

Gateway Factory

MONITOR

YOUR STARTUP REPORT FROM RHINELAND TO THE MOON



Year in
review

behind the scenes
+ meet the team

Success story: Circular Economy in packaging

Meet Ionkraft: a spin-off of the RWTH Aachen

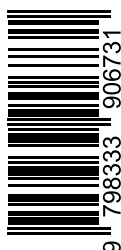
Why strong clusters are essential

In conversation with Roland Oetker

Longlist: Spin-offs

The ones to watch: Rhineland Spin-offs shaping 2026

Gateway
Factory



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DEEPTECH
CHAMPIONS
MADE IN
EUROPE



Yes



IMPRINT

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Editorial



*Dr. Tim Hiddemann and Tanja Zirstein,
Managing Directors of Gateway Factory*

Dear deeptech fans,

2025 was a year of new beginnings for Gateway Factory and for the startup ecosystem in the Rhineland. A year full of dynamism and innovative strength. With this second edition of our Moonitor, we not only want to look back, but above all look ahead: at the startups shaping our region, the people building them, and the opportunities that 2026 will bring.

When we officially founded Gateway Factory in January 2025, our vision was clear: the Rhineland should become the leading region for university-based deeptech ventures. At our kick-off in Aachen, 350 guests from business, academia, and politics shared this vision with us. Just a few months later, in July, we were selected by the Federal Government as one of ten Startup Factories – a milestone that brings not only funding, but above all responsibility.

In October 2025, we launched our first program cohort with 15 outstanding teams. From battery technology and AI-supported diagnostics to sustainable food production – the breadth and quality of these startups impressively demonstrate the potential within our universities. In this edition, we introduce these teams and offer insights into their visions, their challenges, and their successes.

We are particularly proud of success stories from the Rhineland such as IonKraft, which show what becomes possible when ambitious founders meet the right production infrastructure and targeted expertise. In our success story, you will learn how the path from academic research to scaling can succeed.

But this edition does not only look back. With our curated long list of promising spin-offs from the Rhineland for 2026 and a data-based analysis of the ecosystem's development over the past five years, we want to provide orientation: Where do we stand as a region? Which trends will shape 2026? And what opportunities arise from this for founders, investors and corporate partners?

2026 will be a year of deepening for us. We are expanding our services, strengthening collaboration with regional and supra-regional

partners and working to ensure that even more deeptech startups make the leap from the lab to the market. With PULSE, we have established a monthly workshop format that is here to stay. Through new partnerships, we are creating access to production, financing and markets.

Our second edition of the Moonitor is a snapshot of an ecosystem on the rise. We invite you to become part of this movement: as a founder, as an investor, as a partner, as an enabler or simply as a curious observer of a region that proves innovation is not a matter of postal code.

We hope you enjoy reading and wish you a successful 2026!

Warm regards,



Tim Hiddemann
Managing Director, Gateway Factory

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365 days of Gateway Factory**

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YEAR IN REVIEW



January 2025: The Grand Launch

What a kickoff! With around 350 guests from business, science, politics and the startup ecosystem, we celebrated the official founding of Gateway Factory on January 21st at CT² on Campus Melaten in Aachen. Representatives from our partner organizations symbolically presented a factory model to our Managing Directors Tanja and Tim – a powerful symbol of our collective beginning. We started as a tight-knit small team and simultaneously launched our rebranding: A new logo that proudly belongs to the Gateway family.





March 2025: Growth, Startup Board and New Partners

In March our team continued to grow: Max and Julius strengthened our Business Development. Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf joined our consortium and our very first Startup Board took place – a format where selected startups discuss their current challenges with experts like Tim Hiddemann or Malte Brettel and receive concrete support.



April 2025: First Pitch Night and Major Applications

April was intense! Our first Gateway Factory Virtual Pitch Event brought together over 100 participants from across Europe. The amazing team from Cellbricks Therapeutics secured the golden ticket to Deep Tech Momentum including a booth and participation in the DTM100 competition. In parallel, we submitted our detailed application for the Lighthouse Competition Startup Factories – a milestone followed by months of intensive work.



PULSE by Gateway Factory

WHAT GIVES PEOPLE FEELINGS OF POWER

MONEY	Short bar
STATUS	Medium bar
KNOW HOW TO SCALE GLOBALLY	Long bar

FREE

Get ready to scale globally" with Divotsna (Start2 Group) JUNE 11, 2025 3:30 PM

GATEWAY FACTORY INSIDER HINT

The Snark

Der Deutsche Digitalpreis

APPLY TILL MAY 30

Pulse Workshops

PULSE NEW

GATEWAY FACTORY PULSE WORKSHOP SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH



Heute, 16:04

Hey man, can you design me a poster for our first virtual pitch night?

