

# greenlab .brussels

10 years of meaningful  
projects for Brussels



**10**  
**years**

  
**greenlab.brussels**   
start your sustainable business

# greenlab. brussels

## 10 years supporting sustainable and circular entrepreneurship

Imagine a business accelerator that supports start-ups determined to try the adventure of sustainable entrepreneurship with thematic workshops, coaching and a range of expertise boosting them and enabling many of them to take off each year...

This accelerator exists. When it was created in 2011, Brussels even became one of the first European cities to launch such an accelerator. This is greenlab.brussels. It celebrates its tenth anniversary this year and this is its story.

## The beginnings of greenlab.brussels

Actually, in 2011, the accelerator was not yet called greenlab.brussels, but emerged as the BSE Academy (Brussels Sustainable Economy Academy), a structure financed by the ERDF fund. All sectors of the economy were involved, from food to construction, clothing to mobility. And the least we can say is that the project met a need! From 2011 to 2015, no fewer than 33 sustainable start-up projects joined the accelerator, which was still in its infancy, and led to the creation of 8 companies, 6 of which are still in operation today.

## The big shift to the circular economy

2016 marked a turning point in the accelerator's development, which was now financed by the Brussels-Capital Region as part of the Regional Plan for the Circular Economy (PREC). It was certainly not a question of changing either the concept or the methodology, but rather of focusing on the circular economy by targeting projects that are specifically in line with this approach. This was well worth a name and logo change. Consequently, BSE Academy became greenlab.brussels, in accordance with the ambitions of first time entrepreneurs in Brussels who are increasingly inclined to focus on projects that are more respectful of society and the environment. As a result, greenlab.brussels quickly became one of the most popular and frequently approached accelerators. From 2016 to 2021, it supported 81 start-

ups and trained 178 aspiring entrepreneurs, leading to the creation of 42 companies, 33 of which are still in business today. This is survival rate of 80% for projects created during this period! What could be better than that?

## Assessment and future prospects

In its 10 years of existence, the accelerator has supported 113 projects and trained 264 aspiring entrepreneurs in sustainable and circular entrepreneurship. In total, 51 companies that have passed through greenlab.brussels are still in operation today, with an excellent aggregate survival rate of projects over 10 years and a steadily increasing creation rate.

But for the greenlab.brussels team, there is no question of resting on its laurels! A new shift this year was the observation that too many of the start-ups applying were commercial and/or small-scale projects. The decision was made to target applications from industrial production projects which resulted in the selection of 11 large-scale industrial and/or production projects from the 18 projects of the class of 2021. We are calmly looking forward to the short, medium and long term development of the projects we are supporting.



"Over the last ten years, the greenlab.brussels accelerator has supported more than a hundred projects. Behind these projects, nearly 270 entrepreneurs have been trained in sustainable and circular entrepreneurship. So many visionary men and women who undertake projects with an environmental added value for Brussels.

This tenth year of greenlab is also the year that we change course towards industrial production; more than half of the participants in the final have conceived their project in a productive or industrial dimension. A new success for greenlab, which consequently expands its spectrum of projects, broadening the sustainable and circular entrepreneurial ecosystem with new economic activities.

Thank you all for your hard work. Thanks to you, the sustainable economic ecosystem in Brussels is alive and well and thriving year on year!"

**Barbara Trachte, Secretary of State for Economic Transition and Scientific Research**

"Training, equipping, supporting and accompanying Brussels entrepreneurs so that their sustainable projects also have a future: that is the objective of our greenlab programme.

Sustainable entrepreneurship, jobs that can't be relocated, etc.; greenlab maintains all the virtuous effects of the circular economy. The companies that have passed through the accelerator touch on all areas of economic activity: food, construction, mobility, fashion, agriculture, etc. They prove that the circular economy is not an alternative to the "classic" economy but a new way of thinking about human activity in its entirety.

This also proves that sustainable entrepreneurship is a way of restoring meaning to professional activity. And that sustainable entrepreneurship can be accessible to everyone; young and old, men and women.

Despite health and economic uncertainty, and even with a fully virtual programme, 14 of last year's 18 greenlab courses were fully booked. Coronavirus has not therefore affected the thirst for entrepreneurship of the people of Brussels. Against the backdrop of sustainability and impact economy, the opposite may even be happening!"

**Isabelle Grippa, CEO of hub.brussels**



# The inner workings of greenlab.brussels

Over the last ten years, greenlab.brussels has forged a leading place among the various entrepreneurial support structures available to Brussels project leaders. Spotlight on the secrets of its success.



The accelerator, the foundations of which were laid in the early 2010s to support budding start-ups attracted by sustainable entrepreneurship, was launched in 2011 under the name of BSE Academy. It has continued to evolve alongside the transformations in the Brussels entrepreneurial landscape and societal changes.

## MIT as a source of inspiration

*"The idea of such an accelerator came about following a visit I made to MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), where groups of students with different but complementary profiles were created to set up businesses, company energy projects," recalls Patricia Foscolo, Head of BU Clustering. "I found this initiative interesting and I wondered if we couldn't develop something equivalent in Brussels, putting together various skills around a project to increase its success, focusing instead on all things sustainable." While the project was going through the necessary administrative process, the Region obtained ERDF funds to create*

*BSE or "Brussels Sustainable Economy". Patricia Foscolo seized the opportunity to incorporate this MIT-inspired action, which seemed so appropriate to the Brussels entrepreneurial landscape. "We were able to release the necessary funds to launch the first call for applications and create the jury in 2011 in order to start the first session of the BSE Academy from January to June 2012 in a test phase," she explains. ERDF funds are made up of 50% European funds and 50% regional funds. However, external funding can stop overnight, which is a danger. In 2015, after four BSE Academy sessions, the project was made permanent after securing exclusively regional funding. greenlab.brussels, a regional programme in the circular economy, could therefore be set up and take over from BSE Academy. It ran its first programme in 2016: "We decided to focus the priorities of this programme, which was already an accelerator for environmental projects, on the circular economy in order to make greenlab.brussels one of the actions that was part of the new regional policy on the circular economy and make it even more sustainable."*



### A special focus on technological and production projects

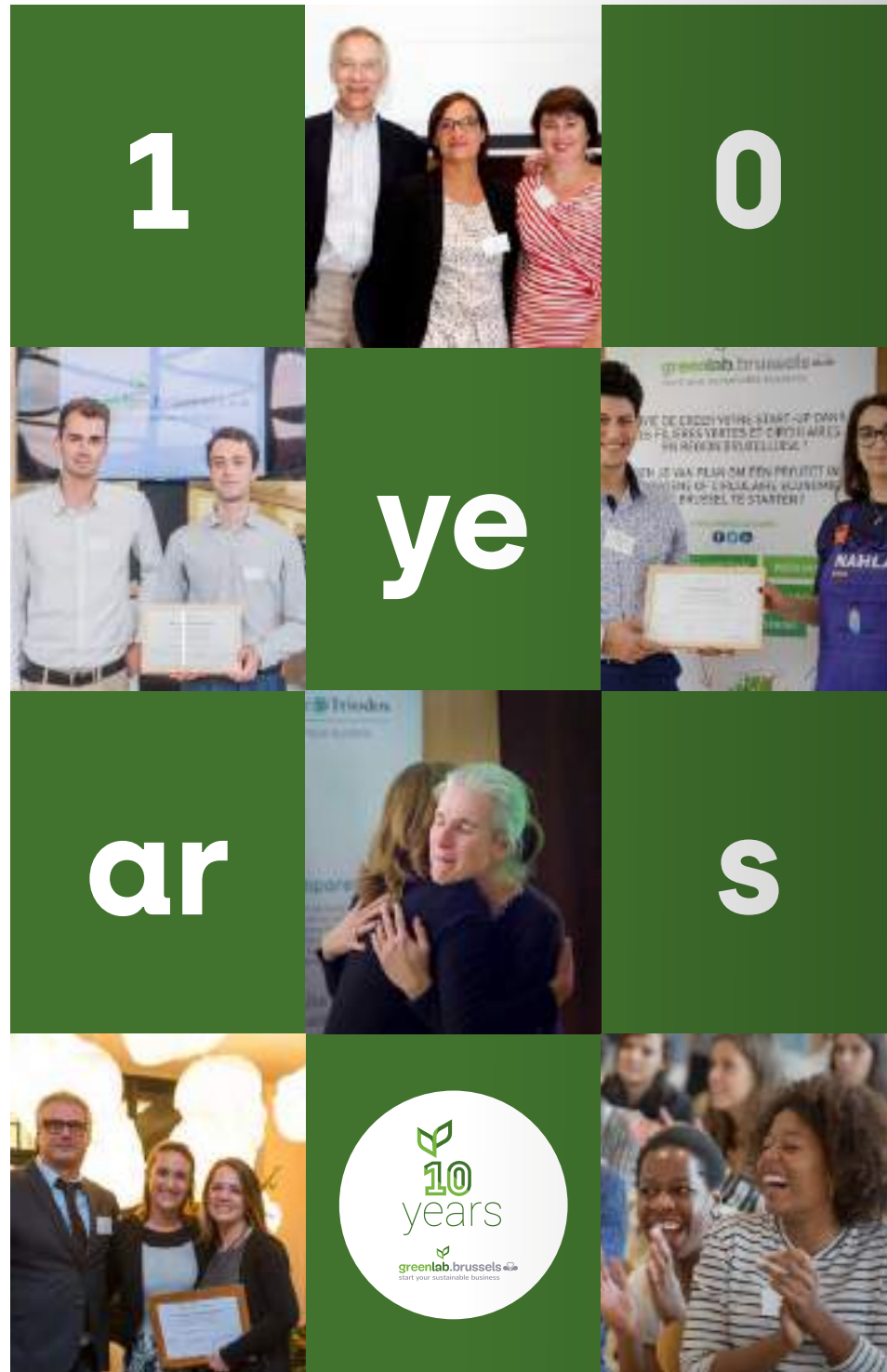
While, in principle, any sustainable and circular project leader is welcome at greenlab.brussels, the programme's originators decided to target technological and production projects in particular. "They are much more complicated, riskier, with stricter legislation to comply with, more barriers to overcome and their leaders really need the six months of coaching," says Patricia Foscolo, who recalls that at the beginning of the BSE Academy, public interest in sustainability was much lower.

