

Upstream Festival 2025: everything startups and scale-ups need to grow

The community-led startup event with 50+ exhibitors, 35+ main events, 30+ side events and many renowned speakers.

Rotterdam, March 20 2025 – On 21 and 22 May 2025, Upstream Festival returns for the sixth edition, bringing together everything a startup needs for growth. More than 45 partners and a highly curated group of founders of startups and scale-ups, investors, corporates and policy makers from all over Europe will gather for this one common goal. The main location for this year's event is Rotterdam's inspiring pop music venue Annabel.

Together for a better world

Upstream Festival 2025's objective is to inspire all attending startups with content that helps them to create a better future, regardless of the industries they are active in. The long-term goal of the startup festival is to help build a future proof economy by focusing on digitalization, carbon neutrality, zero waste and inclusivity. The main events, such as deep dives, fireside chats, startup pitches, speed dating, and roundtables will provide attendees with need-to-know information, while fostering a culture of networking.

Loyal partners like the City of Rotterdam, Rabobank, the City of Delft and the City of Zoetermeer are the first to support the event again. Some of the confirmed investors include Volta Ventures, 4ImpactVC, Arches Capital, Innovation Quarter, Graduate Entrepreneur Fund and Smarter Ventures.

Confirmed speakers: Kiki Lauwers, Ida Tin, Elise de Reus and Clare Jones

There will be many internationally recognized speakers attending the two-day Upstream Festival, sharing their expertise on building a resilient society. [Kiki Lauwers](#), CEO of deeptech scale-up [Thorizon](#), has over 15 years of experience in technology strategy and scale-up management: *"Leading a startup feels like running an obstacle mud race-you have to embrace the mess. It's a challenging ride, but you're not in it alone. Events like this, with fellow founders, are when things get truly real. No need to sugarcoat it"*

[Ida Tin](#) from Denmark, founder of [Clue](#), is a pioneer in the field of femtech. She will take a deep dive in how the tech industry increasingly shapes our most personal experiences, specifically of women.

Other resounding names on the speakerlist are [Clare Jones](#) CEO of [Polarsteps](#), [Elise de Reus](#) co-founder of [Cradle](#) and [Deniz Wiedhaup](#) CEO of [Yoni](#).

Side events: Deep Tech Breakfast and meeting new co-founders

[The program](#) of Upstream Festival consists of general sessions and a wide array of side events. An example of this is the Deep Tech Breakfast, organized by [Quantum Leiden and Quantum Delft](#). This exclusive, early morning event brings deep tech founders and innovators together, with a special focus on the quantum technology community - making it possible to share insights and build meaningful connections with other innovators in fields like fintech, biotech, AI, quantum computing, and more.

At [Meet Your Co-founder](#), a half-day session at YES!Delft, entrepreneurs can network with their equals and possibly meet their new co-founder. Participants can pitch their tech startup or present themselves to find a talent match. As a single founder or founding team they get the tools and connections to find a new member for their team.

Popular side events from previous editions, such as the Annual Scale-up CEO dinner by [Up!Rotterdam](#), the Unconference by the [Dutch Societal Innovation Hub](#), Builders Investor House by [the Builders Studio](#) and many others will also be part of this year's program.

Connecting European tech-hubs

Lars Crama, one of the initiators of Upstream, highlights the European focus of this year's Upstream Festival: *"Mario Draghi's message is clear - Europe must rethink its competitiveness. That's exactly what Upstream is about. We bring together startups and scale-ups driving sustainable growth, connecting them with investors, customers and policymakers. If we want a future-proof economy, we need to back the entrepreneurs shaping it."*

More detailed information and tickets are available on the [Upstream Festival website](#). Further details on this year's locations, speakers, agenda, and side events will be announced in the coming weeks.

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About Upstream Festival

Founded in 2020, Upstream Festival has rapidly become one of the leading community-driven startup events. Every year, they bring together a highly curated group of more than 2,000 founders, investors, and change makers, united by one goal: creating companies that shape a better world. At Upstream, startups and scale-ups find the connections, inspiration, and resources they need to thrive. With an impressive main program and 35+ side events, it's two days packed with everything a startup needs for growth. Join us May 21 & 22, 2025, in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Tickets are available at www.upstreamfestival.com/tickets.

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