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UPSTREAM 2026



DRIVEN BY YOU

Upstream Festival connects startups, capital, and opportunities.

With a clear dedication to curation and collaboration, Upstream Festival has always been a quality-focussed community-driven startup event in the Netherlands.

This year, a dynamic program with talks, workshops, and pitches, 23 side events, and more than 41 co-creation partners ensured the event's success and impact on the entrepreneurial community.

18-05 – 22.05 SIDE EVENTS

INVESTOR MEETUPS

WORKSHOPS

DINNERS

FOUNDER MEETUPS

COMMUNITY MEETUPS

21-05 DAY ONE – MAIN EVENT

FUNDING & GROWTH WORKSHOPS

SPEEDDATING

TALKS &
PANELS

FOUNDERS
LOUNGE

NL STARTUP
COMPETITION



A note from the team

at Upstream Festival

Dear Upstream Community,

Your efforts to build a stellar program really paid off this year. The side events showcased a vibrant startup ecosystem with 23 exciting community-led events. At the main event, 28 speakers and 11 pitches took the stage, while 29 exhibitors filled the meeting area. With a 3:1 founder-to-investor ratio, this edition attracted a well-curated group of visitors from across the Netherlands and beyond, creating new connections for sustainable growth. None of this would've been possible without your energy and commitment. Here's a look at what we accomplished, together.

COMMUNITY DRIVEN STARTUP EVENT IN NL

"Throughout the day, we spoke with ambitious early-stage founders working on innovations in AI, Life Sciences & Health, and Maritime. Some were looking for funding, others for strategic partners, feedback, co-founders, or simply the right conversation to move forward.

And that's what makes events like Upstream Festival so valuable: bringing together founders, early-stage investors, and ecosystem partners in one place, where ideas can quickly turn into meaningful connections."

Uniiq

Finance for the Future

2

STAGES

2

WORKSHOP HUBS

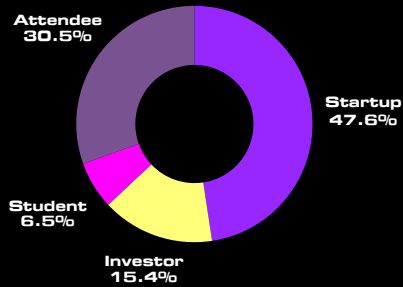
28

SPEAKERS

23

SIDE EVENTS

UPSTREAM IN NUMBERS



ATTENDEES

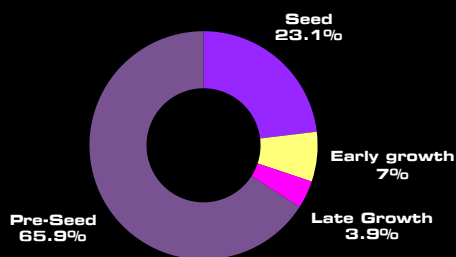
26

COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED

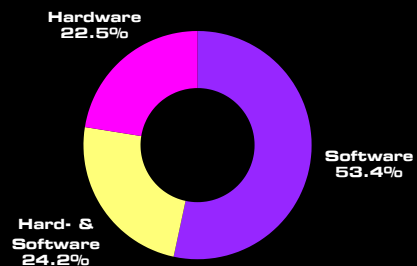
2850

TOTAL
CONNECTIONS
MADE

STARTUPS

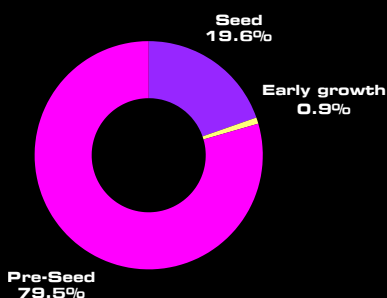


STAGE

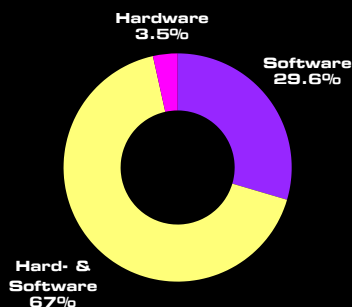


SOLUTION
SCOPE

INVESTORS



STAGE FOCUS



SCOPE FOCUS

€5.7
BN

FUNDS
UNDER
MANAGEMENT

Ohad Gilad

Entrepreneur, Investor & Changemaker

"What is so special about Upstream Festival? Founders first, building meaningful connections, sharing knowledge, experience fuxups network, unlimited energy 🚀, great speakers, interesting side events, best startup festival, perfect matchmaking, curated like-minded community... yes ! All of the above. Thanks all, for making Upstream 2026 amazing."