*"Today, the subject is really topical and there are many business projects which are easier to start. This is where greenlab.brussels has a role to play. On the one hand, we redirect those whose projects that have not been selected to more appropriate structures. On the other hand, we support those who are able to embark on riskier and more industrial projects. This is why it is important to create synergies between production engineers, civil engineers or bioengineers and specialised profiles in sales and management. For the past two years, we have been communicating along these lines and I'm finding that it is starting to show results."*

**"We support those who are able to embark on riskier and more industrial projects."**



Patricia Foscolo



Whatever priorities greenlab.brussels put forward over time, they clearly corresponded to the expectations of the public as well as to the ambitions of the start-up companies, the profiles of which have also evolved. Year on year, the number of applications has steadily increased with a peak of 144 applications received in 2019. The number of projects selected to join greenlab.brussels is capped at 18 per session to ensure the optimal quality of the training and supervision. Another informative figure: the survival rate of projects has followed the same upward trend with more than 50 start-ups still in business out of the 113 supported since the programme began. A remarkable success rate of nearly 50% due to the tenacity of the participants, the relevance of the recruitment and the quality of the follow-up.

### A constantly-evolving programme

Virginie Smans, greenlab coordinator, and Patricia Foscolo agree on one thing: greenlab.brussels is constantly evolving. "During the first four years of the ERDF, we really tested the concept," says Patricia Foscolo. "We set up the programme and improved it. In 2012, no one created a

*business as a result of the programme, no business or financial plan was received at the end of the six months of support because no intermediate deliverables were imposed. This was reviewed the following year. Asking participants to do intermediate work made things much better. Following this, we quickly introduced a market test which means participants need to go into the field as quickly as possible to meet their customers. We then decided to inform participants about the reality of entrepreneurship from the outset through Benjamin Beeckmans' contributions. And the programme continues to adapt."* Virginie Smans adds: "Recruitment techniques have also evolved over time: recruitment via the entrepreneur weekends adopted in 2016 was abandoned the following year in favour of a more traditional selection process. We are using more and more digital tools for our recruitment campaigns and we have even resorted to using posters in the metro! It is interesting to note that after ten years of existence, greenlab.brussels is very solidly embedded in the Brussels regional ecosystem and that word of mouth continues to work particularly well in terms of recruitment."



## Raising applicants' awareness

Benjamin Beeckmans, a Brussels entrepreneur and Professor at the Solvay Business School, has been providing training and advice to those who join the greenlab.brussels coaching programme for several years. "I explain the differences between a traditional salaried or managerial type job favoured by our education, where you develop towards an objective known in advance and which involves assembling the resources necessary to obtain this objective, and entrepreneurship, where the entrepreneur often starts from an objective that has yet to be determined with the means available or to be acquired partially with time. A process that can be quite trying in terms of mental structure." Benjamin Beeckmans also insists on freedom, which is both best friend and worst enemy for an entrepreneur. "I'm trying to show that it's an amazing adventure, that the possibilities are endless, but that the destination is certainly not guaranteed. Most of the time you have

to be able to accept either a failure in the worst case, or a major change in direction. It is not easy to manage for the person or their family because the business, income and success are not guaranteed. It is therefore advisable to ask yourself a series of questions before making this probably less comfortable life choice."

Another important point that Benjamin Beeckmans is quick to highlight is the need to surround yourself with people to help you to deal with reality. Initiatives such as greenlab.brussels create a sort of collective intelligence, thanks to the meeting of entrepreneurs driven by the same approach. They also put participants in contact with specialists who quickly give them the opportunity to undertake a series of actions that will allow them to "de-risk" their project, i.e. to increase its chances of success or, on the contrary, to accelerate the realisation that they have reached a dead end.



## The importance of the pitch

Benjamin Beeckmans also helps aspiring entrepreneurs prepare their pitch. He defines their project as a story, a series of hypotheses. "The aim is to test the validity of this story as soon as possible with a large number of contacts and therefore structure their thinking but also compare their perceptions with reality. This is not the enticement, conviction process, but the listening, questioning approach. I tell them that they are not pitching to convince themselves that their project is good but to understand what they haven't understood about the project. Our goal is to for applicants to enter the accelerator, convinced that the entrepreneurial life plan suits them with a story they have able to build and that they are ready to be expose themselves

to constructive criticism outside their immediate circle. This is especially important for people in transition who often start from a rather delicate professional situation."

Benjamin Beeckmans ends on a positive note: "Entrepreneurship is certainly a great way to have an impact on your environment. Today, I'm delighted to see that some of the projects supported by greenlab.brussels have become reality. It is interesting to note that sustainable entrepreneurship is central to the creation of the economic movement in Brussels. I'm very proud to see that this development, from marginal or peripheral, is becoming more and more mainstream. The aim is to continue to anchor this essence of sustainable development in all perspectives."



# What our alumni are saying

The diversity of sectors favoured by aspiring entrepreneurs is a strength, the variety of projects a richness, the abundance of experiences a treasure. With 113 projects of all kinds supported over ten years, 55 of which have led to the creation of a start-up which is still in business today, greenlab.brussels has fostered the creation of a true heritage that the 264 entrepreneurs trained during this period are eager to share. We only had the space for a few of them to speak...

## Florence Poschelle, co-founder and CEO of Bam! (2017)

Driven by their ideals of sustainable food and zero-waste solutions as well as their desire to convince consumers to embrace home cooking that is organic, delicious and fast, in 2017, Aurélie Manzi and Florence Poschelle launched the Lili Bulk brand specialising in delivering dry grocery goods by bike. Over the years, the concept has evolved to develop perfectly balanced, ready-to-cook, savoury and sweet mixes, while obviously continuing to respect the values dear to the founders, which they summarise using the tagline "delicious & respectful". Lili Bulk then became BAM! "We wanted to facilitate the preparation of daily meals while keeping the notion of pleasure," says Florence Poschelle. "Our mixes taste home-made."

Without the support of greenlab.brussels, the story of BAM! (formerly Lili Bulk) would probably have been quite different as Florence Poschelle recalls: "I signed up for an entrepreneurs weekend with Aurélie, after which you could pitch an idea with the hope of being one of the fifteen or so projects selected to benefit from the support of greenlab.brussels. We pitched the idea of Lili Bulk and the following week, we went back to school on Wednesday evenings to attend the training sessions offered by the accelerator. This lasted six months, after which we won the public award and made our first sales. In six months we went from the idea to the making our project a reality. It could be said that this coaching has been very useful to us!"

Among the many skills acquired within greenlab.brussels, Florence Poschelle points to what she calls the tempo. "Each of us had the objective of producing something tangible at the end of the process and did everything we could to achieve this. We knew that it would not be enough for us to meet every Wednesday evening, that each time we would have a topic to prepare for the following week and that we would have to throw ourselves into this possibility, which meant a lot of simultaneous work, at evenings and weekends. That was really important," she says, "as was the group's shared ambition, seeing others move forward. **It is highly motivating, really enriching to be at the heart of such a collective and creative energy, to feel surrounded by people who are experiencing the same thing as you.**" Florence Poschelle also greatly appreciated the contribution of the experts she met as part of greenlab.brussels: "It was a real ecosystem. All of them talked to us about very practical subjects and in six months introduced us to all the different areas of a company, even for someone like me who had studied economics. Their input was so much more practical than the theory learned in college..."

<https://bamfood.bio/>

### Candice Enderlé, founder of Alma Sana (2016)

Passionate about positive change in our society and the infinite possibilities of being involved in it, the ALMA SANA non-profit association supports the transition towards a healthy and resourceful zero-waste lifestyle using workshops, a mobile pharmacy and the physical stores of the La Ressource cooperative as tools.

This project was initiated by Candice Enderlé, an interior and eco-designer, who, after returning from a stay in Barcelona, signed up for an entrepreneurs weekend. She did so more with the aim of becoming a part of the Brussels economic landscape and creating contacts than immediately making an idea that had been on her mind for some time a reality: "Working on daily needs was a very strong aspiration for me," she confides. "Through developing somewhat futile projects, which were certainly nice but absolutely not essential, I developed a real distaste for anything that did not meet a real need for people. I really wanted to work on products for everyday use." So strong, in fact, that at the end of the weekend, the young woman was rewarded with access to the greenlab.brussels coaching programme, which began just two weeks later. Thanks to a message posted urgently on Facebook, she met Nastassia Godeaux, driven by the same ideals, and both of them embarked on the Alma Sana adventure. This adventure would prove to be as demanding as it was exhausting, but it would end with the Sustainable Impact Award from Triodos bank at the end of the six months of coaching and lead to a real success story.