Sure. When is ist?

Monday, 28. Starting 6:30pm.

Who can apply?

Innovative deep tech startups from all over germany.

Make sure, you mention that they can win a golden ticket to deep tech momentum with their own founder booth and access to dtm100 competition in front of up to 300 investors!!!

Thanks. I think we're done!

Gelesen: 16:11

+ iMessage



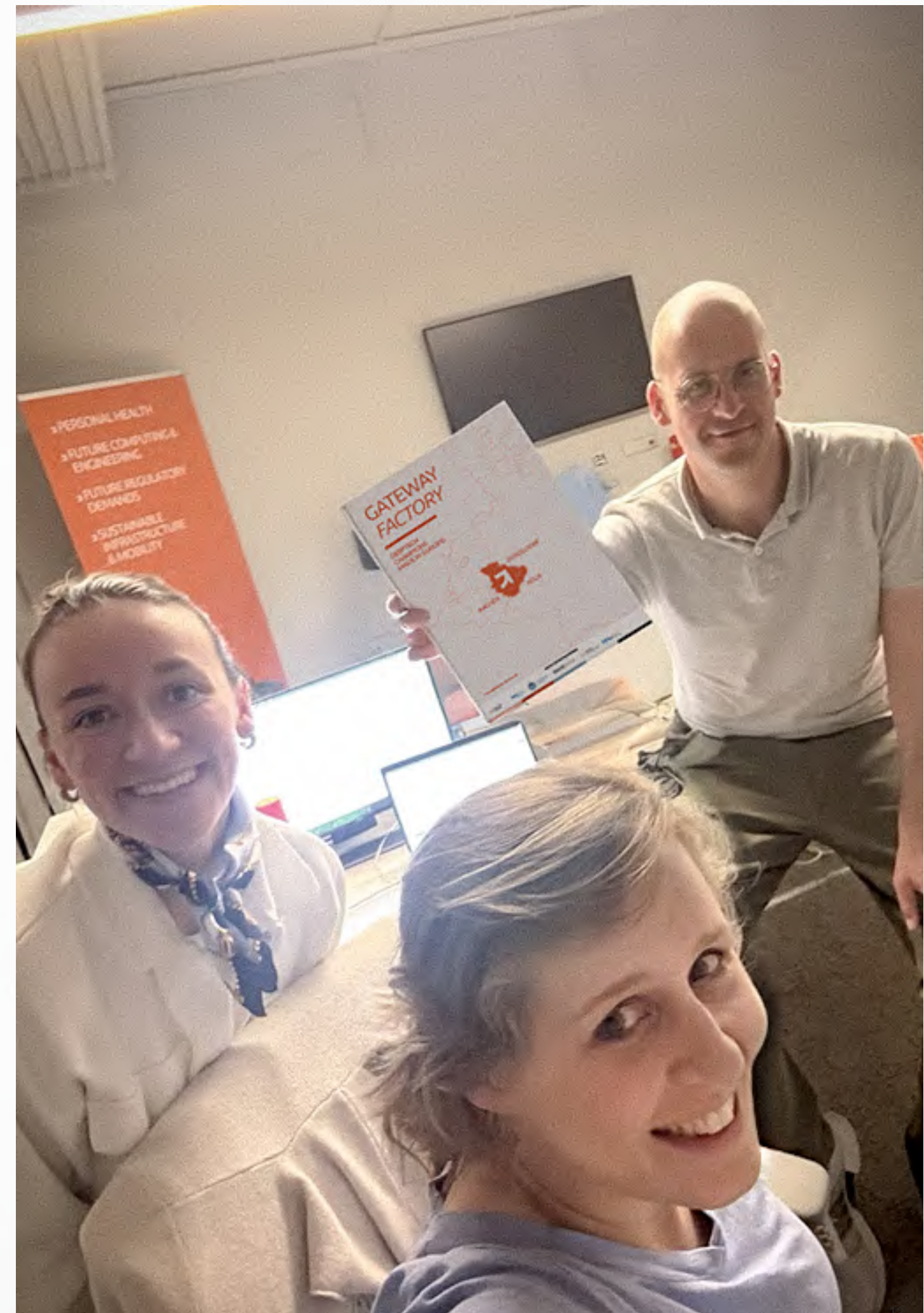
YOUR WAY TO DEEP TECH MOMENTUM

Your way without Gateway Factory

Your way with Gateway Factory

INKL. STARTUP BOOTH + SLOT IN DTM100 COMPETITION

Virtual Pitch Night (April, 28)



May 2025: From Recovery to Momentum

After the application phase, we allowed ourselves a short break before continuing: At Deep Tech Momentum, we met our winning team Cellbricks again. Events like ChemCologne, Koningsdag and the HHL Entrepreneurship Week showcased us to various ecosystem players. A month full of networking and new connections!

