

PRESS RELEASE

‘Level Up Belgium’ puts Belgian tech talent in the spotlight for top international investors

Ghent – On 6 and 7 June, a select group of leading international investors will get to know the hottest Belgian tech scale-ups to watch during ‘Level Up Belgium’. Gent BC, Startups.be, EY and B-Hive are joining forces to make this event a large scale ‘Betech showstopper’.

On June 6th, the investors get familiar with 25 young Belgian growth companies that raised between one and two million euro, and want to go abroad quickly. On June 7th, the focus will be on Belgian scale-ups that closed a Series A investment round, as well as on a handful of starters with the potential to disrupt the market.

In total, **50 businesses** will be put on the investor’s radar during the two-day event. On 20 and 21 May, the selected companies will be trained by renowned Belgian *captains of industry* during a high-level ‘Scale-up Masterclass’.

Accel, Corsair, Index, Microsoft, Atomico, Dawn, Fortino, Vitruvian, Capricorn, ID Invest, HPE Growth Capital, MyMicroInvest, Newion, Partech, Volta Ventures and Icos have already confirmed their attendance. Several more top VC’s will be added to the program in the coming days. The speakers include Pieterjan Bouten (Showpad), Alain De Taeye (Tele Atlas) and Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo (Open VLD).

Initiator **Bruno Vandegheuchte from the Gent BC platform**: “Although there is a large amount of seed capital available in Belgium and the policy-making is increasingly becoming startup-friendly, our promising tech companies don’t have sufficient access to VC’s that are able to provide big tickets and make a difference. The access that Level Up creates to these ‘deep pocket’ investors from centers such as London, Amsterdam, Paris and Stockholm, is very valuable.”

Leveraging on a successful 2016 edition

In 2016, ‘Level Up’ already brought tens of VCs to Ghent, including Accel, Index, Dawn, Partech and many others. “In 2017, we leverage on the extensive networks in the VC world of the partners Startups.be, B-Hive and EY. This way, we can ensure that our top businesses will be able to present themselves for the ‘big fish’ in the VC space.”

“We are seeing an ever-increasing wave of second and third-generation startups popping up in Belgium that learned how things work at successful companies like the social media specialist Netlog, which - at a certain point in time - had more users than Facebook”, adds CEO **Karen Boers of Startups.be**.

“Furthermore, our developers are more cost-efficient and more loyal than their peers in the USA. Belgium also is such a small country that our startups must have an **international focus** from day one.”

“As **B-Hive**, we consider the support for Level Up as a no brainer”, adds chairman of Startups.be and investor **Jurgen Ingels**. “Attracting growth capital remains essential for Belgian technology companies. Startups that do well quickly orientate themselves towards the UK or Silicon Valley, and often transfer their activities or employment.”

Wim De Waele (ex-CEO iMinds, CEO **B-Hive**) says: “Hundreds of businesses have started in our ecosystem. Some remain small, others become players with hundreds of employees. It is great to see businesses like Showpad, Sparkcentral, Teamleader and Collibra becoming international Betech ambassadors. They prove that top investors should keep their eye on Belgium!”

“The objective of ‘Level Up Belgium’ connects seamlessly with the support that EY offers to starting, fast-growing companies”, adds partner **Wouter Desmet** of **EYnovation**. “By reverting to the base of EYnovation – sharing knowledge, expertise and network – we can prepare our top Belgian scale-ups during the Masterclass in Antwerp. This way, they are ready to convince the series of word leading investors in Gent, on June 6 & 7.”

Gent BC, Startups.be, B-Hive and EY provide a great deal of extra ‘triggers’ for the event. “Investors are often on the road but Ghent remains a unique location & the scaling epicenter of Belgium with all the right ingredients: 70.000 students, progressive vibe, a lot of research institutes and serial entrepreneurs with experience. The Ghent based technology companies collect proportionally the biggest amount of capital”, argues Vandegheuchte, who points out that the city is among the top ten ‘must visit’ cities in Lonely Planet, and is being boosted by National Geographic as one of the most authentic destinations in the world.

www.levelup2017.be

Contact:

Bruno Vandegheuchte, Platform Coordinator Gent BC: +32 (0)472 65 40 44

Karen Boers, CEO Startups.be: +32 (0)473 76 42 49

Wim De Waele, CEO B-Hive: +32 (0)474 23 86 53

Wouter Desmet, partner EY: +32 (0)495 48 77 60

About Gent BC

Gent BC is a joint venture set up by Ghent University, the City of Ghent, imec and the Province of East Flanders. As matchmaker between the knowledge institutions and the industry, Gent BC aims to consolidate the innovative capacity of Ghent and the surrounding region. Ghent BC is also the



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Together for strong entrepreneurship

initiator of the leading investor event 'Level Up', and of the 'Level Up Sessions', exclusive network sessions by and for tech entrepreneurs.

About Startups.be

Startups.be is a nonprofit that helps Belgian tech startups grow and reach new markets through matchmaking and expertise. It organizes the biggest startup event in Belgium, takes young companies to several top-notch GoGlobal missions abroad and it acts as the voice of the digital startups in Belgium. With the help of its expert hub and services, Startups.be links companies to the most important startup specialists in the country.

About B-Hive

B-Hive is an independent and open organization, founded by seasoned entrepreneurs, that acts as catalyst for the European FinTech ecosystem by providing a number of services in collaboration with its partners. It organizes a number of educational and network events, including a yearly FinTech conference, and manages a Brussels based Fintech studio. B-Hive connects the dots in Fintech.

About EY

EY strongly believes in entrepreneurship. That's why we want to invest in our relationships with ambitious, (young) entrepreneurs and proactively support them in their development. With EYnovation™, we can help your organization grow fast, by sharing our knowledge, offering our in-house expertise and opening up our international network.