Candice Enderlé, who confesses that she loves to study and learn, has excellent memories of her time at greenlab.brussels: "I found these six months of support really interesting. They provided us with learning, practical keys, tools and a good knowledge of the entrepreneurial environment," she says. "This training also helped to demystify all the steps involved in creating a business. It can be scary when you don't know about this subject. You wonder what a market study is, a business plan, it all seems very complicated. But when experts come and explain what it all means, you realise that it is relatively accessible and that it is possible to manage with the basics that were conveyed to us through greenlab.brussels." Other strengths that are highlighted by the young woman are the visibility and shared ambition: "Our time with greenlab.brussels gave us a wonderful visibility thanks to the journalists who covered the programme. This training period also increased our motivation because feeling effectively supervised and surrounded by other new entrepreneurs developing projects in the same vein is very supportive. It motivates and creates a shared ambition." Not to mention the beginning of the professional network that Candice Enderlé was so eager to create when she returned to Brussels. "It's a special network because it's made up of people who put their heart on the table, their passion, their desire for change. This creates a setting in which it was very pleasant to develop because the competition was healthy. Of course, sometimes we meet people with projects very similar to ours, but we always provide mutual assistance and support, in a very positive atmosphere."

### Guilain Sevrière and Elisabeth Trivière, co-founders of Bel Albatros (2018)

Bel Albatros supports companies concerned about their environmental footprint in managing their plastic waste responsibly based on the principles of the circular economy.

Guilain Sevrière had the idea of Bel Albatros after being inspired by a video; "Precious Plastic" showed how to build a small plastic recycling workshop. Our man therefore started the venture with his wife Elisabeth Trivière. Together, they founded their company even though the first time entrepreneur had not yet found the solid business model he was looking for, "something suited to Brussels, which I could make my job," he says. "It was in this context that word of mouth put us on the trail of greenlab.brussels and we applied." And their journey through the accelerator has made Bel Albatros' concept evolve considerably, to say the least. "Before we went through greenlab.brussels, we wanted to create a small workshop and sell small products, the issue always being to find a high added value for this recycled plastic. We wanted to discourage the 'disposable' image of plastic," says the couple. "Six months later, we focused on one product." In this instance, the dustbin for waste sorting. "This experience has united us around our idea," they say. "With this guidance, we were able to move forward in our thinking, get down to the fundamentals and feel more confident that the time had come to launch our project. **We also had access to tools and advice, each more useful than the next, on where to start,**

which departments such as accounting or communication to include in the company, how to be efficient, how to delegate or in the case of a partnership, how to divide the shares. We also joined a network where you can test your idea against others, pitch it and evaluate what is feasible or not before you start committing to development costs, and that opened doors for us."

For Guilain Sevrière and Elisabeth Trivière, greenlab.brussels was a first step in their entrepreneurial journey in Brussels. "It helped us get a foot on the ladder," they say. "We are still in regular contact with Patricia Foscolo, who followed our progress a lot during the coaching period. We then went through BeCircular and we continue to call 1819 and hub.brussels for consultations. Through this service, we are getting to know virtually every contractor in the city!"

As for the famous dustbin developed within the framework of the greenlab.brussels support, while this has not yet been produced for production cost reasons, it has led to other economic activities, including the creation of recycled plastic sheets, a new construction material that can be used for wall coverings, shower panels, work surfaces, etc.

<http://belalbatros.com/>

### Bertrand Delubac co-founder of Janine (2020)

Take four French thirty-somethings who love Brussels and who are right in the middle of professional retraining against a backdrop of societal concerns and you have the "Janine" team, which was awarded the greenlab Public Prize in 2020. Since then, the bakery-brewery that promotes circularity, local and the fight against food waste has moved to Forest where it met with great success.

Maxime, the engineer who qualified as a baker and worked in Paris for five years before moving to Brussels, Morane, his partner, a doctor in biology with a passion for beer, Carole, a speech therapist who has long been interested in setting up a bakery, and Bertrand, who came to the capital to work in the European institutions, chose Brussels "because it offers an environment that is quite unique compared to other cities in terms of sustainable food and the political will for economic transition." Bertrand Delubac adds: "For us, if we're going to work for a long time, we might as well surround ourselves with people we can trust so that we can enjoy a project that makes sense. Adopting Brussels as my home, I started to make enquiries. I had heard of Greenbizz, greenlab.brussels, Coopcity, various support mechanisms for turning an idea into a practical project." One meeting would accelerate the process considerably; in November 2019, Jean-Marc Bryskère, Director of Greenbizz, encouraged first time entrepreneurs to apply to greenlab.brussels immediately. An application was put together in a hurry and accepted. "That's how we got into the greenlab.brussels environment", says Bertrand Delubac. "We were delighted with the support we received. The fact that we only had six months to turn our idea into a reality

gave us a working framework and we found the exchange of ideas with other project leaders who had the same entrepreneurial approach as us very stimulating. This experience allowed us to accelerate, to build a network, and gave us visibility thanks to the public prize that we won at the end of the cycle. **We were really satisfied with the accessibility of all the hub.brussels services** (legal, urban planning, retail...) all of which gave us very good advice. Consequently, when the support stopped, it was a bit brutal. We would have liked to keep in touch with the all-important network even after the business was up and running."

Janine, the artisan bakery-brewery that transforms bread into beer and beer into bread, opened in Forest in September 2021 and its success has far exceeded its creators' forecasts. "We are almost double what we expected," says Bertrand Delubac. "It's true that the products we offer, all made on site, are different: our beers contain 15% unsold bread and the waste from beer, called dregs, is included in some of our breads."

The quartet is determined to continue its involvement in the Brussels dynamic. Bertrand Delubac: "I have applied for membership of circlemade, which we intend to join as soon as we have turnover is high enough, as we believe that this cluster is a perfect fit for us. What interests us is to develop ideas, to be part of this network to co-construct the Brussels of the future, to bring together participants from various backgrounds with different responsibilities to share common concerns."

<https://janine.brussels/>

### Martina Mikles, founder of MIKLØ BODYCARE (2020)

MIKLØ BODYCARE offers natural and vegan cosmetics in plastic-free packaging. The products are handcrafted in Belgium to take care of your body while protecting the planet.

It is possible to come to Brussels from Slovakia to study political science and then decide to launch a natural and sustainable cosmetics brand. At least that's what Martina Mikles, the founder of MIKLØ BODYCARE, did. "I wanted to do something more tangible," she says. "I had a lot of ideas, but I was sure I didn't want to market traditional creams. Like any person starting a project, I had a plenty of ideas and values that I held dear, but nothing happens overnight. I was advised to apply to greenlab.brussels which has an excellent reputation in Brussels. I thought that there was probably an excellent opportunity to develop my project with its environmental emphasis. I think it's pretty amazing to have access to an environment where it's legitimate to ask yourself how you can grow your business by incorporating circular values so that you have the lowest impact on the environment, to think differently. A project like mine is set up gradually. Rethinking raw materials, the circular aspect of the project, thinking about how to position yourself in Brussels. How to develop the product and the packaging without ever losing sight of the circular aspect takes a lot of thought." The six months of support from greenlab.brussels

proved to be very educational despite the sudden entrance of COVID-19 and the switch to virtual from March 2020. Martina firstly points out the quality and diversity of the experts presenting the different courses. "We were able to follow master classes on subjects as varied as financial planning, market research and digital communication and it was really interesting. We had access to experts who are each leaders in their own field, with whom we would probably not have been able to establish contact so easily under other circumstances." Another strength according to the young woman was the network she built during these six months of supervision: "The work atmosphere was extraordinary, as was the value of the projects developed," she comments. "It was extremely interesting to work with people who also wanted to see their positive impact project come to fruition, as well as people who, like me, had a job in addition to their training." And even the health crisis did not dampen the group's enthusiasm. "It's true that our class had a slightly different experience, with much less networking and no final face-to-face pitching session, but despite that, it was great!" insists Martina, who recently decided to work on MIKLØ BODYCARE full-time. "Obviously, the more time we have, the better the project develops," she concludes.

<https://www.miklobodycare.com/>



### Camille Mommer co-founder of Natura Mater (2019-2020)

Natura Mater was created in May 2020 after an enriching 6 months of coaching at greenlab.brussels. Since then, the company has been assisting professionals in the selection, purchase and implementation of sustainable building materials.

At the helm are Jeremy Boomer and Margaux Cambier, architects, Blanche Mommer, a lawyer, Brendan Culley, a geographer, and Camille Mommer, who holds a master's degree in bioengineering but is above all passionate about entrepreneurship. *"Having once worked at hub.brussels, I knew the quality of the support provided by greenlab.brussels,"* she explains. That's all it took for the team behind the "Natura Mater" concept to participate in a call for projects from the accelerator. *"I told myself that this experience would force us to structure ourselves and give us rhythm. Due to my previous professional experience, I already had a good grasp of the jargon of entrepreneurship, unlike Blanche, who is a lawyer, or Jeremy, whose experience is much more practical. The other members of the group agreed immediately and we went for it. Just being selected was motivating. It told us that we were credible enough!"*

And indeed, the five aspiring entrepreneurs from such different backgrounds had to organise themselves to follow all the seminars, to establish themselves in time, to create a common language. *"It also*

*forced us to have many discussions in order to agree on what we were going to do, what would work or not",* stresses Camille. *"We had to share information and pool our individual expertise. This may sound abstract but it is really fundamental. It was due to this that all of a sudden, we were all moving towards exactly the same goal. This process takes time because the idea evolves. For the first time, we had to put a figure on our project, think about our articles of association and define our priorities. And we also conducted our first interviews with potential customers, we called real estate developers to test the idea."*

The five partners created their company at the end of May 2020, after their coaching at greenlab.brussels. Using a grant obtained from BeCircular, they decided to dedicate themselves to their project full-time and give themselves a year to test its viability. **"Our passage through greenlab.brussels was clearly a trigger, an accelerator,"** says Camille. *We have increasingly been in contact with real estate developers, contractors and architects, which has allowed us to determine the actual interests of the sector and propose a new offer for architects that works extremely well. We are in a recognition phase and accelerating sales. We have found our added value, it is very clear and we can successfully explain it to our customers. We are really very confident."*

<https://www.naturamater.eu/>

**"I told myself that this experience would force us to structure ourselves and give us rhythm."**

### Aimilios Orfanos co-founder of ReVolta (2018)

ReVolta offers environmentally friendly and financially sustainable energy storage solutions for business and private use.