MAIN EVENT

843 VISITORS

SIDE EVENTS

1210 ADDITIONAL VISITORS

3:1 STARTUP-
INVESTOR
RATIO

Wouter de Bruijne

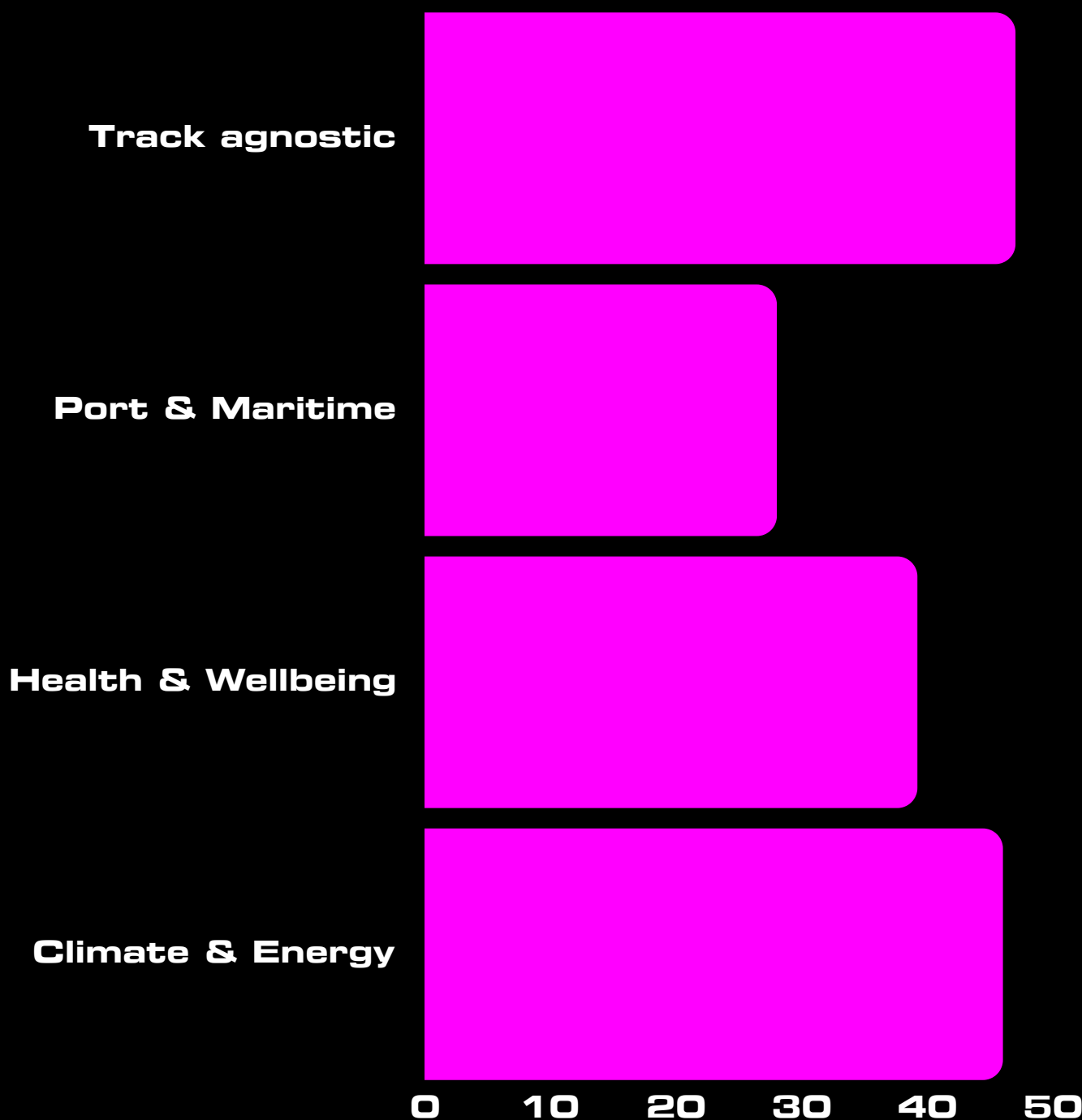
RSLNC Inc

"Yesterday at Upstream Festival, we hosted a power hour in the Founder Lounge with one goal only: fueling real conversations. We knew Upstream Festival was the right place for this, but yesterday they proved it all over again. Really putting founders first, fostering real connections, and bringing the perfect vibe and energy to the Van Nelle Fabriek."