June 2025: PULSE Takes Off and First Startup Service

In June, we launched our PULSE Pilot Workshops – from then on, every second Wednesday of the month! These interactive online sessions with experts on topics like international scaling, B2B Sales and later fundraising quickly developed into a popular community format. Additionally, the first Startup Services in the production area got started. With our Startup Services we support deeptech teams on their path from prototype to scalable business. We connect founders with expert partners for business model and go-to-market validation, leadership and team development, fundraising and investor access, and specialized coaching. For example startups can benefit from Production Services and technical partners that provide access to industrial infrastructure, labs, and engineering expertise, so they can test, build, and scale their products under real-world conditions.



First Pulse Workshop

NEW



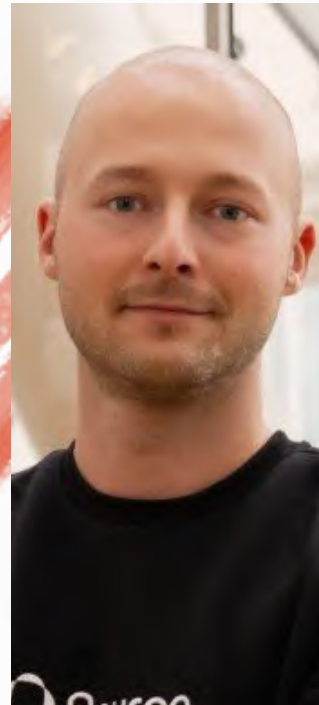
PULSE Workshops
2025 at a glance

PULSE

#01 "Get Ready to Scale Globally" – Divotsna (German Accelerator)



#02 "B2B Sales Mastery" – Matthias Stammen (source.ag)



#03 "Boosted by Grants" – Jannis Willems (Grantlift)



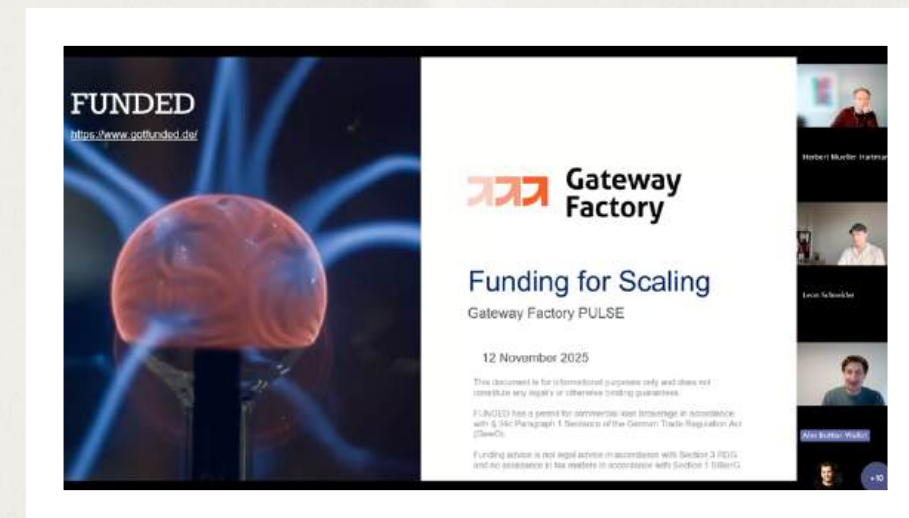
#05 "How to legally secure your first sales" – Leon Wisskirchen (Velsa) and Axel von Goldbeck (lawyer)



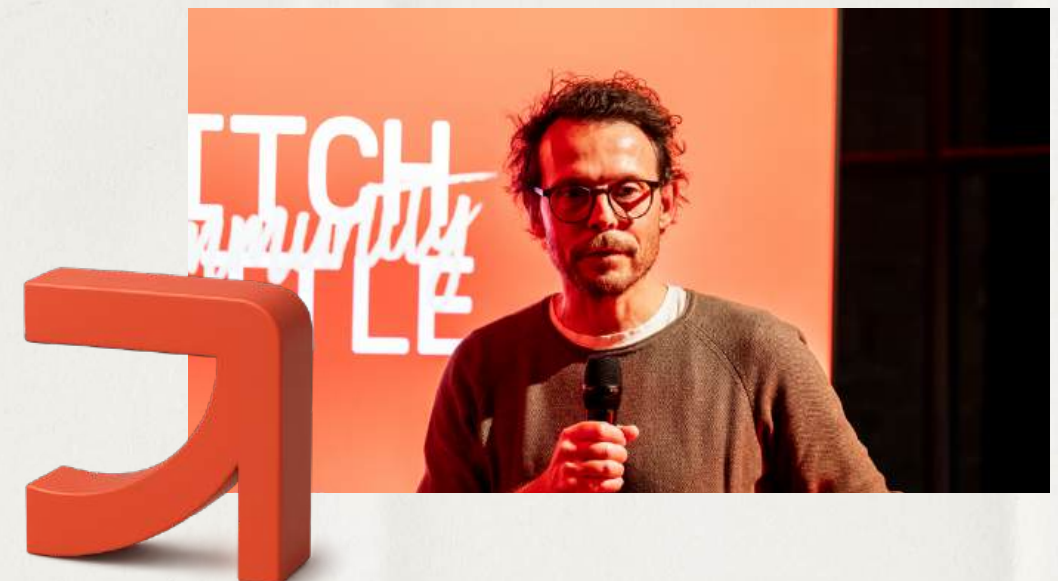
#06 "Founder Mindset" – Andy Booke (Utopian Founders)



