year: 100–125

[Description]

Skillsfactory, a nonprofit organization that provides education on in-demand tech skills such as design and data-driven marketing, is aimed at young job seekers and graduates looking to boost their job opportunities or launch their own businesses. It was founded in 2017 after its cofounders realized that an increasing number of aspiring entrepreneurs were in need of effective training in digital marketing. “Too many freelancers, startups and even incumbent companies fail or stagnate because of a lack of proficiency in digital skills,” says cofounder and CEO Nicolas Hubin. “This is a skills gap that prohibits people from seeing the big picture and emerging with innovative strategies to fight their way to success.”

Skillsfactory looks to fill that gap via two flagship programs: its Traineeship in Data-driven Marketing and Innovation (TDMI), a ten-week, in-house immersive training program in data-driven marketing followed by a three-month internship at a prominent Belgian digital marketing agency or startup; and Bestarter, a ten-week program that culminates with a three-month in-house incubation program to help students launch their own business project. “From SEO to data analytics, our training programs allow individuals to gain the skills they need to launch their own business, accelerate the growth of their existing startup or make a career change,” Nicolas says.

All programs are free of charge as they are subsidized by government and nongovernment partners. Of its 180 graduates, more than three-quarters have launched their own business upon completion or landed a job, with placements at corporations, digital marketing agencies and startups such as L’Oréal, Ogilvy Social-Lab and Efluenz. Its main value, says Nicolas, is in the pivotal skills it teaches. “Digital marketing is a super important skill to master when you want to launch a new business, and in a case where the entrepreneurial project doesn’t work, the aspiring entrepreneur has gained a new skill set that can be used to find a great job in another fast-growing startup.”

[Apply to]

skillsfactory.be

[Links]

Web: skillsfactory.be **Facebook:** [skillsfactory.be](https://www.facebook.com/skillsfactory.be) **LinkedIn:** [school/skillsfactory-be](https://www.linkedin.com/school/skillsfactory-be)



- **Be motivated.**
We are looking for motivated students with a strong interest in business, innovation and entrepreneurship, and appreciate diversity and multidisciplinary activities.
- **Be prepared to work hard.**
We all strive towards the highest standards of performance.
- **Be willing to be challenged.**
Students should have an open mind and love new approaches to life and culture.
- **Have flexible intelligence.**
You should be able to think strategically and have a strong sense of the need for “down to earth” implementation.
- **Be a team player.**
You should be ready to work in groups, be able to adapt to changing situations and accept the challenges of a multicultural environment.

[Name]

Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM)

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are a business school of economics and management that trains leaders through multidisciplinary programs and with a focus on quantitative and scientific approaches.”

[Enrollment]

Students per year: 4,200

[Description]

Founded in 1903 by humanist and industry leader Ernest Solvay, the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management honors the goals set by its founders by delivering training based around the concept of “homo universalis” to educate the leaders of tomorrow with knowledge across a number of disciplines. It accepts students at the undergraduate through PhD levels and runs an executive MBA course and five advanced master’s programs. The university, a faculty of the Université libre de Bruxelles (a French-speaking private research university) is well known for its strict and demanding education system, focusing on excellence at every level.

Solvay Brussels School, whose advanced master’s degrees cost between €15,000 (\$17,000) and \$50,000 (\$56,000), has a unique learning methodology in which students are constantly challenged to think strategically and integrate innovation into their projects. The school provides a cosmopolitan atmosphere where the active exchange of ideas and multicultural perspectives is encouraged. It offers an international experience with forty-six different nationalities among its Advanced Master students. “Diversity in class in terms of gender, academic background, nationality and culture enhances the student experience of participants and prepares them for an international career,” says Laurent Bouty, the academic director of the Advanced Master in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The entrepreneurial spirit is one of the core values of the school. The Advanced Master in Innovation and Entrepreneurship was developed in partnership with Italy’s MIP Politecnico di Milano to help students develop the ability to spot new market opportunities, design suitable innovation strategies and build a new organization while using their skills and creativity in very different settings and constantly experimenting. The program is very practical and includes two main field projects: the New Venture Lab, where students build a startup from scratch; and the Innovation in Action Lab, where students conduct a consulting assignment in an established small or medium enterprise.

[Apply to]

exed.solvay.edu/advanced-masters

[Links]

Web: exed.solvay.edu **Facebook:** [SolvayAdvancedMasters](#) **Instagram:** [solvayadvancedmasters](#)



- **Be ambitious and motivated.**
We are looking for students that have set themselves goals and work hard to meet them.
- **Show independence.**
We want our students to be able to learn and study independently.
- **Be open and enthusiastic.**
Open-minded learners with plenty of enthusiasm are what we are looking for.
- **Demonstrate an international mindset.**
We want our students to be able to successfully collaborate within an intercultural team.

[Name]

Université Saint-Louis

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are a university boasting four faculties that span the spectrum of the human and social sciences, attracting students from all over the world.”

[Enrollment]

Total enrollment: 3,600 (2018/2019)

[Description]

Founded in 1858 as a philosophy department in the Institut Saint-Louis, Université Saint-Louis has since expanded to become an independent institution in its own right. It has four faculties and an Institute for European Studies, and offers a broad range of bachelor's, master's and specialized master's degrees, as well as doctoral-degree programs and numerous lifelong and executive courses. It currently has around 3,600 students from sixty different countries and offers bilingual and trilingual programs of study. “Our programs aim at developing the students’ capacity for reflection, critical analysis and decision making in the domains of humanities and social sciences,” said Alexandre Girard, a professor of finance at Université Saint-Louis.

Located in the heart of Brussels’ business district, Université Saint-Louis promotes contacts between students, professors and experienced professionals. Its programs attract a wide range of people with diverse perspectives and explore the most recent developments in the domains of economics and business administration to prepare students for the fast-moving global business environment. Its Bachelor’s Degree in Business Engineering, for example, is focused on quantitative methods and scientific bases, with a specific emphasis on new technologies. “Therefore, in addition to basic competencies, students apply more precisely quantitative methods and develop an aptitude and an interest in mathematics and sciences,” says Alexandre.

The goal is for students to be able to integrate into an international and intercultural environment and operate in an ethical and responsible manner once they conclude their studies. Saint-Louis graduates are trained to foster innovation and promote organizational change, having developed strong management skills and a deep understanding of economics and business-administration tools. Alumni of the university can be found working across a wide variety of sectors (including both private and public) in Belgium and abroad. “As a flexible institution dedicated to offering the best working environment for our students, we also promote student entrepreneurship by offering young entrepreneurs more flexibility to complete their academic program,” says Alexandre.

[Apply to]

usaintlouis.be/sl/1012.html

[Links]

Web: usaintlouis.be **Facebook:** [UniversiteSaintLouisBruxelles](https://www.facebook.com/UniversiteSaintLouisBruxelles) **Twitter:** [@UnivStLouisBxl](https://twitter.com/UnivStLouisBxl)



- **Tell us why you chose VUB**
We want to know what you think you'll get out of VUB, why Brussels is your destination of choice, and what you can contribute to the VUB community. Be sure to write a strong personal letter to accompany your application.
- **Provide us with proof of English proficiency.**
As mentioned on our website, we're an international university, so comfort working in English is a must.
- **Score above average.**
Grades aren't everything to us, but demonstrating your academic accomplishments will improve your chances of making a successful application.
- **Apply on time.**
Timely applications are essential. Non-EU students should be aware that getting a student visa could take some time, so it's even more important to start your application sooner rather than later.

[Name]

Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Start.VUB

[Elevator Pitch]

“We raise open-minded and critical individuals, and we’re a free university in every sense of the word. Our Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School offer courses in social and economic sciences, including political science, business economics and much more.”

[Enrollment]

Total enrollment: 16,000 (2019)

[Description]

The Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) campus stands as an innovative center of critical thinking in southeastern Brussels. More than 180 years after the school first opened its doors, the words of French mathematician Henri Poincaré remain its basic philosophy: “Thinking must never submit itself.” Apart from its rich history, VUB stands out as the most international of the Flemish universities, with one in four enrolled students originating from outside Belgium. However, “VUB really has its sights on Brussels,” says Jonas Loos of VUB’s Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School. “We want to strengthen the link between the university and the city and to use the city as a great, open laboratory.”

The Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School offer a diverse range of courses in social and economic sciences, with stand-out examples including the Trade Mission and Technological Business Development programs. In addition, two professors of the faculty founded the incubator Start.VUB with the aim of giving entrepreneurial students support in starting their own businesses. The incubator offers coaching, networking, workspace and other services to participants free of charge, and the founding professors deliberately keep the program open and broad to encourage those with an entrepreneurial spirit to take part.

Belgian and EU students pay a little less than €1,000 (\$1,100) to study a full-time academic year at VUB, and non-EU students pay a little under €4,000 for the same length of time. For all prospective students, the application process takes between three and four weeks, and applicants are encouraged to submit an application as soon as possible for the following academic year. “We’re not just like any university exclusively looking for the best students,” says Jonas. “We are also looking for students with a story to tell and a vision to share with us.”