This start-up was founded by Aimilios Orfanos and his wife Vasiliki Klonari, both engineers working in the electrical sector. "We know how important batteries are for the power system," explains Aimilios. "A world of 100% renewable energy without batteries is impossible. So this is a technology that needs to emerge." But batteries still have a few issues, not least of which is that they are not very environmentally friendly. "In addition to being expensive, their production uses a lot of resources and emits a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>," explains Aimilios Orfanos. "As a result, the return on investment is currently quite high and investors are reluctant to enter this sector." So, the two engineers set out to find solutions and created ReVolta in 2018. "To solve the environmental problem, we decided to give a second life to the batteries we recover from electric cars and reuse them in stationary applications. A battery that is a little outdated for automotive use can still be used in a building. This offers a double advantage: on the one hand, it extends the life expectancy of batteries by at least ten years with a beneficial effect on waste reduction, and on the other hand, it puts cheap batteries back into service that are useful for renewable energy management." The two co-founders of ReVolta have thus sought to develop a virtuous cycle. And they haven't stopped

there; for the optimal management of these batteries, they have started to develop a software package that should be on sale in 2022. This has already attracted the interest of large operators such as Delhaize and opens up prospects for them in France and via a European project in Italy. A success to which greenlab.brussels is certainly no stranger as Aimilios confirms: "We got in touch with greenlab.brussels via 1819 which we had approached for help with our entrepreneurial process. greenlab.brussels became involved in our project quite early on, at the most critical moment. For us, it was a real launch pad. It helped us to turn what was initially a fleeting idea into a practical project based on a solid business plan, prospects for the years to come, a network, and experts who supported us even down to the smallest details. It was essential. That said, a project like ours requires a lot of thought and preparation time on a technical and logistics level. So much so that when we finished the coaching, we still had a lot of problems to solve! But **honestly, I doubt that our project would have seen the light of day** without greenlab.brussels because it was greenlab.brussels that forced us to step out of our comfort zone, commit our project on paper and go and talk to people about it, in other words to come out of our shell. I think it was a catalyst."

<https://www.revolta.co/>

### Véronique Dewever co-founder of Skyfarms (November 2016)

**Initially focused on setting up and managing corporate vegetable gardens, Skyfarms' activities have expanded to include urban community vegetable gardens. More recently, an environmentally-friendly garden centre/nursery has been added to the company's services.**

"Augustin and I didn't know each other before we started Skyfarms!" The tone is set. The young start-up cultivated with so much care by the pairing of Véronique Dewever and Augustin Nourissier is a pure product of the Brussels support ecosystem for sustainable start-ups.

"We met during an entrepreneurs weekend on sustainable development organised by what was then impulse.brussels," continues the young woman. "Subsequently, we took part in the Circular Academy organised by Group One in the Partner Village, and a call for projects from greenlab.brussels."

Véronique had wanted to become an entrepreneur for some time, "But I didn't know how to go about things and particularly in which direction to go," she observes. "I started to understand the world of entrepreneurship by gathering information and attending conferences. And then Facebook did a good job of spotting my interest in this subject. It sent me more and more information about it, including the advert for the weekend that started it all."

She has excellent memories of the six months of incubation at greenlab.brussels: "This experience gave us a lot of structure and techniques for building our project.

We were well advised in all areas. **The quality of the advice and support on the various aspects of a project** (financial, marketing, commercial, etc.) **are really the programme's strengths.** It is also thanks to our support at greenlab.brussels that, through another participant, we were able to carry out our first pilot project in a company. Testing the idea with a first customer, stepping out of your bubble and its main principles, checking that the offer really corresponds to a need is so important! The success of this pilot project, but also the encouragement we received and the network we developed, really reassured us in terms of legitimacy and motivated us to take the plunge and create the company so that we could be operational by the end of the programme." Skyfarms would also be one of the first start-ups to join the circlemade cluster and Véronique would even participate in the cluster's first strategic committees.

The Skyfarms concept has evolved a lot since its early days. "Initially, we worked exclusively with B2B with the aim of bringing well-being to the workplace through the vegetable garden via various services and presentations. Our projects have diversified greatly and now tend towards urban greening in the broadest sense. We have even created our own environmentally-friendly garden centre. Our theme really speaks to everyone. The people we meet want to start with sustainable materials, local seeds etc. So why not provide such an offering ourselves?"

<https://www.skyfarms.be/>



### Agnès Bonfond, founder of Simone a soif! (2014)

"Real fruits, real plants, crafted with love" is the slogan of "Simone a Soif!". Behind this original name, there is an equally original range of delicious, natural, organic lemonades, water blends, fruit juices, freshly squeezed vegetables and plants.

Agnès Bonfond created this concept to offer her 10-year-old daughter's friends as well as adults looking for non-alcoholic drinks a healthy and tasty alternative to artificial fizzy drinks and overly sweetened fruit juices. She improved the formula during a holiday in Corrèze where she worked on hydrolats (plants distilled with water vapour) and borrowed the first name of her sprightly neighbour to christen her brand. Returning home, an internet search led her to discover what was still BSE Academy because it was 2014. "I figured this was what would allow me develop the idea," she recalls. "Everyone can have ideas but turning one of them into a business project is a complex journey. The range of expertise offered by the BSE Academy and the opportunity to create a community with other people likely to join my project and move it forward led me to decide to try the experience." An experience that proved to be more than positive. "Those six months of support met my expectations 200%," stresses Agnès. "Firstly this was due to all the expertise and skills made available to us. The people we met as part of the BSE Academy were really inspiring and allowed us to tackle all aspects of the business project step by step. The programme was extremely substantial and everything happened very quickly. Too often, we procrastinate when it comes to putting

an idea into action. At the BSE Academy, we didn't have the chance! We were caught up in a movement, a wave that lasted for several months and continued thanks to the network that was formed as part of this support and which has survived over the years. The people I met at the BSE Academy are the foundation of this network that has supported me in my entrepreneurial life beyond our six months of mentoring. In addition, project leaders like me also had the opportunity to create a team with other participants who were not championing their own project but were willing to join one of the projects already in development. It was also very rich insofar as I was able to bring together multiple skills around my business project, making more contacts, some of which have lasted." Agnès sums up the contributions of the BSE Academy for her and Simone a Soif! in a few words: "The network, the skills, the team that worked on the project with me during this period and the synergies between projects, even of completely different types and the discussions with other participants. And what's more it was very happy."

<https://www.simoneasoif.be/>

### France-Emmanuelle Adil, founder and CEO of Tiamat (2019)

Tiamat develops affordable plant-based proteins and scalable production systems to shape a more sustainable future for everyone. They are safe, ecological, sustainable and ethical solutions made from plants without using animal products.

With a master's degree in biochemistry, France-Emmanuelle Adil worked in the pharmaceutical industry for several years before making a personal change that would have significant repercussions on her professional life. She became a vegan. In doing so, she realised that there was a lack of transparency regarding the origin of materials used to produce our medicines. She also recognised that although the pharmaceutical industry is supposed to be particularly innovative, it was still highly dependent on materials of animal origin, despite the dangers and risks of contamination. She decided to take action using her own scientific weapons. "We use a lot of materials of animal origin, such as cow blood, to feed cells. I knew that there were other ways to produce certain raw materials, including proteins. That's when I started working on Tiamat and the technology we use today; we produce growth factors and ingredients that are used to make cells grow and multiply. My project was and still is to produce recombinant proteins in plants," she explains.

France-Emmanuelle decided to leave her job so that she could dedicate more time to her project, but it was not easy. "I had no idea where to start. A friend put me in touch with the Bureau International Jeunesse (BIJ) where an entrepreneurship advisor sent me the call for projects from greenlab.brussels." The young woman applied at the end of 2018, attracted by

the concept's sustainable dimension. The project was selected as a technology and sustainability project for the 2019 session. "The six months of mentoring went very well. They gave me the structure I needed. I am a scientist. My natural instinct is to research and develop product technology. **Thanks to greenlab.brussels, I have acquired a business knowledge that was totally foreign to me.** I learned to overcome my fear of talking to people, to have discussions with my customers early on, make proposals and develop an offer. And to define products because everything seems simple in the beginning. We tell ourselves that we have plenty of opportunities, but making choices also means giving up certain things. greenlab.brussels really pushed me to do that..." France-Emmanuelle also remembers the group dynamics and the people she met. "We could see each other progressing and it opened me up to the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem. It was thanks to greenlab.brussels that I was able to raise my first funds. I even secured a €50,000 loan from the King Baudouin Foundation simply by adapting the presentation I had prepared for the end of our training course. This loan changed everything because I had no money to spare and a biotech project is expensive. Following this, I had to take the plunge and create the company."

Two years later, Tiamat has ten employees and two offices, one in Belgium and the other in the United States. France-Emmanuelle is calling from North Carolina to talk about her entrepreneurial adventure, which began with the support of greenlab.brussels and is not about to end.

<https://www.tiamat-sciences.com/>



**"Greenlab helps to structure things and ensure progress."**

### Alexandre McCormack founder of Shayp (2016)

Shayp's technology uses machine learning to monitor water consumption, detect leaks and prevent water damage. The company promises a 22% reduction in water bills and advocates real-time water flow analysis for environmental preservation.