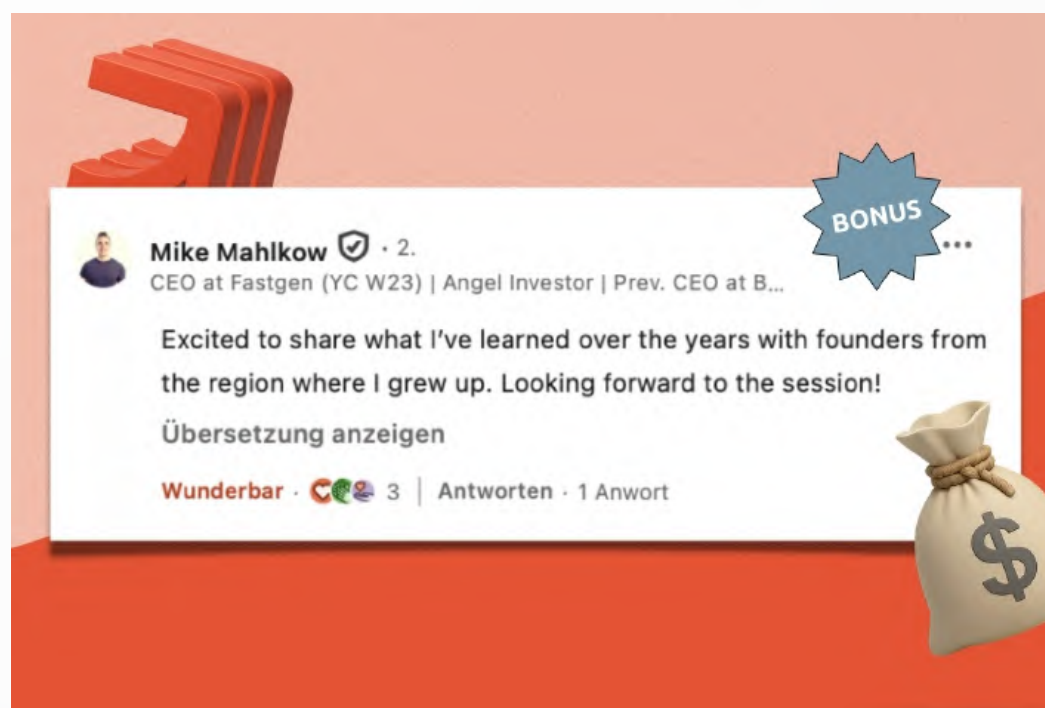
#07 "Funding for Scaling" – Alexander von Buttlar-Wallot (FUNDED)



#08 "Convertible Loans & Simple Agreements for Future Equity" – Benjamin Monheim (Osborne Clarke)



#04 "Unlock US Fundraising" – Mike Mahlkow (Fastgen)



July 2025: Moonitor Launch and the Big News!

A highlight month! We published the first issue of our magazine "Moonitor" with exciting information from the regional startup ecosystem – including an overview of startup centers in the Rhineland. And then: big news! Gateway Factory was selected as one of the ten Startup Factories in Germany and is receiving millions in federal funding! At chiotech in Aachen, there was another special moment: We proudly awarded our first consulting prize to ecoro to support their team with our Production Services.

Gateway Factory

Köln wird zum Leuchtturm für Gründer – Ziel sind zehn neue 100-Millionen-Euro-Firmen

Von Hendrik Geisler und Janne Ahrenhold

12.07.2025, 19:10 Uhr 7 min

Start-ups

Zehn neue Start-up-Fabriken – die Zukunft Deutschlands

Wie kommt Forschung in die Wirtschaft? Mit einer neuen Initiative baut die Bundesregierung zehn Start-up-Fabriken in ganz Deutschland auf. Die Ziele sind ehrgeizig, Experten begeistert.