[Apply to]

vub.be/en/studying-at-the-vub/how-to-apply

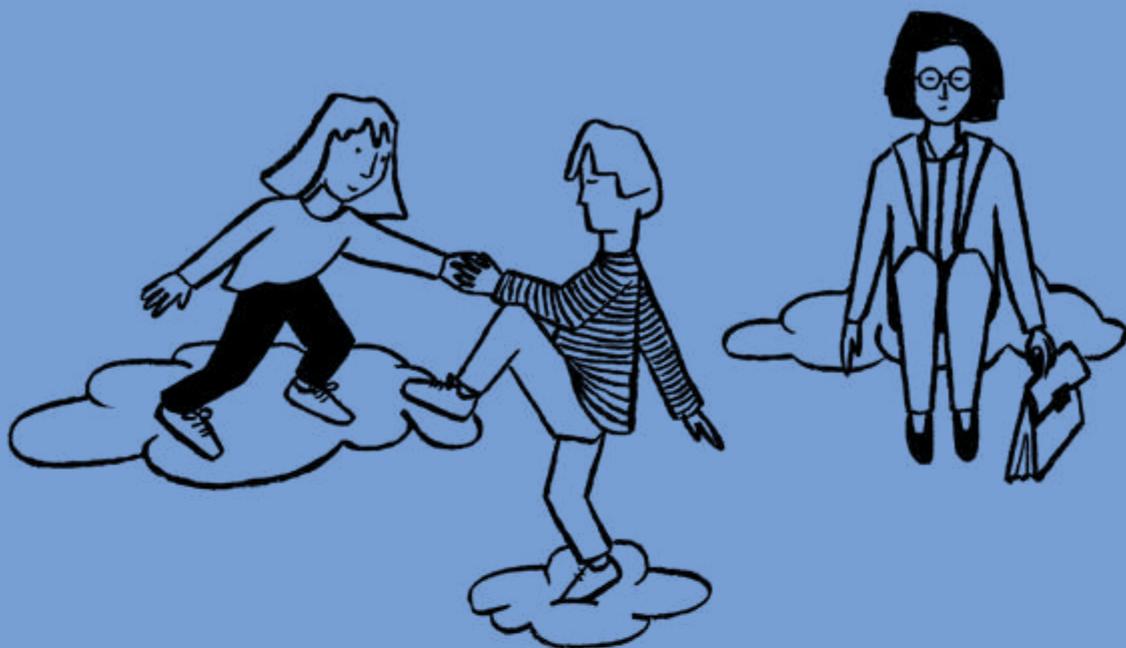
[Links]

Web: vub.be **Facebook:** [VUBrussel](https://www.facebook.com/VUBrussel) **Twitter:** [@VUBrussel](https://twitter.com/VUBrussel) **Instagram:** [vubrussel](https://www.instagram.com/vubrussel)



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- **Know what we're looking for.**
Learn about our key areas of interest and then pitch a product that speaks to one of our sweet spots.
- **Make sure you've got the basics.**
Start with what all VCs want: a scalable solution with a large or expanding market, a proof-of-concept and a barrier of entry to your competitors.
- **Have a unique idea at the core of your pitch.**
We're not looking for businesses that just need a marketing boost: we want to grow particularly innovative ideas, so communicate yours clearly and succinctly.
- **Have a data strategy in place.**
We believe in the power of data, and want to know how you'll use it.
- **Be passionate and people-driven.**
When we meet your team, we'd like to be able to imagine a good working relationship that'll last for the years we invest in building your business, and beyond.

[Name]

Capricorn Partners

[Elevator Pitch]

“Our mission is to provide capital for innovation, impact and growth. Capricorn Partners is an independent manager of private and quoted equity funds that invest in minority shareholding positions of innovative companies with technology as their competitive advantage.”

[Sector]

Digital technologies, healthtech and sustainable chemistry

[Description]

Founded in 1993 by Dr. Jos Peeters, Capricorn Partners initially took an interest in a broad variety of alternative tech and biotech-related investments. The firm has shown adaptability and intuition that's paid off over its decades in business: due to technology's previously unimaginable ubiquity and diversity, investors have sought more clearly positioned investment funds, and the firm has, accordingly, sharpened its focus. Today, it invests in early-stage firms whose products address some of the world's most urgent concerns through digital technologies (focusing on data-driven companies) in healthtech and sustainable chemistry. It sometimes invests in very early-stage firms whose products address some of the world's most urgent human and environmental concerns.

When applying for funding from Capricorn Partners, passion pays off: the firm works with a business for, on average, about five years, so an enthusiastic, can-do attitude has proved a vital asset time and again. Capricorn Partners' beneficiaries typically receive assistance from experts in tasks such as creating business plans or making key business decisions. The firm is first to admit that its team can't be experts at everything, but it aims to provide a birds-eye view of the industry and is well-positioned to tap into the intellectual resources from various experts, often from the nearby Leuven University. Academics from the institution are often involved in consulting in relevant fields or facilitating workshops with the entrepreneurs.

Since its 2012 merge with Quest Management, Capricorn Partners has also been managing some equity funds, stepping outside of the traditional venture capital sphere. Meanwhile, the focus of its investments continues to tighten in line with its investors' interests and to promote the potential of technological advances. Data is among the forces that Capricorn Partners wants to see put to effective use: connected medtech, future health, Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things all look set to provide burgeoning results in the not-too-distant future.

[Apply to]

proposals@capricorn.be

[Links]

Web: capricorn.be



- **Show us your impact.**
Demonstrate the ability of your product or services to positively impact people's lives or create jobs.
- **Help put Brussels on the map.**
We are looking for innovative solutions that will showcase Brussels' status as a startup hub and the gateway to Europe.
- **Show traction.**
We prefer to invest in startups that have already convinced first customers and demonstrated some business traction.

[Name] **finance&invest.brussels**

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are a public company that provides financing to value-creating companies in the Brussels Region to stimulate growth and job creation.”*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic**

[Description] Founded in the 1980s and funded by the Brussels Region and various private investors, finance&invest.brussels funds Brussels-based companies in all phases of development including early stage. Its primary goal is to generate impact and promote job creation within the region, even by attracting companies to the city. finance&invest.brussels invests across all economic sectors but prefers the following investment themes (especially for startups and scaleups): urban well-being, good food, fintech, media and entertainment and Democracy 2.0 (legaltech, edtech, regtech and govtech). CEO Pierre Hermant says the company’s aim is to help put Brussels on the map within the startup world. “We are looking for impact and sustainability, and companies that can add value across the region,” he says. “Brussels is the gateway to Europe.”

finance&invest invests in around 150 companies annually and currently funds more than 500 investments. Its startup funding comes in the form of equity, convertible loan or subordinated debt. It also provides non-dilutive financing, which makes finance&invest very “founder-friendly,” according to Pierre. It prefers companies that are beyond the idea stage and have already demonstrated some business traction, and its approach is focused on a lasting and constructive partnership with portfolio companies. “It is not easy to be a very hands-on partner as we invest in so many companies, but we can facilitate investment from other funds,” says Pierre.

Though interested in impact, finance&invest.brussels does want to see returns on its investments. It recently scored a major successful exit when data-governance specialist Collibra (one of its portfolio companies financed from the very first stage and now the first Belgian unicorn) attracted Iconiq Capital and Battery Ventures as new investors. It hopes to help more startups to reach such levels. “Also, because we are supported by the Brussels Region, the fact we have invested is recognized as a label of credibility,” says Pierre.

[Apply to] [finance.brussels](#)

[Links] [Web: finance.brussels](#) [Facebook: finance.brussels](#) [Twitter: @SRIB_BXL](#) [LinkedIn: company/srib](#)



- **Have a sustainable outlook.**
We expect our startups to be socially responsible and working towards a more sustainable future.
- **Identify with at least one relevant SDG target.**
You need to have an SDG and sub-target in place, whether that's solving a problem with clean water or promoting environmentally friendly policies in urban communities.
- **Incorporate sustainability throughout your business.**
You need to show that you're committed to sustainability and abide by the best corporate practices across the board.
- **Show that you have commercial traction.**
We need to see that you have an audience or the potential to market your product or services before we invest.

[Name]

Inventures Investment Partners

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are a European venture-capital fund looking to build a better world by investing in fast-growing companies in sustainable businesses. We currently have two funds dedicated to early-stage businesses and growth-stage businesses.”

[Sector]

Sustainability and environment

[Description]

Inventures Investment Partners is the first European impact-investment group dedicated to supporting startups and entrepreneurs. Its long-term goal is to promote sustainable job growth in the European Union and manage two distinctive funds: Inventures I and Inventures II. The first is currently worth €15 million (\$17 million) and focuses on the health, education, environment and well-being sectors, while Inventures II SDG Growth is a venture-capital fund looking to raise to €50 million. The second currently invests in social-impact startups working on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These range from climate-change projects and healthcare access to rapid urbanization. Achieving its SDG goals through smart investments in impact startups is an essential part of this process.

Inventures Investment Partners typically invests anything from €150,000 (\$170,000) to €1 million (\$1.1 million) in its startups, “which is a vigorous process, as we have to determine if they have market traction before investing,” says Ines Mertens, communication manager. “The startups can be involved in anything from replacement meat products to clean-energy proposals, so long as they align themselves with the UN’s Sustainable Development goals.”

Dedicated to the SDGs, the fund sees no conflict in both investing in and supporting the environment, and it views climate change as being manageable through innovation. “The planet’s problems are huge, and eco-investment markets are growing in response to environmental change,” says Ines. “Agritech and foodtech sectors reflect a world that is changing. Most people realize we cannot keep on living as we do now and that our food-consumption patterns are unsustainable.” In response to the climate emergency, Inventures is looking for social-impact startups that can provide viable and scalable solutions to the planet. Inventures believes that sustainability and capital are no longer mutually exclusive and that, when combined, investing can help support solutions to the planet’s problems while making a profit simultaneously.

