

## A Vibrant UAntwerpen Spin-off Community

<p><b>Vision and Aims</b></p>	<p>The UAntwerp Spin-off Community was launched in 2017. The number of spin-offs rooted in research from the University of Antwerp has been growing steadily, with 39 active spin-off companies in 2022. Within our spin-off community, we identified the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting to know each other better and strengthening business relationships;</li> <li>- Sharing experiences, learning from and being inspired by peers (other spin-offs);</li> <li>- Maintaining close contacts with the University of Antwerp (Alma Mater) and gaining insights into further collaboration opportunities with the university;</li> <li>- Having a central contact point for spin-offs acting as a facilitator and initiator for further R&amp;D collaborations between the University of Antwerp and the members of its ecosystem.</li> </ul> <p>To respond to these needs, we decided to keep track of our spin-offs after their launch. With this in mind, the idea to start a Spin-off Community was born.</p>
<p><b>Target Audience</b></p>	<p>Spin-offs rooted in research conducted at the University of Antwerp. Individual members are usually spin-off CEOs and CTOs.</p> <p>This requirement makes it possible to create an environment in which tips and tricks can be shared informally. We also want to nurture a special relationship between UAntwerp and its spin-offs, as the 'Alma Mater' which they originated from. The UAntwerp Spin-off Community aims to be their primary 'network' (or circle), an environment where they can ask questions and get answers from both the Valorisation office and other members.</p>
<p><b>Key Features</b></p>	<p>The Valorisation Office of the University of Antwerp launched the community. The approach has been to co-create the concept of this community with its future members, the spin-offs themselves. This was done through a first brainstorming session.</p> <p>The concept/format that we co-developed with our spin-offs is the '<b>Tournée Générale</b>': one spin-off hosts an event during which they introduce themselves as a company to the other spin-offs. The format includes room for an external speaker to share insights on different subjects (legal, HR, finance, sales, ...). All this is supplemented by a short informal networking activity (having a chat with some beverages and snacks).</p>

In the summer of 2017, we had our first Tournée Générale in collaboration with the spin-off Novosanis. The enthusiasm was immediate. UAntwerp was the facilitator, but the content and location were determined in close cooperation with the spin-offs.

We organise approximately 3 Spin-off Community events a year, each with different spin-off hosts and thematic topics.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no physical networking activities could take place in 2021. During this period, we surveyed the members of our spin-off community with the aim to gain a better understanding of their expectations and interests with regards to future Spin-off Community events.

The response rate for this survey was 73%, with largely positive results: 66% of our spin-offs had already taken part in at least one activity of the Community, and 100% of them indicated that they were very satisfied with the offer. We also gathered insights on potential topics of interest for future events. In 2020, a **LinkedIn group** was created for the **UAntwerp spin-off community**.

In April 2022, when in-person networking activities were allowed again, we re-launched the Spin-off Community to celebrate its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We organize **approximately 3 spin-off events a year** around a relevant topic for our companies. Depending on the topic, we involve external experts e.g. as guest-speakers. This external guest-speakers can be other startups or corporates (also without origins in UAntwerp), policy makers, investment partners, ....

Examples of the main activities in 2022:

- **April 21:** Celebration of the 5th Anniversary of the Spin-off Community at the Science Park (Darwin Incubator):
  - 5 years of UAntwerp Spin-off Community: looking back and looking ahead (including presentation of the survey results)
  - Keynote by CEO **Textgain** Guy De Pauw on Artificial Intelligence for Social Good
- **June 16:** Spin-off community event on the topic of: *“Internationalization of your business”*. Host spin-off **HYSOPT**, CEO Roel Vandenbulcke
- **November 24:** Spin-off community event on the topic of *“Alternative Funding for your Business”*. Host spin-off: **iFLUX**, Tim Op 't Eyndt, Co-founder and Managing Direct and additional 2 external guest-speakers: Magali Parent, Advisor VLAIO and contact-point Enterprise Europe with a talk on how to apply for the EIC Accelerator, and Sevan Holemans, Managing director SOLIFIN who explained how our spin-offs can get support from SOLIFIN’s network of impact investors.

The University of Antwerp is member of the European Alliance YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe). In that alliance we are also working on an International YUFE Start Up Community. For 2023 our ambition is to continue with this ‘Tournée Générale- concept’, and we will also try to make cross-links between our ‘decentral’ UAntwerp based Spin-off Community and - where

	meaningful - activities within YUFE for start-ups. A first pilot will be in March 2023 in synergy with the YUFE Accelerator Program.
<b>Achievements &amp; Learnings</b>	<p>During the session at HYSOPT our members shared and learned on how they made a next step in the internationalisation of their company with concrete tips on how to succeed in overcoming hurdles.</p> <p>Also very interesting lessons were learned by sharing the experience of iFLUX that managed to get approval for a substantial investment from the EIC Accelerator <a href="https://www.enterprise-europe-network.vlaanderen.be/">Success stories   Enterprise Europe Network Vlaanderen (enterpriseeuropenvlaanderen.be)</a>. The duo presentation with also the concrete info from the Enterprise Europe contact-person was very appreciated and inspiring for other Spin-offs and food for thought for potential future applications towards the EIC Accelerator.</p>
<b>Launch Date</b>	The UAntwerp Spin-off Community was launched in 2017.
<b>Partners/Sponsors</b>	The University of Antwerp coordinates and facilitates the Spin-off Community, which it also supports financially. The spin-offs are also 'sponsoring' by hosting events in their companies.
<b>Further Information</b>	<a href="https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research/info-for-companies/spin-offs-uantwerp/">https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research/info-for-companies/spin-offs-uantwerp/</a> <a href="#">Guy en Barbara nodigen uit - YouTube</a>
<b>Contact</b>	Barbara Tan (RTTP), Policy Advisor Knowledge Transfer, Valorisation Office, University of Antwerp and Coordinator of the UAntwerp Spin-off Community <a href="mailto:barbara.tan@uantwerpen.be">barbara.tan@uantwerpen.be</a>