Nadine Schimmszik
10.07.2025 - 16:02 Uhr

Artikel anhören 10:26

10.07.2025 PRESSEMITTEILUNG Existenzgründung

Hightech Ausgründungen „made in Germany“ – Minister zeichnet zehn Startup Factories aus



Gateway Factory MOONITOR

YOUR STARTUP REPORT FROM RHINELAND



August 2025: Growth and New Formats

Gateway Factory starts sharing regional Funding News



Gateway Factory joins DeepTech Alliance



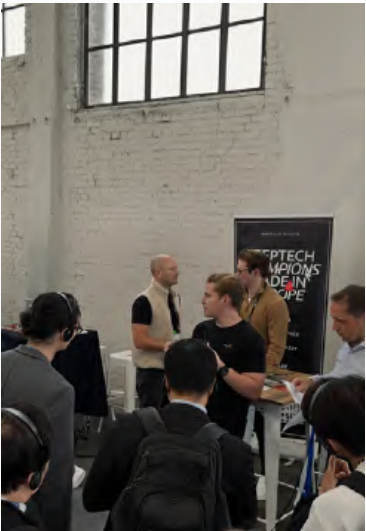
September 2025: New Faces and Major Events

JP joined the team and replaced Max (all the best, Max!). We were present at the Future Tech Fest in Düsseldorf, and together with Stage Two, we organized a Wildcard Event where four teams could additionally qualify for the pan-European pitch competition in October. TheCEPLAS Fireside Chat with Tim rounded off the event marathon.



Lena joined our team, and we launched a new information format: Fundingnews on LinkedIn (as a LinkedIn Newsletter since October) to make success stories from the ecosystem visible. We also became proud members of the DeepTech Alliance (DTA) – an important step for European networking!

Gateway Factory @ FTF25



Winning teams of our StageTwo Wildcard Event (Smarobix, WeldNova, aetheria and ChemInnovation)

October 2025: Project Launch and First Cohort!

October marked a real turning point: Lukas, Tanja Bl. and Matt joined our team. The official project phase of the Startup Factories began and we kicked off our first Pre-Scaleup Program “Ready to Scale” with 15 amazing teams: Accuridy, AEROC, alteva, Co-reactive, Detechgene, experial, foodforecast, LIMAA Technologies, MANUGY, niostem, roofline, sovity, The Oater, Urban Ray, and Vivalyx. The kick-off on October 8th in Cologne was electrifying! The startups pitched their visions to investors, corporates and ecosystem builders. At Stage Two, there were also successes: ReWorth Blocks won our Production Catalyst Prize!



Kick-Off: Ready to Scale

Awarding the Production Catalyst Prize at Stage Two in Berlin



November 2025: Community and Founders Day

In November, we were on the road at Startupland and BIO-Europe. The absolute highlight was our first Founders Day in Aachen – an intimate networking evening in an authentic factory atmosphere, where not only the Ready to Scale teams but the entire Gateway Factory ecosystem came together. These conversations, connections, and spontaneous collaborations are exactly what we created Gateway Factory for!



Our Ready to Scale program managers and vertical leads introducing themselves at Founders Day.

Festive moments with the Collective Incubator at our x-mas party



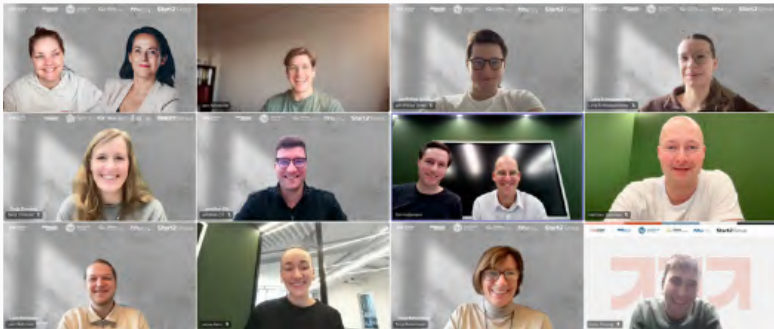
Our Future Health & Life Science Vertical Lead Tanja Blosler speaking at BIO-Europe



December 2025: Year-End in Team Spirit

At year's end, we celebrated our Christmas party together with the Collective Incubator. A beautiful moment to reflect on the year. Also Jonathan and Leon joined our team and are bringing fresh energy for 2026!