[Apply to]

info@inventures.fund

[Links]

Web: inventures.fund **Facebook:** [inventuresfund](https://www.facebook.com/inventuresfund) **LinkedIn:** [company/inventures-fund](https://www.linkedin.com/company/inventures-fund)



- **Have a measurable impact.**
The proof is in the pudding. You should have actual and measurable social impact, a complementary, sustainable financial base, and a dedicated team.
- **Have at least one year of experience.**
We're looking for companies with a minimum of one year of experience in the sustainable sectors and a proof of concept connected to our expertise.
- **Make a positive impact.**
You should be mindful of your societal impact because there is simply no other way. If we carry on as we have in the past, our planet as we know it will disappear.
- **Communication is key.**
You should keep in touch and stay informed with clients: being connected to the right person at the right time can save you months of work.

[Name]

Scale Up Fund

[Elevator Pitch]

“We invest and get involved in sustainable food systems by providing capital, experience and expertise to entrepreneurs who aim to improve the quality and sustainability of their ecological and social environment.”

[Sector]

Food industry and retail

[Description]

Many companies talk the talk in regards to going green, but Scale Up is eager to help Belgian-based companies walk the walk, too. Since January 2015, the cooperative company has taken minority stakes in nearly half a dozen businesses focused on making a positive societal impact. It has invested €3.5 million (\$4 million) to date. “Our goal is to reach the United Nations’ seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, especially goals number twelve, Responsible Consumption and Production, and number fifteen, Life On Land,” says Scale Up Fund CEO Olivier Van Cauwelaert, who founded the company along with Emmanuel Hupin.

Scale Up is based in the residential municipality of Watermael-Boitsfort, Brussels, which is partly made up of the Sonian Forest. Thus far, it has mostly invested equity in companies within the sustainable food industry, but it’s also open to businesses dealing in soft mobility, green energy and other sustainable habitats. On average, Scale Up invests €300,000 (\$340,000). “We are organized in a cooperative, which is really atypical in this sector,” says Olivier. The fund consists of ten young investors who have the same decision capability to refuse or accept new projects and to impact future generations.

The company has kept its finger on the pulse of environmentally friendly trends in the investment sector, such as regenerative or circular economies. In 2017, it took on Les Champignons de Bruxelles, which uses beer waste to grow exotic mushrooms. It has also worked with Urbani, a real estate company that works in the cohousing rental sector to reduce environmental impact by creating new residential spaces. Olivier says that to grow more quickly and become more focused, the company will soon divide itself into two entities: Scale Up Food and Scale Up Immo.

[Apply to]

olivier.vancauwelaert@scale-up.fund

[Links]

Web: scale-up.fund **LinkedIn:** [company/scaleup-scr1](https://www.linkedin.com/company/scaleup-scr1)



- **Be clear about your value proposition and vision.**
Make clear the pain you address and how you address it. Tell us how you make your value proposition a must for your target market.
- **Have a strong understanding of the market you can capture.**
Make sure you understand exactly who your customer is and why you think they will choose your product. Anticipate constraints so we can understand what there is potential to work on.
- **Demonstrate excellence and full complementary skills within your founding team.**
Explain why you'll be better than any other team working on the same idea or market opportunity.
- **Identify and have a roadmap for the key success factors.**
Understand what will make your project stand out from the competition, and ensure this is properly taken into account in your roadmap.
- **Master your key hypothesis and have realistic projections.**
These things are essential for us to engage in a high-value business discussion about your project.

[Name] Seeder Fund

[Elevator Pitch] *“We seed innovative startups with a convertible loan of up to €100,000 with a decision after a maximum of three meetings. We support the growth of the most promising startups by investing up to €1 million per company.”*

[Sector] **Digital innovation**

[Description] Seeder Fund is the eighth fund created and managed by EEBIC Ventures, a key player in the Brussels entrepreneurial scene that has invested over €80 million (\$90 million) in more than one hundred startups through its several families of funds. EEBIC Ventures decided to launch Seeder Fund with an innovative approach aimed at better meeting the financial needs of Belgian digital entrepreneurs. “Our capacity to finance startups from the preseed stage following up to one million euros reduces the time spent by entrepreneurs raising money as much as possible,” says Seeder Fund team member Pierre-François Hellebuyck. “This enables them to focus on the growth of their business.” Seeder Fund is an active investor that helps startups make the right strategic decisions to reach their milestones. It offers the experience of the startups financed by EEBIC Ventures combined with the strong entrepreneurial background of its management team and hands-on support.

Although Seeder Fund was only founded in 2017, it has many promising startups in its portfolio, including enterprise-feedback platform Hello Customer, travel-reference platform Itinari and learning-experience platform MySkillCamp. “The startup ecosystem in Brussels is rich with ambitious entrepreneurs who are humble and eager to learn, which enables fruitful collaborations,” says Pierre-François. “Our ambition is to help them succeed by providing sufficient resources at every stage of their growth as well as advice and key best practices to implement based on our extensive experience.”

Seeder Fund aims to build the foundations for startups’ future growth phases. It looks for startups that can demonstrate the first signs of market traction for their solution, and from here, it supports them in their scaling phase. It also provides equity investment for more mature startups and scaleup businesses. Entrepreneurs approaching Seeder Fund should first send a pitch deck to the team. Successful applicants will then be invited to pitch their project in person and have a first Q&A session.

[Apply to] info@seedersfund.be

[Links] **Web:** seedersfund.be **LinkedIn:** [company/seedersfund](https://www.linkedin.com/company/seedersfund)



- **Show passion for the societal problem you want to solve.**
Have your mind set on fixing the problem instead of on pushing a specific product or service. Be flexible and open to adapting your solution to have more impact.
- **Show us that you are ambitious yet realistic.**
While you should have big dreams, your feet should be firmly planted on the ground.
- **Make sure you have a strong impact case.**
Collect stakeholder data to support any of your impact claims.
- **Have a well-thought-out business-viability perspective.**
Be clear about how your plan to achieve financial self-sustainability will succeed.
- **Present yourselves as a team.**
We value great teams more than anything else. Show us you are in it together.

[Name] **SI² Fund**

[Elevator Pitch] *“We’re an impact-first investment fund with a European scope. We scale innovative social businesses with funding, access to markets and expertise. We strive for a world where both entrepreneurs and investors engage in addressing the most pressing societal problems of our time.”*

[Sector] **Social impact, various**

[Description] Founded in 2012, SI² Fund was the first impact-first investment fund in Benelux. Before then, families and foundations were looking for ways to invest their money in a meaningful way, and early-stage social businesses found it challenging to access capital because the providers’ conditions weren’t adapted to a social-entrepreneurial approach. SI² Fund’s aim is to connect private parties to the social ventures in need of financing. It focuses on businesses with innovative, viable models that address a societal issue linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Although the social-entrepreneurship scene has grown and more money is available, building a viable business and scaling its societal impact remains challenging. SI² Fund offers tailored support and helps social businesses get over the credibility hurdle to grow by providing equity funding and expertise in both business and the societal-impact sector.

With a minimum ticket size of €250,000 (\$280,000) and a maximum ticket size of €1.5 million (\$1.7 million), SI² Fund supports both early-stage ventures that have achieved market validation and growth-stage ventures that have the ambition to scale their social impact. Its main investment focus is on companies operating in Benelux, but it’s open to investment opportunities in neighboring countries.

Among SI² Fund’s recent investments is Helpper, a digital matchmaking platform that connects vulnerable people who need support with day-to-day tasks to neighborhood residents who are looking to help out and earn some extra money. Justice42, a social enterprise aiming to make Dutch law more accessible and user friendly, has also received investment from SI² Fund. Its online divorce-resolution tool enables couples to take charge of the process and reach the best possible solutions for their families. The best way an entrepreneur can present their business to SI² Fund is by sending a personal email to the team or meeting them at one of the many industry events they attend.

[Apply to] pieter.oostlander@si2fund.com

[Links] **Web:** si2fund.com **Twitter:** [@Si2Fund](https://twitter.com/Si2Fund) **LinkedIn:** [company/si2fund](https://www.linkedin.com/company/si2fund)



- **Tell us why you chose us.**
This is one of the first questions we ask entrepreneurs. If there is no specific reason why you think Solvay can add value to your company, we are probably not the right investor.
- **Be bold and ambitious.**
We look for entrepreneurs who have the potential to become global leaders in their area of expertise.
- **Don't be afraid of checking in early.**
We won't waste your time if we feel you're not ready for us to invest in you, but we will already have had a chance to connect and will be happy to re-engage for your next round of funding.
- **Be transparent and honest with your feedback.**
This is a people's business, so honest feedback goes both ways. We choose to invest in you and you choose an investment from us. We will provide any reference you ask for before we partner together, and we welcome you to be as diligent as we are.

[Name]

Solvay Ventures

[Elevator Pitch]

“We invest in breakthrough technologies in advanced materials and devices materials informatics, and B2B business models. We target early-stage investment opportunities with a focus on startups solving problems in sustainable resources, energy transition and increased well-being.”