Little did Alexandre McCormack, the founder of Shayp, know that he would be working in the field of water conservation. This architectural engineer specialising in resource optimisation in buildings was working for the City of Brussels when he was asked to visit a nursery where young children were systematically becoming sick. The atmosphere was overheated and saturated with moisture. Alexandre investigated and discovered a major water leak. He subsequently observed the seriousness and recurrence of this type of problem. He also found that the solutions on the market were not very satisfactory. So he began to prototype a more efficient tool to eradicate these water losses and improve the efficiency of water management in buildings. Once the feasibility of such a technology had been proven, he wondered: what now? "That's when I turned to *greenlab.brussels* and I'm very glad I did," he comments. "When you're faced with entrepreneurship and you're all alone, you're not all alone facing the world, but all alone facing yourself. You set your own objectives which you can endlessly put off since there is no one to answer to. Greenlab helps to structure things and ensure progress. **There is a timeline, monitoring and objectives within a programme that I believe is well structured.** There are courses on how to set up a company, how to sell a product, how

*to structure your growth and acquisition strategy and how to raise money, which was very useful for me. In addition, you mix with other entrepreneurs, which creates ambition. You see others moving forward and say to yourself that you should be moving forward too."*

It is also thanks to *greenlab.brussels* that Alexandre discovered the circular economy, a concept that he was not familiar with but which has nevertheless proved to be a determining factor in Shayp's success: "My project consisted of attaching an electronic box to the meter. Behind this box there is intelligence that detects possible leaks and their severity. I was encouraged to opt for the subscription model where profit is not calculated on the volume of sensors sold, but on customer loyalty and satisfaction, with the hardware just being a way of providing the service."

Shayp won the *greenlab* award in 2016. Alexandre dedicated the following months to R&D and was finally able to work on his project full-time in 2018, the year he raised his first round of funding. Well established in Belgium where, to its founder's great surprise, its influence is growing, the company is also focusing on the international market. "We are developing quite a bit in France and we are also present in Germany and Great Britain," he says. And even if it is not always easy, the results are there to see with turnover quadrupling in 2021 compared to 2020.

<https://www.shayp.com/>

### Bénédicte O'Sullivan, co-founder of Fyteko (2014)

Under the slogan "The science of biopossible", since 2014, Fyteko has been developing a natural biostimulant which protects seeds during severe drought and thus enhances plant resistance to abiotic stress.

The company was founded by Guillaume Wégria, a bioengineer, and Dr Juan Carlos Cabrera, who holds a PhD in chemistry and biology. In addition to their work at the Materia Nova Research Centre, the two researchers are developing this first innovative biomolecule.

Guillaume had long wanted to be an entrepreneur. So, he talked about his idea with his friend Bénédicte, a specialist in international business who was persuaded and joined the two researchers in taking part in the call for projects of what, at that time, was still the BSE Academy. The result was six months of coaching to get an idea of the project's viability. Bénédicte says: *"At the BSE Academy, we learned a lot, determined the interesting aspects of our project and the points that needed to be worked on. Without this guidance, we would never have been able to develop a sound financial plan, a market study or even a convincing pitch! And above all, we would not have had a meeting that made a big difference, Xavier De Poorter who was our coach and was a great help during these six months of training. He gave us a great deal of encouragement in realising that our project was more than just a dream. He showed us that there were tools that could help us make it happen, even though we had started with an idea but no money. At the end of the process, he was one of those who said 'now you have to go out there, you have an interesting project'. Xavier is still an independent director on our Board of Directors."*

At the end of the BSE Academy, the three first time entrepreneurs were awarded one of the three prizes and invested all their savings in creating the company Fyteko. A grant of €460,000 over three years obtained in early 2015 under the Innoviris' Rise prize enabled them to rent laboratories, file the patent, finalise the prototype, and hire their first employee. *"It really was the beginning of the adventure..."*, comments Bénédicte.

Although Belgium is beginning to experience periods of drought, the products that Fyteko develops are mainly geared towards international markets (Latin America, Southern Europe, Ukraine or Africa) through distributors. A marketing solution adopted by the company because *"our expertise is R&D, innovation and the development of new molecules to help agriculture become more sustainable, not direct distribution to farmers,"* explains Bénédicte who notes: *"There is still a long and perilous road ahead. Our daily lives are a series of ups and downs, roller coasters. That's the game."* But she assures: *"As soon as we meet someone who has an idea, we make sure we tell them about greenlab.brussels, which was the trigger for us in creating the founding team. Without it, we would never have started the way we did. **Going through those six months of coaching, everything we learned, everything we put in place, it was great!**"*

<https://fyteko.com/>

**Over the last ten years, more than fifty of the start-ups created or developed under greenlab.brussels have not only survived after the support, but have even continued to prosper. All sizes, operating in all fields, faithful to their original model or changing completely, from local to international, all contribute to the dynamism of the Brussels economy. Here is the list of them, a list that will only continue to grow over the years to come:**

## 2013

### Lumency

A pioneer in the creation of **wireless sensor arrays** and **smart actuators** which can be used for smart buildings, smart lighting and environmental monitoring.

### Youmeal

Provides a web platform and associated services for the **creation and analysis of food choices** for caterers, retailers, producers, recipe websites and health applications.







## 2014

### Simone A Soif

Delicious **fruity water with organic plants**, **100% natural**, no additives, no colouring and no added sugar.

### Fytekko

Creates **natural biostimulants** which **protect seeds** during severe drought and thus **enhance plant resistance** to abiotic stress.

## 2015

### Jecliculture1

A support platform to help you overcome fatigue, with healthy and **sustainable recipes, nutrition advice, personalised food profiling, monthly meetings...**







2016

### Alma Sana

Organises **zero-waste workshops** around essential daily needs: taking care of your home, your body and your soul. Another project has also been developed since 2020, the shared, **local and zero-waste hardware store**, La Ressource.

### Greensolution.pro

Uses a range of products derived from biotechnology and nanotechnology to **clean and restore real estate and furniture**.

### Happinest

Second hand store that **gives a new life to items for children** aged 0 to 10: childcare equipment, toys, clothes.



### BAM Food (formerly Lili Bulk)

**Food deliveries** using returnable jars, in the form of sweet and savoury mixes perfectly measured out for **delicious and balanced meals** in 15 minutes.

### Orybany

**Ethical and sustainable store** in the centre of Brussels, which brings together a whole community of local craftsmen and designers.

### Loops

A social and environmental initiative that aims to **raise awareness about reusing toys in the form of workshops** for individuals (in partnership with the Recyclerie Sociale de Saint-Gilles) and **awareness events for companies**.





### Shayp

Equipment designed to **monitor water consumption, detect leaks** and **prevent water damage through real-time analysis** of water flow using machine learning.

### Skyfarms

Workshops and training to **teach individuals how to plant the vegetable garden of their dreams**. Skyfarms also supports citizens' groups and/or companies who wish to transform roofs, terraces, or gardens into peaceful havens.





## 2017

### Shake Eat

**Catering service** which uses food and drinks from **certified organic suppliers**, for both professional and private events.

### URBI Leaf

Creation of an **urban farm** dedicated to the cultivation of micro-shoots in a basement right in the centre of Brussels.

### ReVolta

**Environmentally-friendly energy storage solutions** for business and home.

ReVolta's sister company, Watt4Ever, offers stationary batteries made from reused electric vehicle batteries for buildings and mobile batteries for events.

### Box Bunny

**A sustainable food service for children** which in practical terms relates to deliveries of picnic boxes to schools in the Brussels region.

### Mon Cafetier

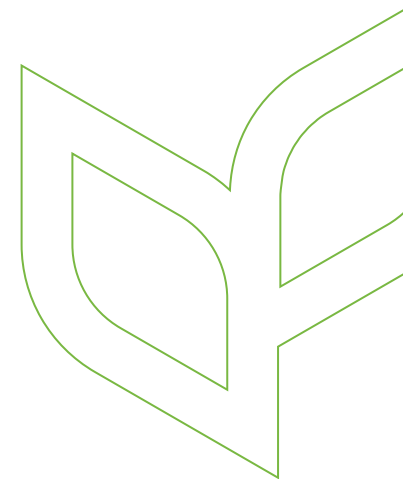
"**Coffee as a service**" offer that includes, in the price of the coffee capsules, monthly delivery of freshly roasted coffee beans and the rental of an espresso machine with integrated grinder, which produces only 100% natural coffee grounds as waste!

### Fais-le toi-même

**A shared and fully-equipped workshop, group courses on manual skills** and **upscaling reusable materials** in Ixelles.

### Boentje Café

**Brussels' first zero-waste coffee house.** From the heart and featuring local products, good for you and the planet. Delicious just as they are, without superfluous waste. We'll put some local in your jar, and you'll love it!





## 2018

### Bel Albatros

**Recycles plastic waste** from the Brussels Recyparks recycling centres into sustainable objects, in partnership with the injector Belgiplast.

### Enprobel

**Collection service for used edible oils**, for professionals and individuals.

### Les Cartons d'Anaïs

**Transformation of large cardboard packaging boards** into light, strong, reusable, foldable and custom-made furniture.



## 2019

### Coulemelle

Artisan studio specialising in **upcycling textile waste** and **transforming** it into fashion accessories and haberdashery items.