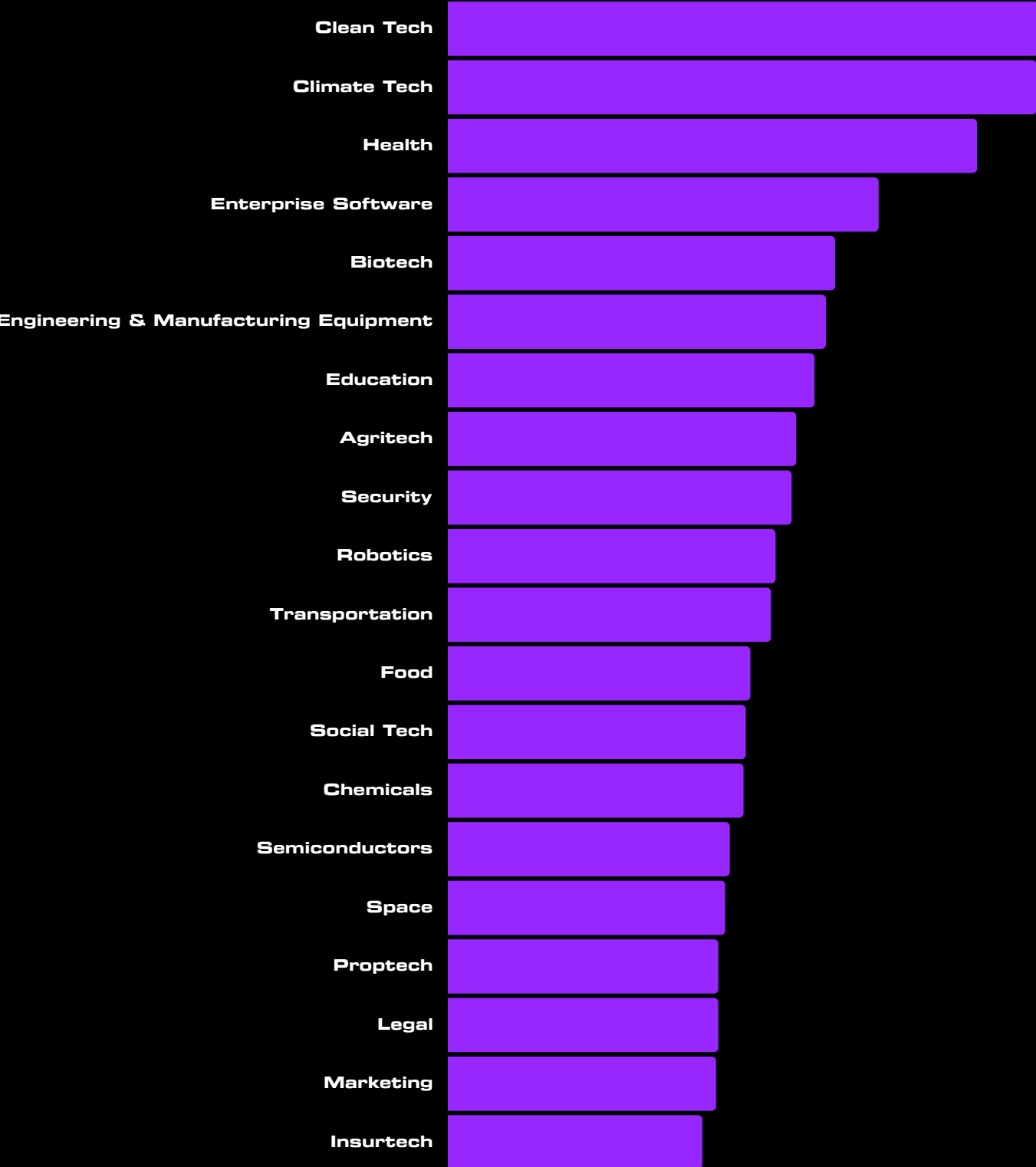


INDUSTRY TRACKS IN %

Upstream brings in some special focus on three industry tracks, being Port & Maritime, Health & Wellbeing, and Climate & Energy, while continuing to welcome innovations from all sectors. Participants chose one or multiple tracks they felt were most matching to what they do/their interests. Below, we show the percentage of tracks chosen from the Upstream Festival 2026 participants. Note: Participants were able to choose more than one track



TOP 20 INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED



SIDE EVENTS

DRIVEN BY YOU. THE CHANGE MAKERS

Attendees dived into a range of side events. They explored workshops, panels, networking mixers, and more. Besides picking up new skills, they dug into industry topics and bonded with like-minded professionals. In the midst of the activities, they found potential co-founders, secured funding, and, most importantly, connected on a deeper level with each other.



23

SIDE EVENTS

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

- Collaboration between partners across the region.
- Industry-specific for founders, investors, corporates, and students
- Various formats – from breakfasts, dinners, workshops, Q&As to sport experiences

Emmie van Halder

Angel Investor

"Today Upstream Festival in van Nelle Fabriek: amazing how one can have so much fun while doing business!

Great edition of Upstream! Your positive energy is inspiring! So many inspiring founders, new investors, and ecosystem players. Looking forward to next year."



Stef Traa