[Sector]

Sustainable resources, energy transition, 3D printing, agtech

[Description]

Solvay, a global leader in advanced materials and specialty chemicals, started investing in venture capital in 2005. In spring 2016, Solvay Ventures activities shifted to an open-innovation platform to augment Solvay’s products and strategies. “The team combines corporate and venture-capital experience to balance financial performance and strategic objectives for the larger Solvay group,” says founding partner Stéphane Roussel. “We care about doing good and creating value for the entrepreneurs we support and our coinvestors. Their success will be our success.”

Solvay Ventures invests in early-stage startups, from seed to Series B. In a first round of financing, it invests between \$500,000 and \$3 million in companies that have passed a proof-of-concept stage and developed a proof of value to early customers or adopters. It’s one of the few investors in Brussels that supports B2B deeptech and hardtech startups, and its privileged relationship with Solvay allows it to leverage Solvay technology and market positions to build mutually beneficial relationships with its portfolio companies. “Solvay is a complex organization that is often difficult to navigate,” Stéphane says. “We want to establish ourselves as the go-between partner for startups that look for an entry into the larger Solvay organization. We are also a long-term partner, supporting future financing rounds when things go well.”

While the Solvay Ventures team has experience in venture investment, Solvay helps its portfolio companies with everything from technological development to scaleup and access to customers.

Among the companies in its portfolio is Solid Power, which is poised to revolutionize the automotive industry with its full solid-state battery that not only increases performance but adds intrinsic safety features to lithium-ion batteries. Solvay Ventures has its headquarters in Brussels but invests globally. The best way for startups to make contact is through its website or LinkedIn.

[Apply to]

[solvay-ventures.com](https://www.solvay-ventures.com)

[Links]

Web: [solvay.com](https://www.solvay.com) **Facebook:** [solvaygroup](https://www.facebook.com/solvaygroup) **Twitter:** [@solvaygroup](https://twitter.com/solvaygroup) **LinkedIn:** [company/solvay](https://www.linkedin.com/company/solvay)



[Name]

eFounders

[Elevator Pitch] *"eFounders is a startup studio that builds and incubates software startups from the ground up before spinning them out as independent entities."*

[Sector] **SaaS B2B**

[Description] Founded by Quentin Nickmans and Thibaud Elzière in 2011, eFounders is a venture builder (or startup studio) that operates in the space somewhere between a startup and an investment firm. It designs its own projects internally, all focused on the SaaS B2B space, and then selects entrepreneurs to head them up. It then finances them until it eventually spins them out as independent businesses and remains as a shareholder. "We are very close to the founders in terms of recruitment and development," says Quentin. "That's the difference between us and an accelerator."

eFounders launches two or three projects every year with entrepreneurs it has identified via its network, and so far it has built twenty-two startups comprising one thousand employees. Its primary ecosystems are Brussels and Paris, but its startups have expanded even further afield. Once a company has been spun out of eFounders, it remains there to help. "We have a network of investors and VCs that follow our projects, and once a company is ready to raise a venture round, we help facilitate that," says Quentin. eFounders, which was initially funded by its founders and some business angels, is now starting to see its first exits, with three so far bringing money back into the system to launch yet more businesses.

[Apply to] hello@efounders.com

[Links] **Web:** efounders.com **Facebook:** [eFounders](#) **Twitter:** [@efounders](#) **LinkedIn:** [company/efounders](#)



[Name]

Look&Fin

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are a crowd-lending service for Belgian SMEs. We provide an online platform that connects companies with retail investors.”*

[Sector] **Tech companies solving problems in health and wellness, real estate and finance**

[Description] Look&Fin, a crowd-lending platform for Belgian startups and SMEs, connects entrepreneurs looking for funds with retail investors via its lending community of around five thousand companies. All of Look&Fin’s services are completely digital, and selected companies can borrow anything from €50,000 to €5 million for any type of need and any type of business, regardless of activity sector. However, it mostly focuses on B2B and B2C services companies, industry and real estate firms. “Our goal is to become the solution of choice for accessing digital and non-bank credit for companies, regardless of size, need or sector,” says Frédéric Lévy Morelle, the company’s founder and CEO.

Look&Fin launched in 2012 in a bid to create a bond market for companies, and over the last seven years it has seen almost 100 percent growth every year. It has become one of the top SME crowd-lenders in Belgium, Luxembourg and France and has so far helped to disburse €75 million worth of loans to more than 230 SMEs. Around €30 million of that has already been repaid, with an average annual net default rate of 5.5 percent, making the Look&Fin model attractive to lenders as well as borrowers. “Our mission is to facilitate and complete the funding chain,” says Frédéric. “At present, Look & Fin has managed to distinguish itself by its rigor, and its simple and effective procedures.”

[Apply to] info@lookandfin.com

[Links] [Web: lookandfin.com](http://lookandfin.com) [Facebook: lookandfin](https://www.facebook.com/lookandfin) [Twitter: @LookAndFin](https://twitter.com/LookAndFin) [Linkedin: company/look&fin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/look&fin)



[Name]

Make it Studio

[Elevator Pitch]

“We are a venture studio that invests as early as an idea written on a napkin. Make it Studio comes with a whole team of software and hardware engineers, digital-marketing gurus and salespeople to help execute your vision.”

[Sector]

Digital

[Description]

Born in 2014, Make it is a venture studio focused on entrepreneurs who have a great vision but need help executing. The Belgium- and California-based investment firm has worked with over three hundred startups and invests at a very early stage. “Our ideal scenario is a first-time solo founder who has a great vision, with no revenue generated and no product built yet,” says Alexis Bedoret, cofounder of Make it. “We can handle that kind of risk because we come with a whole team of software and hardware engineers, digital marketing gurus and salespeople to help execute.”

Make it was launched to bridge the gap between entrepreneurs needing assistance and investors expecting to see a validated business model with growing revenue. It does this by investing in entrepreneurs very early on and making them attractive to investors. Key to this is “The Machine” method, which regroups all the required talent and methodologies to provide the best execution, including generating customer traction, building the right solution for the right people, shaping the business model and growing the company through recruiting the right talent. “From an investor’s point of view, building The Machine was a priority for us in order to maximize our return on investment with limited resources,” says Alexis.

[Email]

hey@makeit-studio.com

[Links]

Web: makeit-studio.com



[Name] Startup Factory

[Elevator Pitch] *Startup Factory is a venture builder, recruiting talented entrepreneurs and working hand in hand with innovative corporates. We build real business value, find real customers and identify a problem worth solving, all in three months' time.*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic, early-stage startups**

[Description] Startup Factory is a corporate venturing startup studio: a startup that creates startups in collaboration with big corporates. "We create entrepreneurs," explains CEO and Founder Baudouin de Troostembergh. "People coming to us are first-time entrepreneurs, and we operate as cofounders with our studio of about ten people. We help with finding the first customers, recruiting the right team, finding smart investors and scaling."

Baudouin made his start as an entrepreneur around fifteen years ago, and his own career journey has informed his aims at Startup Factory. "My focus during the first five years was on big, industrial projects, and after a first exit in 2014, I launched two digital startups. Through these ventures, I realized that my drive was to create projects from the ground – building the zero to one." With their highly collaborative approach, the team at Startup Factory compare themselves to a Swiss Army Knife for their efficient, versatile assistance for early-stage startups, handling everything from accounting and legal to HR matters. "When you're active in seed investment, you're investing in people, talent," Baudouin says. "This is the only important thing at that stage. Once talent is there, clients will follow. Then investors and team will follow."

[Apply to] info@startupfactory.be

[Links] **Web:** startupfactory.be **Facebook:** [startupFactoryBE](https://www.facebook.com/startupFactoryBE) **Instagram:** [startupfactorybxl](https://www.instagram.com/startupfactorybxl)

directory

The following is only a brief selection of organizations, companies and contacts available in Brussels

Startups

Bsit

Avenue Louise 120
1050 Brussels
bsit.com

CitizenLab

Boulevard Anspach 65
1000 Brussels
citizenlab.co

Fytek

Allée de la Recherche 4
1070 Brussels
fyteko.com

Helpilepsy

Antoine Dansaertstraat 3
1000 Brussels
helpilepsy.com

Kazidomi

Rue Saint-Lambert 135
1200 Woluwe-Saint-Lambert
kazidomi.com

LucidWeb

KBC Start it
Havenlaan 8
1080 Brussels
lucidweb.io

MuseLabs

Rue du Tocsin 12
1000 Brussels
muselabs.com
jooki.rocks

Qover

Rue du Commerce 31
1000 Brussels
Qover.com

Simone a Soif!