### Palettes pour particuliers

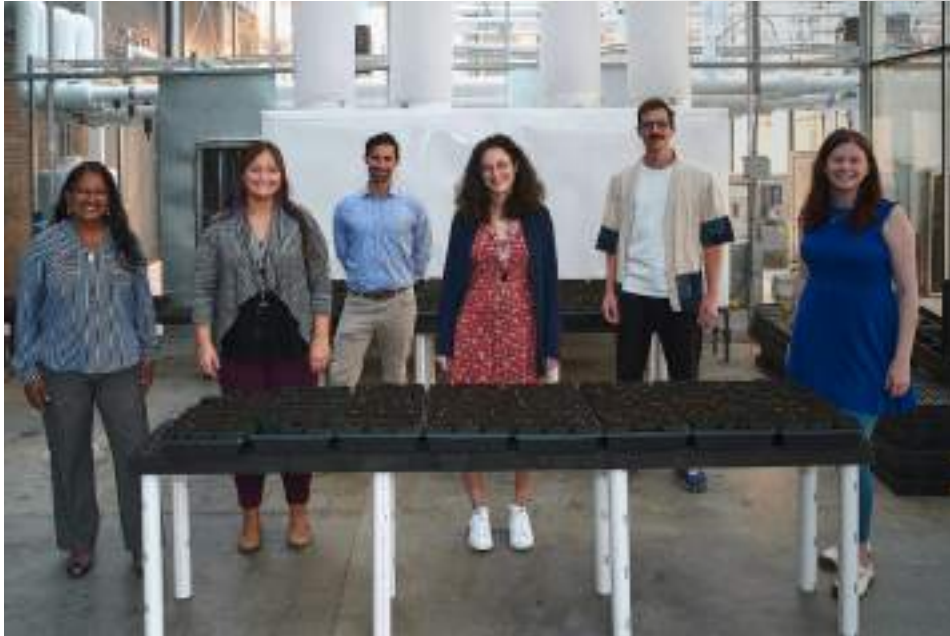
Enables everyone to **make their own interior and exterior furniture** from pallets delivered to their home.

### Camp in Brussels

**Open-air tourist facilities** in tents and unusual accommodation or for tourists in motorhomes.

### Mon Bouillon

**Promoting the benefits of artisan broth** in the form of filtered liquid. Production is based on the principles of the circular economy by recovering unsold local vegetables and meat carcasses from short circuits.



### Yuma

Production of **savoury crackers** made from cricket flour.

### Tiamat

Development of **safe, ecological and ethical plant-based solutions** for pharmaceutical companies specialising in cell therapy.

### Daurema

Aims to **give a second life to the batteries of electric bikes and scooters**, the cells of which are too often destroyed in the recycling channels while they are still perfectly functional.

## 2020

### Janine

A **neighbourhood bakery-brewery** operating on a **circular model**: beer is produced from bread waste and baked goods are produced from the spent grains from the beer.

### Natura Mater

Offers construction professionals an **"all-in-one" solution** for sustainable construction with clear ecopacks of bio-based materials that are easy to implement.

### Koti Sauna

A **traditional Finnish, ecological and social neighbourhood sauna** which aims to **allow the people of Brussels to enjoy a moment of relaxation** in a warm setting in the middle of the city.





### Brussels Craft Saké

**Production of local craft sake** (organic, 100% natural, vegan, gluten-free), made from organic rice of European origin.

### Freddy Met Curry

**Virtual canteen** that allows all Brussels employees to **eat healthily and easily at lunch time** through affordable organic and **zero-waste dishes**.

### BUNCH

**Creation of savoury, gourmet pies**, 100% organic and with ingredients that come from local farms.

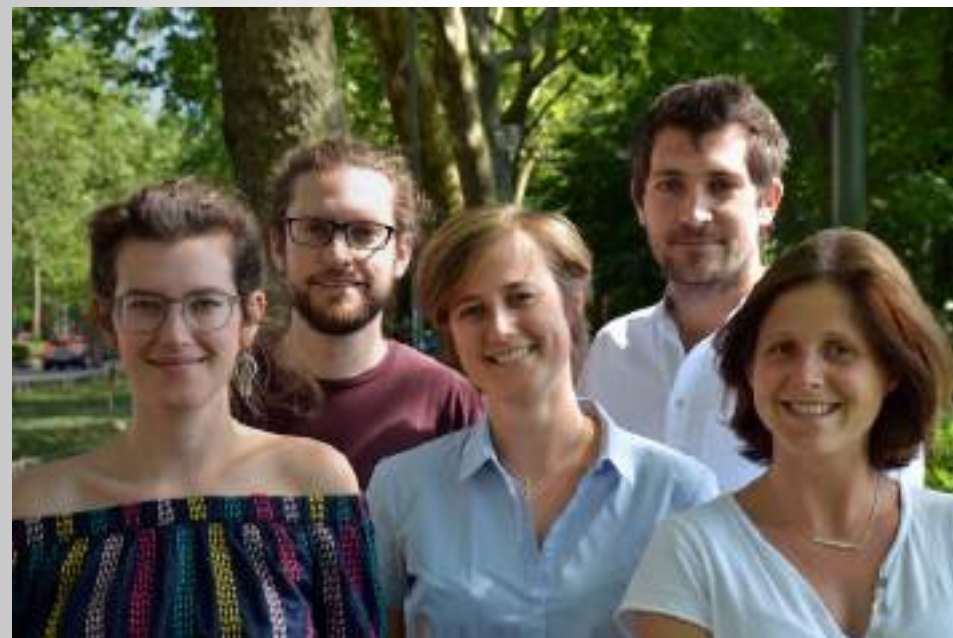


### MIKLØ Bodycare

**Natural, vegan, handcrafted cosmetics** from the most local ingredients possible (mostly EU) with **plastic-free packaging** while retaining the practical aspect of use.

### Many Lives

**Socio-professional reintegration project** around a store selling second hand tableware and decorations in the centre of Brussels.



### Octave

**Recovery of batteries from soft mobility** (cars, scooters and electric bikes) to convert them into stationary batteries to balance the high voltage network.

### Making Tradition

**Researching a systematic approach to upcycling materials into high-end product** design through the incorporation of traditional craft techniques within Industry 4.0.

### Les Maraîchers

**Urban micro-farm** whose fruit/vegetable production is purchased by subscription: this gives the subscriber access to the field from sunrise to sunset to harvest and create their own basket of fruit, berries and vegetables depending on their tastes and desires.

### Beanlife

**Raising awareness of tempeh**, a fermented product made from beans, ideal for vegetarians and flexitarians who want to improve their diet and reduce their meat consumption.





## 2021

### Chukwa

**Infusions** made from cocoa bean husks recovered from Brussels chocolate makers.

### Decarbone

**Conversion of non-standard commercial vehicles to electricity**, replacing the entire diesel or petrol engine with a new electric motor.

### Hypy

Horse-drawn 'hippopedibus' for the **school run** helping to **bring nature back to the city**.

### Landcoss

**Production of modular, hardwearing and comfortable sofas and armchairs** from decommissioned gym mattresses.

### My Tiny Garden

**Vertical, urban vegetable garden kits** ready to use throughout the seasons easily installed on a balcony/terrace/garden, with customer support.

### Oddpaper

**Custom and standard notebooks and notepads**, made using locally recovered paper and with professional machines for large volumes.

### PuriFungi

**A bio-based pollution control technique** targeting cigarette butts in order to manufacture a new material with various uses (ashtrays, etc.).

### Scobee

**Manufactures biodegradable packaging** using micro-organisms that transform the waste from the production of Belgian beers.

### Sensibel

A Brussels-based social enterprise that develops a **range of cosmetics** from an organic resource: coffee.



### Lokee

Buying and selling items between neighbours.

### Tiny Evolution

Production of eco-designed and intergenerational tiny houses for individuals, modular for grandparents, children and grandchildren.



### Urekap

Recovery of urine as a natural and local fertilizer for the agricultural sector, thus reducing our dependence on synthetic fertilizers.

### Pyroloop

Using biochar produced from solid sanitary waste (human and canine excrement), Pyroloop helps keep urban soils alive, while reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into the atmosphere.





Despite a booming sector and motivated first time entrepreneurs, some projects never see the light of day or come to a halt as they are in development. This can be caused by poor planetary alignment, personal reasons or a change in professional circumstances, but certainly not bad ideas! They are ready to be reborn in their initial form, using a modified formula, or to inspire new variations.

## 2012

### Altamano

Workshop and store for upcycling furniture and accessories using recycled leather offcuts.

### Urbana Farms

Environmentally-friendly production and marketing of healthy vegetables at the heart of the community by setting up a 500m<sup>2</sup> cold greenhouse with a sales area open to the city.

### Bemotion

All-inclusive rental service for electrically-assisted bicycles for companies.

### Biofood

Sale of sustainable, healthy and varied food to employees in isolated areas (such as industrial estates on the outskirts), at lunchtime, prepared by local producers and served by responsible employees at an affordable price (Food Truck).



### Eco Green-Energy Solutions

Pellets and logs made from coffee grounds. The product is made of recyclable waste shaped by a pelletizing process similar to wood, but has a higher calorific value.

### Beehappy

Development of a beekeeping and environmentally-friendly nursery for municipalities.

### Rooftop greenhouses

Hydroponic cultivation of vegetables in greenhouses on Brussels' roofs.

### REVVe

Coaching from A to Z, to find the right public and private partners to "rebuild villages in the city" in the form of cohabitation (social eco-construction).



## 2013

### Fibre Orties

**Outdoor sportswear brand** made from nettle fibres.

### B-PREG

**Bamboo fibre-based composite materials** for the production of sports equipment.

### Bugs'Food

**Innovative insect-based** (*Tenebrio molitor*, mealworm) **food product** for human consumption.

### Tale Me

**Clothing provision** via a **web platform** where it is possible to take out a monthly subscription guaranteeing access to clothing suited to the needs of children (season, size, number of garments, style).

### B-Organic

Creation of a **bio-waste management channel** to stop the incineration of organic waste.

### Slow Eco Design

**Service targeting individuals and customised design companies** based on recycled materials, objects they own or from sustainable crafts.

### MagnetYt

Natural solution for the recovery of certain metals present in a polymetallic solution. By using microorganisms to **recover metals in solution**, we offer a biological solution to a problem that previously had a chemical solution.

## 2014

### Apicolo

Innovative solutions to deal with the honey bee decline, called Colony Collapse Disorder (CDD), by **optimising the production of organic crops** in the countryside and in urban and peri-urban areas.