Founder
Droppie

"Looking back at all the connections and interactions from last week, I can only confirm how important events like this are for our ecosystem. The side events, the energy, the people in the room: it doesn't happen by accident."

THANK YOU FOR MAKING THIS POSSIBLE

3MBRACE HEALTH | 42 WORKSPACE | AI4ALL | ARCHES CAPITAL | ATVENTURE PLATFORM | BLUECITY | BRING IT BACK | BUILDERS | CITY OF ROTTERDAM | DIGITALE GLANS | ERASMUS STARTUP HUB | ERASMUS TECH COMMUNITY | EU PROJECT EKIP | FOUNDED | FUTURE MOBILITY PARK FOUNDATION | GRADUATE VENTURES | GROWTHDESK | HELLOPRINT | INNOVATION QUARTER | LOVABLE | MICROLAB | OSLO KOMMUNE | PLATFORM ZERO | PORT OF ROTTERDAM | PROGRESS BAR | PROPOSITION HERO | RISE LENS | ROTTERDAM PARTNERS | SIBYL | STARTDOCK COWORKING | STARTUP VISA PROGRAM (SVP) | SUPERCONNECTORS | THE INNERPRISE | UNCONVENTIONAL INNOVATORS | UP!ROTTERDAM | VNTR CAPITAL | VOOR GOED AGENCY | WINDT LE GRAND LEEUWENBURGH ADVOCATEN | XABLU VENTURE STUDIO | YES!DELFT | ZWARTE VROUWEN VOOR TECHNOLOGIE

MAIN EVENT



TOTAL SESSIONS

8

TALKS

3

PANELS

10

WORKSHOPS

11

PITCHES

296

SPEED DATES

On Thursday, May 21st, the primary program was held at the main venue. Attendees were engaged with inspiring founder stories, panels, and startup pitches. They connected with peers and scheduled meetings with investors and corporate buyers.



UPSTREAM STAGE

Keynotes, talks, and panel discussions that sparked curiosity, inspiration, and practical next steps.

FUNDING AND GROWTH HUB

Practical workshops that supported you in your funding and growth journey.