Boulevard Général Wahis 16EA
1030 Schaerbeek
simoneasoif.be

Sortlist

Avenue Zénobe Gramme 29
1300 Wavre
sortlist.be/en

Spentys SA/NV

Rue Saint-Denis 120
1190 Forest Brussels
spentys.com

Tricount

Avenue Louise 251
1050 Brussels
tricount.com

Urbantz SA/NV

120 Avenue Louise
1050 Brussels
urbantz.com

Wooclap

Rue des Pères Blancs 4
1040 Brussels
wooclap.com

Programs

COOPCITY

Rue Coenraets 72
1060 Saint-Gilles
coopcity.be

greenlab.brussels

hosted by hub.brussels
Chaussée de Charleroi 110
1060 Brussels
greenlab.brussels

Imec.istart

De Krook (4th floor)
Miriam Makebaplein 1
9000 Gent
imecistart.com

MAD Brussels - TRIAXES

Place du Nouveau
Marché aux Grains 10
1000 Brussels
mad.brussels

Orange Belgium NV

Bourgetlaan 3
1140 Brussels
orangefab.be

Réseau Entreprendre Bruxelles

Rue des Pères Blancs 4
1040 Etterbeek
reseau-entreprendre.org/bruxelles

Start it @KBC

Havenlaan 8
1080 Brussels
Startit.be

Start.LAB

Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50
1050 Brussels
startlab.be

Spaces

BeCentral Brussels

Cantersteen 10/12
1000 Brussels
becentral.org

Betacowork

Rue des Pères Blancs 4
1040 Etterbeek
betacowork.com

Brussels Life Science Incubator

Clos Chapelle-aux-
Champs 30
1200 Brussels
blsincubator.com

Co.Station Brussels

Parvis Sainte-Gudule 5
1000 Brussel
co-station.com

DigitYser

Boulevard d'Anvers 40
1000 Brussels
digityser.org

EEBIC

Allée de la Recherche 12
1070 Brussels
eebic.be

Some of the websites in the Directory require the 'www' prefix.

Greenbizz

Rue Dieudonné Lefèvre 17
1020 Brussels
greenbizz.brussels

ICAB nv - Arsenaal

Witte Patersstraat 4,
Rue des Pères Blancs
1040 Brussels
icab-brussel.be

MolenGeek

Place de la Minoterie 10
1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean
molengeek.com

Silversquare Triomphe

Avenue Arnauld Fraiteur 15-23
1050 Brussels
silversquare.eu/location/triomphe

transforma bxl

Avenue Jules Bordet 13
1140 Brussels
transformabxl.be

WeWork Belmont Court

Rue Belliard 51-53
1000 Brussels
wework.com/buildings/belmont-court-brussels

Experts

Beyond Law Firm

Terhulpesteenweg 150
Chaussée de la Hulpe
1170 Brussels
beyond-lawfirm.com

hub.brussels

Chaussée de Charleroi 110
1060 Brussels
hub.brussels/en

Proximus

Boulevard du Roi Albert II 27
1030 Brussels
proximus.com

Founders

CentralApp

Rue d'Alost 7
1000 Brussels
centralapp.com

Collibra NV

Oorlogskruisenlaan 116
1120 Brussels
collibra.com

Cowboy

Rue de la Régence 67
1000 Brussels
cowboy.bike

JUMP Brussels

21 Chaussée de la Hulpe
1180 Brussels
jump.eu.com

Schools

19

Rue Engeland 555
1180 Uccle
s19.be

BeCode

Cantersteen 10
1000 Brussels
becode.org

ICHEC Brussels

Management School
Boulevard Brand Whitlock 4
1150 Woluwe-Saint-Pierre
ichec.be

Le Wagon

Cantersteen 10
1000 Brussels
lewagon.com

Skillsfactory

Cantersteen 10
1000 Brussels
skillsfactory.be

Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM)

Université libre de Bruxelles
Campus du Solbosch
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 42
1050 Brussels
exed.solvay.edu/advanced-master

Université Saint-Louis

Boulevard du Jardin
botanique 43
1000 Brussels
usaintlouis.be

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Pleinlaan 2
1050 Brussels
vub.be

Investors

Capricorn Partners

Lei 19/1
3000 Leuven
capricorn.be

Finance&invest.brussels

Rue de Stassart 32
1050 Brussels
finance.brussels

Inventures Investment Partners S.A.

Place Sainte-Gudule 5
1000 Brussels
inventures.fund

Scale Up Fund

Rue du Gruyer 50
Watermael-Boitsfort
1170 Brussels
scale-up.fund

Seeder Fund

Allée de la Recherche 12
1070 Brussels
seederfund.be

SI² Fund

Jozef II Straat 20
Rue Joseph II
1000 Brussels
si2fund.com

Solvay Ventures

Rue de Ransbeek 310
1120 Brussels
solvay.com

Investor Support

eFounders

Place Eugène Flagey 7
1050 Brussels
efounders.com

Look&Fin

Avenue Louise 475
1050 Brussels
lookandfin.com

Make it Studio

Cantersteen 10/12
1000 Brussels
makeit-studio.com

Startup Factory

Startup Factory
Parvis Sainte-Gudule 5
1000 Brussels
startupfactory.be

Media Partner

La Libre Belgique

Rue des Francs 79
1040 Brussels
lalibre.be

Ecosystem Partner

Startups.be and Scale-Ups.eu

Cantersteen 10/12
1000 Brussels
startups.be
scale-ups.eu

Startup Support

BECI

Avenue Louise 500
1050 Brussels
beci.be

BeAngels

Cantersteen 10
1000 Brussels
beangels.eu

Banks

Belfius

Place Charles Rogier 11
1210 Brussels
belfius.be

BNP Paribas Fortis

Montagne du Parc 3
1000 Brussels
bnpparibasfortis.com

ING

Avenue Marnix 24
1000 Brussels
ing.be

KBC Brussels

Avenue du Port 2
1080 Brussels
kbcbrussels.be

Triodos

Rue Haute 139/3
1000 Brussels
triodos.be

Business Centers and Local Economy Offices

CE Molenbeek

Rue des Ateliers 6-7
1080 Brussels

Dansaert - Local Economy Office of Bruxelles-Ville

Rue d'Alost 7-11
1000 Brussels
dansaert.be

Euclides - Local Economy Office of Anderlecht

Rue du Chimiste 34-36
1070 Brussels
euclides.be

La Lustrerie / ILES

Rue des Palais 153
1030 Brussels
lalustrerie.be

Les Ateliers des Tanneurs

Rue des Tanneurs 58
1000 Brussels
ateliersdestanneurs.be

Local Economy Office of Molenbeek

Rue Le Lorrain, 110
1080 Brussels

Local Economy Office of Schaerbeek

Rue des Palais 44
1030 Brussels
gelschaerbeek.com

M-Brussels Village

Rue des Palais 44
1030 Brussels
mvillage.be

Pepibru

Rue Bara 173 -177
1070 Brussels
pepibru.be

**Village Partenaire -
Local Economy Office
of Saint-Gilles**

Rue Fernand Bernier 15
1060 Brussels
villagepartenaire.com

Coffee Shops and Places with Wifi

Café Capitale

Rue du Midi 45
1000 Brussels
facebook.com/cafecapitale

Café de la Presse

Avenue Louise 493
1000 Brussels
facebook.com/
cafedelapressebrussels

Hinterland

Chaussée de Charleroi 179
1060 Brussels
hntrld.be

Jat' Café

Chaussée de Charleroi 116b
1060 Brussels
jat.cool

Karsmakers

Rue de Trèves 20
1050 Brussels
karsmakers.be

Le Phare du Kanaal

Quai des Charbonnages 40
1080 Brussels
lepharedukanaal.com

Leopold Café Presse

facebook.com/
leopoldcafepresse

My Little Cup

Rue de la Croix de Fer 53
1000 Brussels
mylittlecup.be

Or Espresso Bar

orcoffee.be/bars

Parlor Coffee

Chaussée de Charleroi 203
1060 Brussels
facebook.com/
parlorcoffee203

Expats Groups and Meetups

Expats Club Brussels

expatclub.org

Expats in Brussels

expatsinbrussels.be

InterNations

internations.org/brussels-
expats

**Brussels Commissioner
for Europe**

commissioner.brussels

Flats and Rentals

B-Apart Hotels

Square Ambiorix 28
1000 Brussels
b-aparthotels.com

Brussels Business Flats

Avenue de Roodebeek 78
box 9
1030 Brussels
bbf.be

BXL à louer Facebook group

facebook.com/groups/
virtueljojo

Cohabs

cohabs.com

Colive

Place Sainte-Gudule 5
1000 Brussels
colive.eu

Immovlan

Immovlan.be

Immoweb

immoweb.be

Logic-immo

logic-immo.be

RentMore Brussels

Woluwe-Saint-Pierre 2
1150 Brussels
rentmore.be

Financial Services

**Institute of Accounting
professionals and Tax
Experts (IPCF)**

Avenue Legrand 45
1050 Brussels
ipcf.be

**Professional Institute
of Certified Bookkeepers
and Tax Consultants
(IEC-IAB)**

Boulevard Emile
Jacqmain 135/2
1000 Brussels
iec-iab.be

**Institut des Réviseurs
d'Entreprises (IRE)**

Boulevard Emile
Jacqmain 135/1
1000 Brussels
ibr-ire.be

Important Government Offices

1819

Chaussée de Charleroi 110
1060 Brussels
1819.brussels

Actiris (Brussels Regional Office of Employment)

Avenue de l'Astronomie 14
1210 Brussels
actiris.be

Brussels Economy and Employment (Brussels Regional Public Service)

Boulevard du Jardin botanique 20
1035 Brussels
werk-economie-emploi.brussels

CityDev

Rue Gabrielle Petit 6
1080 Brussels
citydev.brussels

Innoviris

Chaussée de Charleroi 110
1060 Brussels
innoviris.brussels

Visit.brussels

Rue Royale 2-4
1000 Brussels
visit.brussels

Insurance Companies

AG Insurance

Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 53
1000 Brussels
aginsurance.be