Meet our full Team



Outlook 2026: Building the Future of Deeptech

As we step into 2026, Gateway Factory is accelerating into its next phase of growth and impact. The year kicks off with the soft Production Campus Opening in Aachen on January 21st – a milestone that will provide startups with access to cutting-edge production infrastructure and hands-on support. Our lab infrastructure is expanding with a Shared Lab Space in Cologne coming, enabling life science startups to prototype and validate their innovations without the burden of building their own facilities from scratch. On the program side, we're doubling down: Batch #2 and #3 of Ready to Scale will launch, supporting even more pre-scaleup teams in their journey from validation to market traction. We're also launching our Accelerator program, designed to help earlier-stage startups build solid foundations for rapid growth. And finally, we're getting a fresh digital face: Our website relaunch will better reflect who we are and make it even easier for startups, partners, and ecosystem players to connect with us. 2026 is shaping up to be a year where Gateway Factory truly becomes the go-to platform for deeptech startups in the Rhineland and beyond.

Rhineland on the rise: Deeptech and innovation between resilience and record highs



The Rhineland as an innovation region



A data-driven analysis of startup development 2019–2024

The startup ecosystem in the Rhineland has undergone an exceptionally remarkable and at the same time highly turbulent development over the past five years, shaped by various macroeconomic factors.

Following the startup boom in 2021, the ecosystem saw a true wave of new ventures. This boom was triggered, accelerated, and intensified by the coronavirus pandemic. Then came a pronounced and sharp correction during the interest rate turnaround in 2022/23. Parts of this correction were painful and confronted many players in the ecosystem with significant hurdles. This was followed by a powerful, dynamic, and encouraging rebound in 2024 that brought new hope and momentum. Taken together, a clear picture emerges: the region is not only proving to be extraordinarily resistant, robust, and resilient

to external economic shocks and market turbulence, but is also deliberately, systematically, and strategically gaining in profile, visibility, and supra-regional relevance within the German and European startup context.

Between the four core cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Bonn, a deeptech region is taking shape. It is highly specialized, research-oriented, and technologically sophisticated. Distinct thematic focus areas are clearly emerging. At the same time, the region shows a remarkable and steadily growing appetite for substantial growth capital. It is hungry for strategic, long-term investments that can sustainably support its further development.

The numbers: From 2019 to today

Around 70 to 75 percent of the total startup ecosystem value in North Rhine-Westphalia is concen-

trated in the four central core cities of the Rhineland – namely Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Bonn. This remarkable spatial concentration of value creation, innovative strength, and entrepreneurial dynamism is by no means a new phenomenon, but rather the result of long-term structural developments. Nevertheless, it can be observed that this concentration has further intensified and solidified over the past five years, i.e. in the period from 2019 to 2024, which makes the position of these four cities as dominant players in the state-wide startup ecosystem even more pronounced.

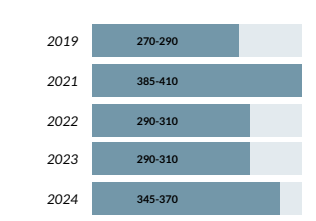
The number of new startups in the Rhineland follows a clear and comprehensible development pattern that can be observed over several years: starting from around 270 to 290 new ventures in 2019, i.e. before the onset of the global pandemic, the numbers reached their absolute peak of 385 to 410 newly founded startups in the pandemic year 2021. They then declined again to a lower level of around 290 to 310 new ventures during the phase of economic correction and the interest rate turnaround in 2022 and 2023. Finally, 2024 saw a significant upswing with an estimated 345 to 370 new startups, indicating a recovery in startup activity. At the higher, state-wide level, North Rhine-Westphalia reported a total of 674 startups for 2024 – a figure that represents a remarkable increase of 26 percent compared to the previous year and thus signals a positive trend in the state’s overall startup ecosystem.

What these figures and statistical values do not immediately reveal – and what can easily be overlooked in a purely quantitative perspective – is that the quality, thematic orientation, and technological depth of new ventures are shifting.

Deeptech: Aachen as a catalyst

According to the German Startup Monitor 2024, the share of deeptech startups in North Rhine-Westphalia stands at 7.9 percent – below the national average of 11.4 percent. But the Rhineland is the exception. In particular, Aachen, which has established itself as NRW’s number one founding hotspot, is driving a new wave of research-based spin-offs. Its proximity to RWTH Aachen University, Forschungszentrum Jülich, and a growing number of specialized incubators makes the city a magnet for future computing and engineering as well as life sciences.

NEW STARTUPS IN RHINELAND



Conservatively estimated, the deeptech share in the Rhineland lies between 9 and 11 percent – and is thus noticeably above the state average. This is no coincidence. It is the result of targeted infrastructure, a long research tradition, and an increasingly professional support ecosystem.

Capital: Concentration in a few large deals

The funding landscape presents an ambivalent picture. At the level of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia as a whole, a total of around 374 million US dollars in venture capital investments was raised in 2023 – a sum which, compared to the previous year 2022, represents a sharp decline of 36 percent and thus reflects the impact of changing macroeconomic conditions. However, as early as 2024, there was a fundamental trend reversal and turnaround of this negative development: VC investments in the state rose by an impressive 58 percent, pointing to a clear recovery in the investment climate and a renewed confidence among capital providers.