### Biowaste Reflex

An alternative solution to the **current management of organic waste**: local management through the installation of an on-site machine which treats the waste by reducing its weight by 90% in a maximum of 24 hours (biodigester).

### Gumba

**Transport service for people** in the centre of Brussels, for tourism or commercial purposes, by means of electrically-assisted tricycles.

### Plant-a-fish

Production and consumption of **animal and plant proteins** produced locally and sustainably using aquaponic systems in the heart of Brussels homes and gardens.

### SUMY

"Last mile logistics" and sustainable transport service through the use of **vehicles refrigerated with natural gas** and "reverse logistics" route optimisation.





## 2015

### Stemgarden

**Vertical closed circuit cultivation system** using bamboo canes.

### The Quiet Box

**Modular furniture** that reduces noise from pianos on the neighbourhood and the family, suitable for any piano.

### Irecycle

Allows **inter-municipal waste management** to raise awareness about waste sorting and encourage citizens to produce less waste.

### EnVie

**A catering service** with a traditional operation, but vegan and organic.

### Art et Jardin.Urbain

**Offers eco-design services** for gardens and the development of green spaces. The designs include alternative, economical and environmentally-friendly methods and practices for plant treatment and maintenance (solar energy, rainwater harvesting, etc.).

### Generatio Durabilis

**Online sale of foods** from sustainable agriculture with delivery into schools.

### Generation E

**A project to install photovoltaic solar panels on school roofs** financed by citizens.

## 2016

### Cicada

**A solution recovering excess production from thermal solar panels** by transforming the excess heat into electricity.

### Mille Pâtes

**A range of Italian pasta made** with insects produced in Brussels, ideal for people with gluten allergies or intolerance.

### R-eBike

**Rental of electric bikes** to companies.

### Lavage Consignes

Creation of an **agile washing station** in Brussels in order to support the development of deposit return initiatives (in partnership with Jean Bouteille).

## 2017

### KEEP

Canning, a real **crossroads of processing and storage between production and consumption** using different methods (jars, drying, lacto-fermentation, oil, vinegar).

### MySolarInvest

**A crowdfunding platform** for financing solar panel installation projects on public buildings and retail spaces in urban areas.

### [t)ECNAM

**Indoor vegetable gardens**, computer assisted or not.

### Tata'M

**Manufacturing and marketing of gourmet chocolate bars** the ingredients of which are organically grown, sustainable and fair trade.



### Discoveride

**Personalised guided tour** of the city of Brussels using electrically-assisted scooters. This new and sustainable means of transport offers a wide range of activities allowing tourists to discover less accessible neighbourhoods and businesses.

### Wonderloop

**A slow fashion store** for men and women in Brussels. Ethical, eco-responsible and elegant brands and designers. Services to help customers extend the life of their garments.

### Nils Design

**Creation and marketing of a range of furniture** for small urban living spaces using a simple and obvious assembly method with a view to recycling.

### Neocycle

**Recovery of used neoprene wetsuits** from Belgian water sports schools which are recycled into laptop bags and cases.

### La Conserverie

**Self-contained storage station** for fresh fruits and vegetables at home. This device, based on an ultrasonic humidification technique, preserves food longer and without packaging.

### Le Dispensaire

**Artisan and contemporary shoe repair shop** which aims to revitalise and rehabilitate a profession by infusing it with a force of creative proposals open to current trends.

## 2018

### Mycélium

**A 100% organic and biodegradable biomaterial made** from mushroom mycelium used to manufacture mycelium sound insulation panels.

### Tank

**Automated dispensers for the delivery of solid and liquid products** to facilitate and revolutionise bulk sales.

### Greenfy

**Smartphone application** which is a **digital marketplace for the environmentally-friendly consumption** of local products, from producers, artisans and collection points geolocated in the application.

### Senfinenco

**Ecological shower** for festivals and sports events: it recycles (and filters) its water in real time and is easy to transport, disassemble and store.

### Les gros outils

**Cooperative of medium and large tools** for construction professionals.

### Rawette

**Storage of vegetables** using traditional fermentation and drying methods. To extend the seasons while eating locally and bring more variety, taste, colour and vitamins to our plate.

### Ecotrip

**Production of waters essential** to the Food & Beverage industry and expert laboratory in plant distillation in the circular economy.

### Sci-Fly

**Insect-based dog food** for owners who want to give quality food to their four-legged friends.

### Ferugreen

**Recycling of brewery waste** to extract ferulic acid and resell it to cosmetics producers.

### Moxies

**Customisable moccasins** in a kit to make yourself.



## 2019

### Solange

**Washable nappies** for hire, cleaned by professionals, for private individuals and nurseries in Brussels.

### Ceramicos

**An alternative to single-use containers in the field of cosmetics** with the creation of reusable and handcrafted ceramic bottles and containers for creams, oils and body butters.

### Eco Fire Mat

**Invention of a non-flammable ecological material based on water and clay**, an inorganic polymer. UniQ Material Technology (UMT) has a unique resistance to fire, heat, water and chemicals.

### Cohizy

**Short, medium and long term rental of new and used household appliances** to individuals.

### BeeSpice

**A range of gourmet products made from the residues** from the Brussels beekeeping sector (gingerbread, cereal bars, granola, sweets).

### Loop Your Box

**Provision of reusable containers** to any place distributing food in disposable packaging such as restaurants, stores, canteens...

### ePark Bike

**Secure and connected bicycle parking** (standard, electric, valuable, folding) based on a web platform.



## 2020

### Bubble Oil

**Transformation of used cooking oil into household soaps**, for both individuals and for restaurants.

### Rolidoo

**Educational toys inspired by the Montessori education method** and suitable for all children aged from 18 months (disabled or not), eco-designed, made from recycled or bio-based plastic.

### Block2be

**Furniture designed in standardised modules**, customisable and scalable due to a simplified assembly system with a wide choice of sizes, accessories and configurations.

## 2021

### Bercail

**A youth hostel with a small restaurant**, all 100% local with the aim of promoting Brussels eco-tourism.

### Build.Again!

**Identifies and recycles deconstruction materials** destined for destruction in order to provide a supply of reused materials that is as qualitative and accessible as that of new materials.

### C'Ramik

**Gives visibility to Belgian ceramists**, by offering an online sales channel specialising in pottery applied to modern and eco-friendly needs and practices.

### Fibeltri

**Belgian technology which automatically separates used clothes by material and colour** (industrial textile reprocessing), and subsequently reuses them as raw materials.

### Mouches Blacksoldier

**Recovery of organic by-products from Brussels industries** to transform them into low-carbon animal proteins using black soldier flies (raw feed for pets and composting for vegetable gardens).

# Following greenlab. brussels

greenlab.brussels is an integral part of the Brussels entrepreneurial fabric. For some project leaders who go through it, there was a before. For many - as many as possible - there will be an after. At the end of their journey with greenlab.brussels, these aspiring Brussels entrepreneurs can find advice and/or accommodation with other Brussels organisations that support companies, including two significant examples:



## **ICHEC-PME, the gold standard of entrepreneurial support**

Another historical companion of the BSE Academy and then of greenlab.brussels is **ICHEC-PME**. Our teams were won over by its avant-garde techniques in terms of entrepreneurial support, while ICHEC-PME was impressed by the vision and internal skills surrounding the creation of the BSE Academy. Xavier De Poorter, an entrepreneur at heart, co-creator of ICHEC-PME and a regular contributor to greenlab.brussels, says, "I really think that the Region was a visionary when the BSE Academy was launched, because while it is easy to talk about certain things, it is often more difficult to turn them into reality. But there was a quality team within it that really wanted to make things happen. The technical skills of Patricia Foscolo and her colleagues was a key element. Patricia knows the project from the inside out and has analysed it with a more scientific

*vision of things. This allows for a certain demand with regard to the evolution of the programme in general and the acceptance and selection of projects in particular. I think these two elements have led to the continued success and therefore the sustainability of the programme."* He also stresses what he believes is one of Brussels' assets, i.e. the size of the city, which has allowed a particular avant-garde dynamic to emerge in Brussels on a number of entrepreneurial subjects, including sustainable aspects. "Everything is concentrated here and everyone knows each other," he says. "This has the virtue of facilitating contacts, meetings and networking. A real community has been created around sustainability. greenlab.brussels is part of this. It has been a very positive factor."



ICHEC-PME's role was originally due to be limited to coaching, i.e. one-to-one support for projects, but it was soon extended to co-designing the programme, including the pedagogical aspects of content, tools, the skills to be provided and programme leadership. Each year, Xavier De Poorter makes four interventions in January, focusing on the sustainability of the projects, of course, but also their socio-economic potential. *"If I create a sustainable business, that's fine. Except that a customer who comes to buy from me will not go shopping in another equivalent store,"* he explains. *"From a socio-economic point of view, it is neutral, it does not add anything. However, public funding, which is vital, comes from different taxes. Our society therefore needs an economy that creates value, generates VAT, social contributions, personal income tax, different taxes, corporate tax, as well as entrepreneurs, SMEs, VSEs and self-employed people, to finance them. At greenlab.brussels, we try to bring this added value, this content."*

In support of this, he cites the example of Fyteko (see p. 28). In 2014, he met the three founders of this biotech, which was then in gestation and is now becoming a world leader in crop protection products, *"There were a lot of things to sort out in their business model and about their association. They did very, very well, won an award at the end of the BSE Academy and were directed towards Innoviris, where they obtained a very large grant that allowed them to set up a lab. They then joined one of the Brussels incubators linked to this kind of project and were able to set up a fundraising campaign, which was essential to their activity. In short, they have done a tremendous amount of work that has made their company what it is today and resulted in around 15 very high-level jobs... I'm not sure all of this could have been achieved in the same way without the greenlab. It is the materialisation of the global socio-economic vision."*

**"They have done a tremendous amount of work that has made their company what it is today and resulted in around 15 very high-level jobs."**



### Le cluster circlemade : tout pour l'économie circulaire

Another natural partnership for greenlab.brussels is the **circlemade** cluster, the reference network for the circular economy in Brussels. Since its inception in May 2018, it has been supporting its members in their efforts by helping them to develop and facilitate the presentation of their commercial offer with one key access criteria: the circular model. Alexandra Lambert, Coordinator of circlemade, explains: "We have defined four circular business models (extending the product lifetime, reuse of resources, the sharing economy and functionality, sustainable procurement) and seven business categories that meet citizens' needs (housing, food, clothing, entertainment, transport, equipment, well-being). All of our members must subscribe to one of these business models."