Allianz Benelux

Rue de Laeken 35
1000 Brussels
allianz.be

AXA

Place du Trône 1
1000 Brussels
axa.be

Baloise insurance

Rue du Champ de Mars 23
1050 Brussels
baloise.be

DKV

Rue de Loxum 25
1000 Brussels
dkv.be

Ethias

Rue des Fripiers 18/20
1000 Brussels
ethias.be

Federale assurance

Rue de l'Etuve 12
1000 Brussels
federale.be

Language Schools

Alliance Française de Bruxelles

Avenue des Arts 46
1000 Brussels
alliancefr.be

Amira

Rue des Deux Églises 14-16
1000 Brussels
amira.eu

Berlitz

Avenue Louise 65
1050 Brussels
berlitz.be

Bxl Academy

Rue Joseph II 9-13
1000 Brussels
bxlacademy.be

Call International

Avenue Louise 65/11
1050 Brussels
callinter.com

CLL Language Centres

Avenue de Kraainem 61
1200 Brussels
cli.be

Huis van het Nederlands

Rue Philippe de Champagne 23
1000 Brussels
huisnederlandsbrussel.be

La Maison de la Francité

Rue Joseph II 18
1000 Brussels
maisondelafrancite.be

Speak Brussels / Brussels Together asbl

Rue de l'Industrie 11
1000 Brussels
speak.social

Startup Services

Belgian Federal Government

Chambers of Commerce

Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels

Chambers of Commerce (Belgium - Chile)

Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
chileanchamber.be

Chambers of Commerce (Belgium - Luxembourg - Colombia)

Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
belcol-cc.com

Chambers of Commerce (Belgium - Peru)

Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
belgoperu.com

**Chambers of Commerce
(Canada - Belgium
- Luxembourg)**
Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
canchambelux.org

Credal
Rue d'Alost 7
1000 Brussels
credal.be

EPFC
Avenue de l'Astronomie 19
1210 Brussels
epfc.eu

**EURACEN
Chamber of Commerce
(Europe - Central America)**
Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
euracen.eu

Groupe One
Rue Fernand Bernier 15
1060 Brussels
groupeone.be

Iles
Rue des Palais 153
1030 Brussels
iles.be

JobYourself
Rue d'Alost 7
1000 Brussels
jobyourself.be

microStart
Rue de Fiennes 77
1070 Brussels
microstart.be

Network of business centers
Rue Gabrielle Petit 6
1080 Brussels
brucenter.be

**NKVK
Nederlandse kamer
van koophandel voor
Belgie en Luxemburg**
Avenue Louise 500
1000 Brussels
nkvk.be

PARTENA PROFESSIONAL
Rue des Chartreux 45
1000 Brussels
partena-professional.be

SEMPER
Boulevard de la Plaine 2
1050 Brussels
cvosemper.be

UCM
Rue Colonel Bourg 123
1140 Brussels
ucm.be

Unizo
Quai de Willebroek 37
1000 Brussels
unizo.be

Startup Events

**BECI - Brussels Chamber
of Commerce**
beci.be/agenda

Brussels Pitch Night
bpitchnight.be

French Tech Brussels
frenchtech-brussels.com

PitchInBrussels
meetup.com/PitchInBrussels

Startups.be
startups.be/calendar

Startup Events List
startupeventslist.com/
brussels

Startup Lab
digitalfirst.be

glossary

A

Accelerator

An organization or program that offers advice and resources to help small businesses grow

Acqui-hire

The process of buying out a company based on the skills of its staff rather than its service or product

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The simulation of human intelligence by computer systems; machines that are able to perform tasks normally carried out by humans

Angel Investment

Outside funding with shared ownership equity typically made possible by an affluent individual who provides a startup with starting capital

[see also: [business angel](#)]

API (Application programming interface)

An interface or communication protocol between a client and a server that simplifies the building of client-side software

ARR (Accounting or average rate of return)

The calculation generated from net income of the proposed capital investment

B

B2B

(Business-to-Business)

The exchange of services, information and/or products from a business to a business

B2C

(Business-to-Consumer)

The exchange of services, information and/or products from a business to a consumer

B Corporation

A certification issued to for-profit companies by the nonprofit B Lab, which certifies that businesses meet standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency

Blockchain

A digital, public collection of financial accounts in which transactions made in bitcoin or another cryptocurrency are recorded chronologically

BOM

(Bill of Materials)

A list of the parts or components required to build a product

Bootstrapping

To self-fund, without outside investment

Bridge Loan

A loan taken out for a short-term period, typically between two weeks and three years, until long-term financing can be organized

Burn Rate

The amount of money a startup spends

Business Angel

An experienced entrepreneur or professional who provides starting or growth capital for promising startups

[see also: [angel investment](#)]

Business Model Canvas

A template that offers a coherent overview of the key drivers of a business in order to bring innovation into current or new business models

C

C-level

A corporate title given to high-ranking executives responsible for making company-wide decisions

CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost)

The amount needed to pay in marketing and sales in order to acquire one user

Cap Table

An analysis of ownership stakes in a company

Chatbot

A piece of sophisticated software that can have conversations with humans through text messages

CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

The highest-ranking person in a company, responsible for taking on managerial decisions

Circular Economy

An economic system aimed at eliminating waste by sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products for as long as possible

CMO**(Chief Marketing Officer)**

A corporate executive responsible for marketing activities in an organization or company

Cold-Calling

The solicitation of potential customers who had no prior interaction with the solicitor

Conversational App

A chat or messaging interface that includes graphic elements such as date selectors, images, buttons and other features within a text-based conversation

Convertible Note/Bond

A type of short-term debt often used by seed investors to delay establishing a valuation for the startup until a later round of funding or milestone

COO**(Chief Operating Officer)**

A high-level executive running the operations of a company

Coworking

A shared working environment

CPA (Cost per Action or Acquisition)

The average cost for a conversion from one's advertising campaign

CPC (Cost per Click)

An internet advertising model used to drive traffic to websites in which an advertiser pays a publisher when the ad is clicked

Cybersecurity

Computer security; technologies, processes and practices designed to protect against criminal or unauthorized use of electronic data

D**Dark data**

Information about user behavior that's been collected and stored but not used, usually because it's not structured or categorized in a way that allows it to be interpreted

Dealflow

A term for investors that refers to the rate at which they receive potential business deals

Deeptech

Companies founded on the discoveries or innovations of technologists and scientists

Diluting

A reduction in the ownership percentage of a share of stock due to new equity shares being issued

E**Early-Stage**

The stage in which financing is provided by a venture capital firm to a company after the seed round; a company stage in which a product or service is still in development but not on the market yet

Elevator Pitch

A short description of an idea, product or company that explains the concept

Ethereum

A blockchain-based software platform and programming language that helps developers build and publish distributed applications

Exit

A way to transition the ownership of a company to another company

F**Fintech**

Financial technology; a technology or innovation that aims to compete with traditional financial methods in the delivery of financial services

Flex Desk

A shared desk available for temporary use in a coworking space

I**Incubator**

A facility established to nurture young startup firms during their first few months or years of development

Installed Base

The number of units of a product that have been sold and are actually being used

IP (Intellectual Property)

Property which is not tangible; the result of creativity, such as ideas that can be patented and protected by copyright

IPO (Initial Public Offering)

The first time a company's stock is offered for sale to the public

K**KPI (Key Performance Indicator)**

Value that is measurable and demonstrates how effectively a company is achieving its key business objectives

L**Later-Stage**

The stage in which companies have typically demonstrated viability as a going concern and have a product with a strong market presence

Lean

Lean startup methodology; the method proposed by Eric Ries in his book on developing businesses and startups through product-development cycles

Lean LaunchPad

A methodology for entrepreneurs to test and develop business models based on inquiring with and learning from customers

M**M&A (Mergers and Acquisitions)**

A merger is a process by which two companies join to form a new company, while an acquisition is the purchase of one company by another where no new company is formed

MAU (Monthly Active Users)

A performance metric for the success of an internet product

MVP (Minimum Viable Product)

A product with just enough features to satisfy early customers who can provide feedback for future product development

O**Open Banking**

A system that allows third-party providers to access the financial information of bank clients through open APIs and build services around it

Opportunity Fund

An investment vehicle in companies or sectors in areas where growth opportunities are anticipated

P**P2P (Peer-to-Peer)**

A network created when two or more PCs are connected and share resources without going through a separate server

Pitch Deck

A shorter version of a business plan that presents key figures generally to investors

Pivot

The process when a company quickly changes direction after previously targeting a different market segment

PR-Kit (Press Release Kit or Press Kit)

A Package of promotional materials, such as pictures, logos and descriptions of a company

Product-Market Fit

A product that has created significant customer value and its best target industries have been identified

Pro-market

A market or capitalist economy

S**SaaS (Software as a Service)**

A software distribution model in which a third-party provider hosts applications and makes them available to customers

Scaleup

A company that has already validated its product in a market and is economically sustainable

SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)

A United Nations agenda that covers seventeen global goals that can be achieved by reaching 169 defined targets

SDG Indicators

An indication used to measure the progress in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals

[see also: [UN Goals for Sustainable Development and sustainable development](#)]

Seed Funding

The first round of venture capital funding (typically called the seed round); a small, early-stage investment from family members, friends, banks or an investor, also known as a seed investor

Series A/B/C/D

The subsequent funding rounds that come after the seed stage and aim to raise further capital (up to \$1 million) when the company demonstrates various increase factors

Shares

A unit of ownership of a company that belong to a shareholder

Social Entrepreneur

A person who establishes an enterprise with the aim of solving social problems and/or effecting social change