STARTUP STAGE

Finalists of the NL Startup competition took the stage to pitch their idea in front of a jury. The overall winner received a Golden Ticket to the Draper University Hero Training Program in Silicon Valley. Finalists competed within 3 innovation tracks. Each track winner received a €10,000 cash prize, alongside additional support focused on growth and international scalability.

Sabrina Cobben-Bösch

Community Manager
Brightlands Smart Services

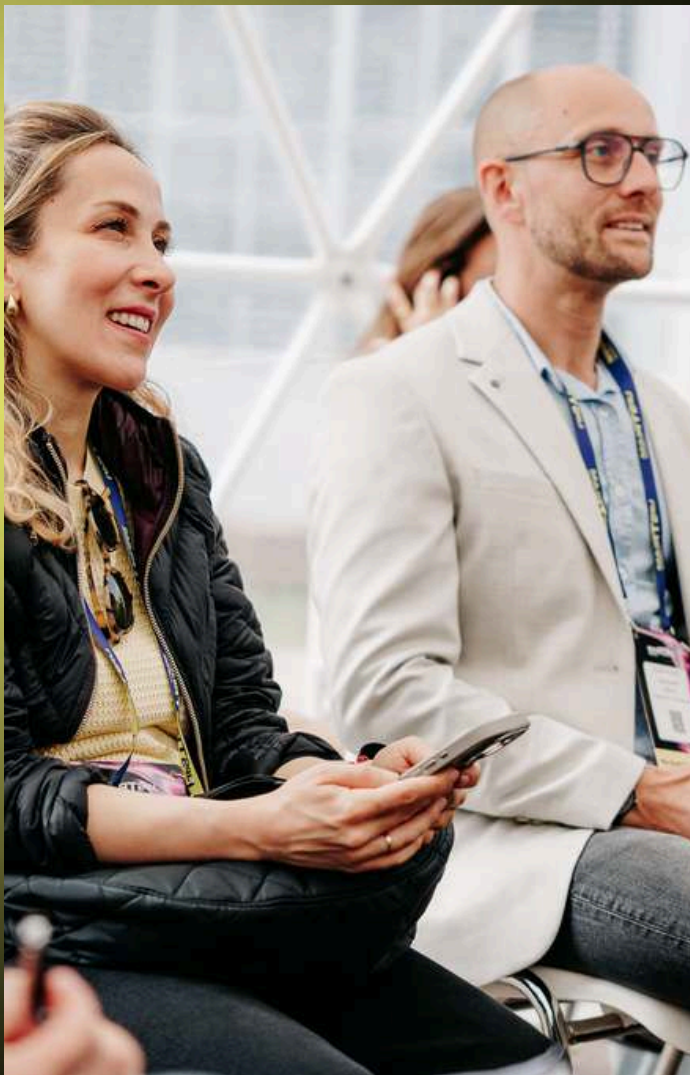
“Valuable and inspiring day full of new connections! Today, we visited the Upstream Festival. A day full of inspiring conversations, speed dates, fresh insights, and above all many great encounters with founders, investors, and innovators from the startup ecosystem of the Netherlands and Europe. For our startups, this is exactly the environment where ideas continue to grow: new collaborations arise, feedback is collected, and valuable connections are made that help to further accelerate ambitions.”

FOUNDERS LOUNGE

An exclusive founders-only safe space where startup and scale-up founders connected with peers, shared experiences, and maybe even met their cofounder. We also hosted power hours in this space.

SPEEDDATE AREA

Speeddates with investors were scheduled via our event platform, or set up via our Connector Desk on-site.