If we now carefully translate these state-wide figures and developments to the specific Rhineland region and take into account the established concentration of roughly 70 to 75 percent of total ecosystem value in the four core cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Bonn, this yields an estimated overall investment volume for the Rhineland in the range of 440 to 500 million US dollars in 2024.

The city of Cologne alone attracted an impressive 381 million euros in venture capital investments over the past two years, marking an exceptionally strong growth of 71 percent compared to the previous years. Yet a closer look at these initially very positive figures also reveals the fundamental challenge and structural problem of the current funding environment: a full 85 percent of this substantial total capital volume was concentrated in just four individual financing rounds and thus flowed into only a handful of selected companies. At the absolute top of this capital concentration stands language technology company DeepL, which alone raised 300 million dollars in a single round, making it by far the largest deal of the year. Following in the ranking are DISCO Pharmaceuticals in the field of pharmaceutical research with a 36 million euro round in 2025, payment startup bezahl.de with a 23 million euro investment also in 2025, and Spot my Energy from the energy and sustainability sector with funding of 10.5 million euros in 2024.

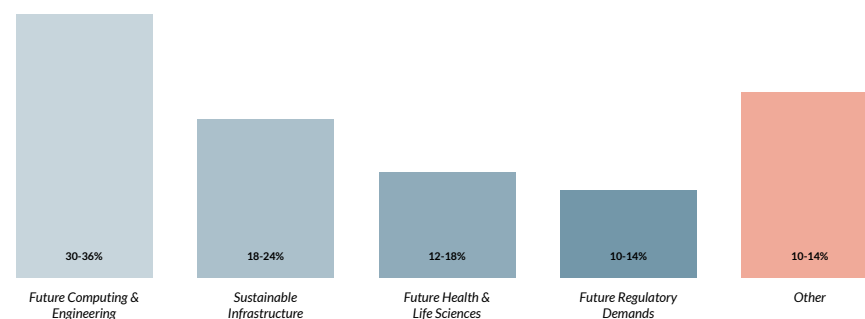
The message is clear: a small number of startups absorb the vast majority of capital. For the broad base of early-stage ventures, the funding situation remains tight – a structural problem that will not solve itself in 2026 either.

Verticals: Four focus areas, one region

Gateway Factory exists because the strengths of the Rhineland's metropolitan areas naturally point toward four clear focus areas. These strengths form the foundation of our chosen verticals and define where we can create the most impact together.

The Rhineland is not a monolith. Each city contributes its own strengths, which are reflected in a clear vertical distribution:

- **Future Computing & Engineering:** The dominant cluster, driven by AI pioneers in Cologne and hardware/deeptech ventures in Aachen. From language models to robotics and novel materials. This is where the technological heart of the region beats.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Energy, climate, mobility – topics that are disproportionately strong across North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and find particularly fertile ground in the Rhineland.
- **Future Health & Life Sciences:** Bonn and Cologne bring digital health and life sciences together, while Aachen contributes bio-medical tech. This mixture is perfect for the Rhineland
- **Future Regulatory Demands:** Düsseldorf and Bonn have traditionally been strong in insurtech, fintech with regulatory relevance, and cybersecurity – areas that are often underestimated but highly relevant for B2B scaling.



VERTICAL DISTRIBUTION

What does this mean for 2026?

The Rhineland is currently at a decisive turning point in its development as a startup region. The number of new ventures shows a clear recovery trend and is visibly rebounding from the declines of previous years. Capital concentration continues to increase and is reaching a new level, while at the same time the thematic focus on deeptech and research-based spin-offs is becoming ever sharper and more pronounced.

At the same time, the central and fundamental challenge remains, one that affects the entire ecosystem and will have to be addressed in the coming years: How can we ensure that not just a handful of four large startups, but a broad base of forty or more startups per year gains access to substantial growth capital and is thus able to realize its scaling potential?

The answer lies in targeted infrastructure – precisely where Gateway Factory comes in. With production-oriented services, vertical expertise, and a network that extends beyond Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Bonn, an ecosystem is taking shape that not only counts, but counts what it stands for.

The data is unequivocal: the Rhineland has the foundations in place to become a leading deeptech region in Europe. The task now is to translate these foundations into sustainable scaling – startup by startup, vertical by vertical, year after year.

INTERVIEW

Deeptech over standstill: *Why Europe must invest now*

The SURO Foundation connects entrepreneurship with biotechnology and supports the Gateway Factory as an enabler. We spoke with Roland Oetker about innovation, deeptech, and the importance of strong regional clusters.

Among others, Roland Oetker at the official ceremony recognizing Gateway Factory as one of Germany's ten Startup Factories.