Social Impact Investing

Investment that brings together capital and expertise from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to achieve a social objective

Solopreneurs

A person who sets up and runs a business on their own and typically does not hire employees

Startup

Companies under three years old that are in the growth stage and starting to become profitable (if not already)

Sustainable Development

Defined by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development as

an organizing principle that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

SVP (Senior Vice President)

An officer of an organization who reports to the president or CEO and functions as the second in command in rank within the company

T**Term Sheet/Letter of Intent**

A document between an investor and a startup including the conditions for financing (commonly nonbinding)

TRL (Technological Readiness Level)

A method developed by NASA that enables consistent, uniform measurement of technical maturity (from research to proven success) across different types of technology and inventions

U**Unicorn**

A company, often in the tech or software sector, worth over US\$1 billion

UN Goals for Sustainable Development (SDG)

Seventeen intergovernmental development goals established by all 193 members of the United Nations in 2015 for the year 2030. The SDGs’ non-binding targets provide a framework for organizations and

businesses to think about and begin addressing the world’s most important challenges

[see also: SDGs, SDG Indicators, and sustainable development]

USP (Unique Selling Point)

A factor that differentiates a product from its competitors

UX (User experience design)

The process of designing and improving user satisfaction with products so that they are useful, easy to use and pleasurable to interact with

V**Valuation**

The amount of money a company is worth; typically happens at every stage of funding

VC (Venture Capital)

A form of financing that comes from a pool of investors in a venture capital firm in return for equity

Vesting

A process that involves giving or earning a right to a present or future payment, benefit or asset

Z**Zebra**

A company that aims for sustainable prosperity and is powered by people who work together to create change beyond a positive financial return



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About the Guide

Based on traditional guidebooks and stocked with information you might need to know about starting your next business adventure, Startup Guide books help you navigate and connect with different startup scenes across the globe. Each book is packed with exciting stories of entrepreneurship, insightful interviews with local experts and useful tips and tricks. To date, Startup Guide has featured over forty cities and regions in Europe, Asia, the US, Africa and the Middle East, including Berlin, London, Singapore, New York, Cape Town and Tel Aviv.

How we make the books:

To ensure an accurate and trustworthy guide every time, we team up with local partners that are established in their respective startup scene. We then ask the local community to nominate startups, coworking spaces, founders, schools, investors, incubators and established businesses to be featured through an online submission form. Based on the results, these submissions are narrowed down to the top one hundred organizations and individuals. Next, the local advisory board – which is selected by our community partners and consists of key players in the local startup community – votes for the final selection, ensuring a balanced representation of industries and startup stories in each book. The local community partners then work in close collaboration with our international editorial and design team to help research, organize interviews with journalists and plan photoshoots. Finally, all content is reviewed and edited and the book is designed and created by the Startup Guide team before going to print in Berlin.

Where to find us:

The easiest way to get your hands on a Startup Guide book is to order it from our online shop: startupguide.com/shop. You can also visit us at our Lisbon and Copenhagen offices:

Rua Saraiva de Carvalho 1C
1250 – 240 Lisbon, Portugal
lisbon@startupguide.com

Borgbjergsvej 1,
2450 Copenhagen, Denmark
copenhagen@startupguide.com

Want to become a stockist or suggest a store?

Get in touch here: sales@gestalten.com



The Startup Guide Website

Since the first Startup Guide book was published, our network has grown and the possibilities to reach new audiences have expanded. One of the reasons we decided to start producing content through a digital platform was to be able to take a deeper look at the cities, regions and ecosystems that our books cover. We want to make it more accessible for new entrepreneurs to understand the process of getting a startup off the ground through the stories of those who were once in their shoes. By sharing educational content and inspiring examples from the startup community, our website provides valuable insights and continues our core purpose: to guide, empower and inspire people beginning their entrepreneurial path.

For more details, visit our website at startupguide.com.

#startupeverywhere

Startup Guide was founded by Sissel Hansen in 2014. As a publishing and media company, we produce guidebooks and online content to help entrepreneurs navigate and connect with different startup scenes across the globe. As the world of work changes, our mission stays the same: to guide, empower and inspire people to start their own business anywhere. To get your hands on one of our books, feel free to visit us at our offices in Lisbon and Copenhagen.

Want to learn more,
become a partner or just say hello? 

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Anis Bedda

Transformer in Chief
transforma bxl

Anis Bedda is the founder of transforma bxl, a coworking space, makerspace and entrepreneurial ecosystem promoting sustainable innovation, and of Innov8rs, an international community and organization that programs corporate innovation and intrapreneurship events. Both projects were launched using a lean startup approach. As of 2019, transforma bxl manages two locations in Brussels, fosters a dynamic community and offers an array of services to promote the emergence of sustainable innovation among starters, startups, SMEs and corporates. Innov8rs is presently the largest global community dedicated to employee-generated intrapreneurship and innovation. Anis is an active proponent of bottom-up innovation, intrapreneurship, sustainability, crowdsourcing and open innovation.



Baudouin de Troostenbergh

CEO

Startup Factory

Baudouin de Troostenbergh is the founder and CEO of Startup Factory, a platform (and a startup itself) that launches startups. Baudouin decided to create the Startup Factory in 2015 based on his ambition to launch projects and have them in viable orbit within two years. To get startups to the stage where they can implement an exit strategy within that time frame, the Startup Factory uses a lean approach and offers close support for entrepreneurs during all stages of the creation and acceleration of their business, from idea validation and product development to putting together a team and raising funds. After three years of creating startups, Startup Factory has cocreated over twenty-five startups and continues to improve its methodology to execute innovative projects.



Elisabeth Van Ingelgem

Director Convention and Association Bureau

visitbrussels

Along with 180 dedicated colleagues, Elisabeth Van Ingelgem brings Brussels to life for local and international visitors with visitbrussels, the attraction agency for the Brussels-Capital Region. Elisabeth has been helping people discover the region and its many attractions and personalities for over a decade. She is passionate about showing both visitors and new residents that Brussels is more than just the European Capital and a leading events destination; it's also a decision-making center with infinite networking opportunities and the hub of many international organizations. The Brussels ecosystem is highly welcoming of new ideas and new startups, and with the help of Elisabeth and her organization, these new startups flourish. visitbrussels is driven by the purpose to make people fall in love with Brussels.



Eric Vanden Bemden

Business Advisor

Brussels Chamber of Commerce – reSTART

Prior to joining the Brussels Chamber of Commerce as the coordinator of the support program reSTART in 2016, Eric Vanden Bemden was a company manager for several fitness centers, wellness centers and tennis clubs as well as a trained physiotherapist and osteopath. reSTART helps business leaders, entrepreneurs and self-employed people to rebound and launch new professional projects after experiencing downturns in activity, liquidation or bankruptcy. After two years coordinating reSTART, Eric took on another coordinator role for a new support program run by the Brussels Chamber of Commerce for entrepreneurs with prior startup experience of three years or fewer.



Frederik Tibau

Expert Digital Innovation & Growth

Agoria

As Expert in Digital Innovation and Growth in Agoria's innovation team, Frederik helps startups and scaleups grow by offering practical tools and expertise with a strong focus on internationalization. Before joining the Belgian federation for the technology industry, Frederik was the director of International Relations at Startups.be and at Scale-Ups.eu. In that capacity, he focused on the community-building strategy of both organizations as well as on creating global connections for Belgian digital businesses and the organization of GoGlobal economic missions for Belgian startups all over the world. Frederik is a former tech journalist for publications such as *Data News* and *De Tijd*.



Guy-Louis de le Vingne

CEO

[MyMove \(Former CEO Make it – Tech Startup Studio\)](#)

As the CEO of Make it – Tech Startup Studio, Guy-Louis de le Vingne combined his experiences in strategic business consulting and entrepreneurship to help others launch and grow startups. Make it tests, develops, grows and funds tech startups. The program, employing a methodology dubbed “The Machine,” gives entrepreneurs the requisite skills (such as engineering, marketing, sales, development and design) to succeed, and all for an affordable price. Prior to becoming CEO of Make it, Guy-Louis was a founder, turnaround manager and scaleup CEO, which gave him the skills and experience for teaching others how to launch and grow their companies. Since early 2020, Guy-Louis took up another challenge by starting a new company MyMove as part of the Lab-Box startup studio that creates new concepts in the space of Mobility.



Hughes Verbrouck

Head of Commercial

[citydev.brussels](#)

Hughes Verbrouck has been the head of commercial for citydev.brussels, the leading real estate operator in the Brussels region, for over a decade. With extensive entrepreneurial experience in project management, sales management and consulting, Hughes strives to be a valuable partner for project leaders, opening doors to a wide range of innovative real estate solutions such as workshops, offices, labs, business centers, SME parks or land. Via citydev.brussels. Hughes actively supports companies throughout their lifecycle, offering tailor-made real estate packages or solutions adapted to their specific needs. He brings to the ecosystem an excellent knowledge of the Brussels scene as well as experience with SMEs, multinationals and startups.



Nicolas Vautrin

Head of Industrial Research Unit
Innoviris

Nicolas Vautrin is the head of the Industrial Research Unit at the Brussels Institute for Research and Innovation (Innoviris). The mission of Innoviris is to support companies in Brussels in the various stages of their research and development through financing programs. Over the last three years, Nicolas and his team have increased Innoviris' intervention resources in order to boost the competitiveness of innovative startups and companies in Brussels. Between 2015 and 2019, both the budget dedicated to startups and the number of projects financed has more than doubled, with the emphasis being placed on open innovation and future technologies such as AI. Innoviris has also created a startup support package that has contributed to supporting companies such as Collibra, the first unicorn in Brussels.