No fewer than 13 Alumni(\*) have joined its ranks after completing their six-month course within greenlab.brussels. Some are even among the cluster's founding pioneer companies and have joined its strategic board. Alexandra Lambert continues: "The fact that a company has passed through greenlab.brussels is not an expectation, but we are aware of the companies that have emerged from it. The circlemade cluster currently has 78 members from whom we expect a certain involvement and to whom we offer a wide range of services and activities: individual and collective support, international missions, knowledge sharing, network visibility with regards institutions and large companies, social networks, etc."

<https://www.circlemade.brussels/>

(\*)Lumency (2013) Fytekko (2014), SUMY (2014), EnVie (2015), Lili bulk now Bam! (2016), Looops (2016), Orybany (2016), Shayp (2016), Skyfarms (2016), Mon Cafetier (2017), Do it yourself (2017), Boentje Café (2017), Bel Albatros (2018) - have joined circlemade

**Since its inception in May 2018, it has been supporting its members in their efforts by helping them to develop and facilitate the presentation of their commercial offer**



# Between partnership and mentoring

It is impossible to see through a success story like greenlab.brussels alone! Partners and mentors are essential in bringing high added value to the initiative.

In this area, greenlab.brussels and its predecessor BSE Academy have succeeded in generating interest and cooperation from organisations that have played an important role in promoting and continuing their support.

## Triodos, the partner bank from the outset

The first to officially join this dream team, **Triodos**, the sustainable and ethical bank, became a partner of BSE Academy in 2011, the same year the accelerator was created. William Barrault, Team Leader Healthcare SME at the bank, has been involved in this partnership from the start. *"Originally, it was beneficial for BSE Academy, the future greenlab.brussels, to establish contacts with financial partners. They are indeed important contacts for entrepreneurs who, faced with the obligation to write a business plan, wonder how to approach a bank or an investor. Since Triodos bank is geared towards projects with a social and environmental purpose, its values coincided with the accelerator's aim to develop sustainable entrepreneurship in Brussels."* In addition to the Triodos prize of €2,500 awarded at the end of each year group based on various criteria, including the synergy of the winning team and the project's ability to grow and duplicate not only in Brussels but also elsewhere, the bank invests in the participants by

offering training and coaching to explain how the bank works and analyses credit applications. *"Originally, we wanted to be one of the players in this ecosystem that helped the Brussels economy to transform itself and become more sustainable. For Triodos it is very important to be in the mix with all the partners who matter in Brussels around sustainability,"* says William Barrault who is pleased with this partnership that he has seen grow. *"The project had modest beginnings, but today, there are many of us around the table. I've also seen a qualitative improvement in the programme, its content, the quality of the entrepreneurs selected and the projects they present at the end of the cycle. The quality of the business plans has improved greatly. In the beginning, we were dealing with a lot of innovative, visionary and even slightly crazy ideas, with limited chances of success. Today, with projects such as Janine (see p.43) where the business plan is a little more traditional, the success rate is much higher. I will hold on to the pleasure of working with both the members of the jury and the entrepreneurs who can also teach us many things. It's very rewarding and I think it's the role of a bank like Triodos to be there. So I hope this partnership will continue."*

## BeAngels promotes sustainability

Two years later, **BeAngels**, a network of private investors the members of which support and invest some of their own assets in innovative companies, generally in the start-up phase and in various business sectors, joined the initiative. It also became involved in the training programme and offered the leaders of the winning projects entry to its Investors Forum without having to go through the usual selection process.

"When they invest, business angels, who are passionate about innovation, make sure they contribute to the company," explains Claire Munck, CEO of BeAngels. "They provide their expertise, their entrepreneurial or managerial experience and even their address book. Most of them joined our ranks attracted by the monthly opportunity to discover companies that are about to launch or are raising funds and which bring

*new solutions or new ways to bring existing solutions to market. Our association's role is to put these potential investors in contact with the project leaders that we have pre-selected. We help them prepare for the presentation and accompany them in their discussions with the business angels. When presenting to investors, you're not there to sell your product or service. You're talking about an investment in a company that includes an innovative product or service. Once the investment is made, we provide an ecosystem of support in addition to the assistance provided by the business angel(s) who have taken a stake. We are also able to provide financing solutions later in the company's development."* The cooperation with the Brussels-Capital Region and its various tools to support the creation or financing of companies, including of course hub.brussels, has long been well established. BeAngels could only be enthralled by greenlab.brussels: "This initiative interested us for



several reasons," explains Claire Munck. "During the workshop dedicated to the financing chain and the role of each actor in the financing process, we have the opportunity to explain to project leaders what venture capital is and the role of business angels. We are also represented on the jury that, at the end of the six months of support, awards the prizes, including the BeAngel prize. This gives the rewarded entrepreneur the option to take part in one of our investment forums without fixed costs and at the most appropriate time because not all projects coming out of the greenlab.brussels coaching are ready to be presented to investors. In addition, the greenlab.brussels support is a source of projects for us, especially in the field of sustainable innovation, which is highly appreciated by our members particularly since the COVID-19 epidemic. The financing of the Shayp company (see p.36) is quite representative of this. Just one year after receiving the BeAngels award, Alexandre McCormack took part in one of our forums and secured funding through network members."





### Greenbizz: an incubator for sustainable projects

Among these structures working in perfect symbiosis with greenlab.brussels, there is for example the regional incubator **Greenbizz**, the first sustainable economy incubator in Brussels. This is the ideal place for entrepreneurs in the sustainable and circular economy who want to establish special contacts, save time and focus on their objectives, in short to advance their business. Greenbizz provides Brussels start-ups with production workshops, offices and a co-working space in functional premises near Tour & Taxis. In 2016, Greenbizz became a partner of the BSE Academy accelerator which had been newly refocused on the circular economy and renamed greenlab.brussels. This succeeded L'Atelier des Tanneurs & Village Partenaire. From now on, it would host all the greenlab.brussels training workshops and every year offer three months' accommodation to the winners of the greenlab prize. *"In the development phases of a start-up project, there is the concept, the test and then the launch"*, explains Jean-Marc Bryskère, Director of greenbizz.

*"The purpose of greenlab.brussels is to support aspiring entrepreneurs in the concept and creation phase of their project. They emerge from the six months of training with a business plan and having tested their project, product, or service and are in a position to decide whether or not to go ahead. That's where we come in. Our mission is to support sustainable entrepreneurship. We accommodate companies from the moment they enter the launch or development phase. We are therefore perfectly suited to accommodate start-ups that have developed their project within the framework of greenlab, the idea being to offer continuity in the support of start-ups in the sustainable economy."*

<https://www.greenbizz.brussels>

**"Our mission is to support sustainable entrepreneurship."**





## Growfunding for sustainable Brussels crowdfunding

In 2019, **Growfunding**, a Belgian civic crowdfunding platform connecting people and resources to support projects that make our society more resilient and sustainable, joined the long-standing partners of greenlab.brussels. Following the example of Triodos Bank and BeAngels, it actively participates in some workshops and offers the winners personalised support in terms of both preparation and optimisation for the launch of a crowdfunding campaign.

Elodie Dossogne is one of five coaches who run this platform. She explains the project's origin and philosophy: *"We were born out of a research project at the Dutch-speaking university Odissee, based in Brussels since 2014. The result was the creation in 2016 of an independent non-profit organisation which aims to offer civic crowdfunding to people with projects with a societal impact in the broadest sense of the term, who want to use crowdfunding."* Growfunding supports projects in the circular and social economy, as well as non-profit organisations working with newcomers or artistic projects, as long as these projects bring added value to the city or a particular community. *"We provide both entrepreneurial and financial support, helping those who apply to us to gain easy access to funding."* Logically, Growfunding participates in the selection and the various

pitching sessions and assists aspiring entrepreneurs within greenlab.brussels at the time when different ways of accessing funding are being discussed. *"The idea is to intervene as a possible player,"* explains Elodie Dossogne. *"Our presence is also justified by the fact that we are a very accessible springboard for certain projects such as those that require prototyping. Crowdfunding is a great way to raise awareness and engage a community around a project. The bonds were formed quite quickly and I have had the opportunity to support project leaders at different stages of their journey. It's always interesting to learn how things work from the inside, to meet the different people involved and see what kind of projects are presented."*

Since its creation in 2016, Growfunding has supported several dozen projects each year. These include campaigns initiated by greenlab.brussels Alumni such as Fais-le toi-même, Orybany, Wonderloop, Boentje Café and Le Dispensaire, regardless of whether they have benefited from the personalised support offered by the non-profit association to projects awarded by the accelerator. They certainly won't be last.



## What else?

Amongst all those who have made the greenlab.brussels project a reality, we must also mention ICHEC, which is very effective in handling the educational aspects of the training courses, and Groupe One, which is involved in the annual selection of projects and coaches them during the 6-month acceleration period. And let's not forget our independent coaches who also contribute to greenlab's success.

Each of these partners makes their own contribution to the positive evolution of the programme and the emergence in Brussels of an increasing number of wonderful sustainable companies that continue to develop there; greenlab is sincerely grateful for this.



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