28

SPEAKERS & WORKSHOP HOSTS

BEST RATED

1. Startup Pitches
2. Opening Barbara Barend
3. Fundraising when no one believes in you

SPEAKERS & WORKSHOP HOSTS



Barbara Barand



Constantijn Van Oranje



Melissa Ablett-Jordaan



Matthijs Welle



Ingrid Romijn



Arosha Brouwer



Siete Hamminga



Liselotte Graas



Thijn van Helvoirt



Iggy Harmsen



Sophie Heijenberg



Krijn de Nood



Vicky Kuang



Hans Scheffer



Koen Burgers



Maud Vermeulen



Frank Appeldoorn



Pieter Aarts



Nina Orlic



Thomas Vles



Jort Schutte



Gaston Serpenti



Dominic Stephen



Leonor Zubillaga



Paul Musters



Ties Hagemeijer



Sharon Klaver



Ingeborg van Harten

MEDIA & PR

PUBLICATIONS ACROSS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS

STREET INSIDER | BUSINESS INSURANCE | LASER FOCUS WORLD | INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TIMES | INVESTORS COMMODITY SERVICES | TRAVEL AND TOUR WORLD | NAT LAW REVIEW | CB HERALD | DUTCH BRIEF | DE TELEGRAAF | BUSINESS TIMES NETHERLANDS | ECONOMIC TIMES BELGIUM | BELGIUM ENTERTAINMENT DISPATCH | NETHERLANDS ENTERTAINMENT WORLD | THE NETHERLANDS BRIEF | BUSINESS NEWS NETWORK | THE BELGIUM JOURNAL | BELGIUM INDUSTRY TIMES | AMSTERDAM DAILY NEWS | NETHERLANDS JOURNAL NEWS | INDUSTRY TODAY NETHERLANDS | BELGIUM DAILY TIMES | TODAY IN BUSINESS | ECONOMY PRESS RELEASES | ECONOMIC DIGEST OF EUROPE | EUROPEAN NEWS ONLINE | GLOBAL BUSINESS WATCH | EUROPEAN LEDGER | JOURNAL OF BUSINESS NEWS | CONSUMER WORLD REPORT | SMALL BUSINESS ONLINE NETWORK | BUSINESS HERALD | SMALL BUSINESS IN THE NEWS | ONE WORLD DAILY BRIEF | WORLD REPORT MONITOR | MEDIA INDUSTRY OBSERVER | THE EUROPE DAILY REPORT | SMART'S BUSINESS WIRE | WORLD ONLINE NEWS REPORT | EUROPEAN GLOBE | SMALL BUSINESS WORLD MAGAZINE | MY EUROPEAN NEWS | MONTSERRAT DAILY NEWS | CONSUMER PRODUCTS WORLDS | INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS WATCH | THE CONSUMERS NEWS NETWORK | THE BUSINESS GAZET | SMALL BUSINESS NEWS TODAY | EYEBALLS & CLICKS | THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP REPORTER | EUROPEAN MORNING REPORT | INTERNATIONAL NEWS LEDGER | GLOBAL JOURNAL OBSERVER | THE GLOBAL EUROPEAN | TODAY IN MARCOM | CENTRAL EUROPE ONLINE | THE EUROPEAN GAZETTE | SMB ACTION | SMALL BUSINESS JOURNAL | WORKD ADVERTISING REPORT | GLOBAL REPORT ONLINE | EUROPEAN GLOBAL TIMES | GROWING BUSINESS IN THE NEWS | INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEUR NEWS | EUROPEAN SMALL BUSINESS NETORK | BELGIUM INDUSTRY TIMES | THE NETHERLANDS BRIEF | THE ENTREPRENEUR REPORTER | NETHERLANDS NEWSWIRE | BELGIUM NEWSWIRE | GOOGLE NEWS | AP NEWS | YAHOO | BING | CHAT GPT



3

PRESS RELEASES

580

PUBLICATIONS

SPEEDDATES



MORE INVESTORS



VolveCapital



ROTTERDAM
FACTURING



NOM

KEADYN



At
Venture.



ROM
Utrecht
Region



KEEN
venture partners



HORIZON
Partner in gezonde groei



Dff

Brightlands



Energie
transitie
fonds
Rotterdam

VALUE
CREATION
CAPITAL



RS Participaties

CORONET VENTURES

MAIN PARTNERS

Rabobank



provincie
Zuid-Holland



PORTXL



Gemeente
Rotterdam

PROGRAM PARTNERS



Gemeente Delft



Den Haag

STAY CONNECTED

While this report shows the highlights, we all know the real impact lies in the follow-up conversations. We love to hear from you. Drop us a message via robbin@upstreamfestival.com. Thank you for your support, and see you again next year!



SEE YOU IN 2027



UPSTREAMFESTIVAL.COM