Pierre Hermant

CEO
finance&invest.brussels

Pierre Hermant is the CEO of finance&invest.brussels, which facilitates and completes the financing chain for companies that create value in the Brussels region. Pierre has eighteen years of hands-on experience in managerial positions in different sectors. He is passionate about making finance markets work better for startups and scaleups, is a specialist in strategy and transformation, and has high-level knowledge in finance, marketing and business-performance management. Pierre is also a member of the board of directors of several Brussels companies and lectures at Université Saint-Louis in management and strategy. His academic accomplishments include an MBA from Vlerick, an MSc in Corporate Finance and Business Performance Management from HEC Paris and an AMP from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.



Pierre-François Lovens

Business Editor
[La Libre Belgique](#)

When Pierre-François Lovens, the business editor for *La Libre Belgique*, was eighteen years old, the editor of a Belgian magazine gave him the following advice: “You want to become a journalist? Don’t study journalism!” So instead, he studied economics at the University of Louvain. After obtaining master’s degrees from Louvain and Trinity College in Dublin in 1992, he started working for the daily financial newspaper *L’Echo*. In 1998, *La Libre Belgique* hired him, and over the course of his career there, Pierre-François worked as the paper’s business editor, chief of the business section and deputy editor in chief. In 2014, Pierre-François took up writing again and contributes pieces on digital economy, innovation, entrepreneurship, startups and other business topics.



Véronique Flammang

Coordinator
[1819.brussels](#)

Before working as a business consultant, Véronique Flammang had careers as both a musician and a historian. She began as a consultant for a private subsidy research firm, before joining 1819.brussels, which offers regional awareness, information and guidance services for people doing business in Brussels, as a coordinator. At 1819.brussels, Véronique coordinates a team that responds free of charge to requests from entrepreneurs looking for guidance in legal, financial, subsidy, authorization or other matters. The department she runs organizes many events for entrepreneurs and raises awareness of opportunities for people in the ecosystem such as creating or taking over companies. Véronique has been an entrepreneur for over twenty years, and fosters dedication to entrepreneurship in her team and broader network.



Ecosystem Partner / Startups.be & Scale-Ups.eu

[Summary] *“We are the leading growth platform in Belgium that brings startups, scaleups, investors, corporates and public-sector officials together for innovation and cocreation. Time squeezing is at the heart of what we do.”*

[Description] Startups.be, the one-stop shop for Belgian tech entrepreneurship, and Scale-Ups.eu, the “top-of-mind time squeezer” for scaleups in Europe, joined forces to solidify their offering for the Belgian tech ecosystem. Together, they enable startups to reduce time in their life cycle and grow faster by organizing high-quality international networking events and creating intelligence-based reports about the Belgian tech ecosystem.

The flagship event, SuperNova, is the biggest tech and innovation festival in Belgium, featuring a conference, tech fair, expedition and investor pitching. The first edition in 2018 featured 47 speakers, 50 European pitching scaleups, more than 150 companies, 185 VCs from fourteen different countries, over 5,000 professionals and more than 30,000 visitors for the public weekend. The Big Score is a multiday international venture capital and corporate sourcing event that brings together 75 startups and scaleups with 185 VCs and industry captains. The Big Squeeze (the former Tech Startup Day) is Belgium’s leading tech startup conference and brings all the key players in the Belgian startup ecosystem to the heart of Brussels, and the GoGlobal program consists of highly curated, award-winning economic-startup missions that help startups soft-land into new markets all over the world.

Aside from their high-impact matchmaking events, Startups.be and Scale-Ups.eu also mobilize key innovation and entrepreneurial platforms in Belgium such as The Growcery, a business-matchmaking platform where startups and scaleups pitch to corporates about consumer-centric products and business models, and Failing Forward, a series of conferences and networking events for and by entrepreneurs who share about their failures and how they use these as stepping stones towards their success.

Startups.be and Scale-Ups.eu also participate in European initiatives to broaden their network and open up further opportunities for growth.

[Links]

Web: startups.be	Web: scale-ups.eu
Twitter: @StartUpsBe	Twitter: @scaleups_eu
LinkedIn: company/startups-be	LinkedIn: company/scale-ups-eu



Media Partner / La Libre Belgique

For several decades, we have been one of Belgium's leading French-speaking media outlets. Owned by the family group IPM, the *La Libre Belgique* has also been active in digital media since 2000. Today, its global audience (daily "paper" and digital content) exceeds 300,000 people every day.

Along with politics, international news and culture, economic and financial information is the backbone of the content published by *La Libre*. It was the first newspaper to launch a weekend supplement on economics and business in French-speaking Belgium in the late 1980s.

Based in the heart of Brussels, the journalists of *La Libre* occupy a privileged observation post to monitor and comment on developments in the Belgian and European economic and financial landscape. Over the past five years, *La Libre* has witnessed the emergence and development of an ecosystem of startups that have taken an increasingly important place alongside large companies and international organizations. It was in Brussels that the first Belgian unicorn, Collibra, was born. *La Libre's* economic editorial team is in daily contact with the public and private stakeholders of this growing Brussels ecosystem.

The universe of startups occupies an increasingly important place in *La Libre's* offering. In 2016, we launched the "One Hour Challenge" in partnership with the regional investment fund Leansquare and with the support of two major Belgian companies. This initiative has enabled more than two hundred young Belgian startups to pitch before a jury of professionals and to obtain high media visibility.

Last September, we launched an ambitious new editorial offer, *La Libre Eco*, which is available both online and on paper. For example, every week, we produce a short video that showcases a Belgian startup.

– La Libre Belgique



Startup Support / Be Angels

[Elevator Pitch] *“We are a network with more than two years of experience in bringing together entrepreneurs and potential private investors. We go beyond simply connecting people, offering education, support services and activities.”*

[Sector] **Sector-agnostic**

[Description] Specializing in business support and smart early-stage funding, Be Angels provides opportunities to entrepreneurs and investors alike. Beyond simply connecting those in need of investment to those with the funds to enable their ideas, Be Angels provides unique forms of support to investors at all levels of experience through innovative investment structures: one allows co-investment alongside experienced peers while another facilitates a “club” for first-time angel investors who pool resources and vote on investment decisions. In the Be Angels Academy, courses cover angel-investment basics such as due diligence, the investment cycle, valuation and negotiation. Entrepreneurs reap the rewards, benefitting from informed, hands-on input from angels investing their time in the growth of their chosen project.

CEO Claire Munck has made it a key mandate to encourage investment by women so that the resources allocated to startups are controlled by a group more representative of those building them and using their products. One of the successes of the support pioneered by Be Angels is the diversification of the investor network. Considering that older male investors dominate the funding landscape, groups like the Women Business Angels Club – the first female business angel network in Belgium – are vitally important.

[Email] info@beangels.be

[Links] [Web: beangels.eu](http://beangels.eu) [Facebook: beangelsbelgium](#) [Twitter: @beangels_be](#)



Startup Support / BECI

[Elevator pitch] *“We offer our members advice and bilingual services with their administrative struggles in Brussels and Europe and offer them worldwide opportunities thanks to our international community of entrepreneurs.”*

[Description] In 2007, the Chamber of Commerce and the Company Union of Brussels signed a contract and became one single entity – the Belgium Enterprises Commerce and Industry (BECI) – so that they could better defend the interests of all Brussels’ companies, big and small alike. BECI now represents more than 35,000 companies to whom it provides services ranging from administrative and legal advice to third-party support. BECI’s role is also to represent the voices of its members in public discussions and with its institutional partners. As an association, BECI works on a membership basis. For a fee, you can join and access all it provides. This includes advice from experts; a large internal network of potential clients, buyers and investors; training sessions specifically designed for startups; and masterclasses in law, digital marketing, finances, human resources and strategy.

BECI follows the startups’ progress individually with weekly workshops, which are available to the startups through every stage of their development, from the project stage to the funding stage. It supports the startups in finding the right partners, clients and investors. The association also offers its startup members a monthly networking event or workshop focused on a particular theme. BECI especially supports commercial expansion in Europe and worldwide, since Brussels has two official languages, French and Dutch, and many people also speak English. This multiplicity of languages allows for easy communication with the local community of entrepreneurs. Startup founders also get a larger visibility thanks to content released in different languages. BECI uses its various media platforms, including magazines and podcasts, to promote startups’ stories and products.

Filled with case studies, expert advice, insights,
interviews, local tips and useful addresses,
Startup Guide Brussels is essential
reading for anyone interested in starting up
a business, whether they're new to the city,
new to the startup scene or seasoned
businessperson starting again.

Brussels, situated at the crossroads of Europe's
cultures, sprouts innovation, creativity and talent.
Rich with its millennial history and deep-rooted
business tradition, Brussels offers a very skilled,
multilingual workforce and a strong official
support to entrepreneurs: everything you need to
start a business in the pulsing heart of Europe.

Every startup has a story.

The **Startup Guide** is a series of guidebooks made to inspire and guide anyone interested in starting up in particular cities around the world. Established business owners are all too familiar with the struggles and victories of starting up, and their shared experiences can help other entrepreneurs learn how to develop and grow their own business. Visit startupguide.com to discover more cities.

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