Why does the SURO Foundation support the Gateway Factory?

ROLAND OETKER: Cluster formation in NRW is essential. We need strong ecosystems where founders, science, capital, and infrastructure come together. The Gateway Factory creates exactly that: a place where deeptech startups get the support they need to grow and succeed.

What particularly convinces me: The Rhineland has three strong locations with Aachen, Cologne, and Düsseldorf, with excellent universities and research institutions. But this strength dissipates if everyone works in isolation. Clusters create critical mass. They bring the right people together, enable knowledge transfer, and attract additional capital. Especially in biotechnology, we see: successful regions are always

“
AI is causing
a dramatic
acceleration in the
speed of innovation.
[...]The motto must
therefore be: *Don't
hesitate, get started!*”

clusters. Whether Boston/Cambridge or Munich or Düsseldorf/Cologne – wherever innovation truly scales, there's this concentration of expertise, infrastructure, and network.

The Gateway Factory acts as a catalyst. It makes visible what already exists and creates structures that didn't exist before. For us as a foundation, this is the crucial lever: we can deploy our resources strategically because we know we're not just supporting a single startup, but strengthening an entire ecosystem.

Deeptech is considered particularly capital-intensive and risky. Why is this area still so worthy of support in your view?

ROLAND OETKER: High-tech companies in particular compete from day one with companies from around the world. If we want to remain competitive in Europe, we must specifically promote deeptech. This is where the technologies emerge that solve real problems and create long-term value. This is a

great opportunity for the European economy, if we seize it.

In which areas do you currently see the greatest innovation sectors?

ROLAND OETKER: Clearly: bioinformatics with the help of AI. The combination of biology, data, and artificial intelligence opens up completely new possibilities – whether in medicine, diagnostics, or the development of new therapies. We see enormous potential here. The analysis of data from the now finally mass-introduced patient card will also lead to new insights.

A great example from the current Gateway Factory cohort can be LIMAA Technologies: The team from Cologne is developing a medtech platform for high-resolution tissue imaging and genomics that delivers diagnostic results on the same day. Precisely such innovations, where bioinformatics meets AI, will fundamentally change medicine.

AI is causing a dramatic acceleration in the speed of innovation, which prepared companies can use to expand their market power. The motto must therefore be: Don't hesitate, get started!

Your focus is on Future Health & Life Sciences. What do you hope to achieve through collaboration with the Gateway Factory?

Above all, access to promising startups, exciting investment cases, and qualified leads. The Gateway Factory brings together the right teams – exactly those that fit our focus and with whom we can make a difference together. We also want to actively support and advance the work of the Gateway Factory. For us, it's about actively strengthening the ecosystem and creating spaces where encounters and exchange are possible.

About the SURO Foundation

The SURO Foundation promotes entrepreneurship in general and specifically in the field of biotechnology, and supports the deeptech ecosystem in the Rhineland and at the national level as a partner of the Gateway Factory.

FROM BUZZWORD TO REALITY

Innovation in their words

Our ecosystem lives from people and companies that continuously re-think how things are done. To understand how they see their role, we asked five of our partners and enablers to define “*innovation*” in their own words. The replies range from technology and processes to mindset and culture. Together, they sketch a powerful picture of what drives the Gateway Factory community.

Innovation literally means “renewal.” It is about the successful implementation of new ideas that provide practical benefit and thus create value while distinguishing themselves from what already exists. Innovation can apply to products or services, processes, or business models as a whole, for example. In my understanding, innovation is one of the central factors for sustainable competitiveness and progress.

Dr. Johannes Gerlach,
Stadtsparkasse Düsseldorf

Translating new ideas and technologies into specific, applicable solutions that create real value and enable progress. The major challenges of our time can only be solved with technological innovations.

Dennis Zeiler,
xDeck GmbH

For us, innovation means the opportunity to break through existing barriers with (technological) advancements, unlock efficiencies, and create financial, organizational, and time-based value for all parties.

Kai André Mischak,
*GründerCenter der
Sparkasse KölnBonn*

We see excellent opportunities particularly in promoting spin-off activities from technology-focused German universities, in order to strengthen the innovative capacity of the German economy and catch up with technology hubs, especially in the USA.

Sven Greulich,
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP

For me, innovation means leveraging the opportunities of the digital world to understand and solve real human needs – not simply to develop new features. It’s about helping companies reach their goals faster by thinking of the value proposition not just technically, but as a tangible brand experience that people can feel across all touchpoints.

Marco Zingler,
denkwerk GmbH

From technology to business impact: Why the best product isn't enough



Matthias Niedermaier
Lead Strategist of denkwerk
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Robin De Bruijn
Director Business & Transformation Strategy of denkwerk
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**“Customers don’t buy features,
they buy solutions to their problems.”**

The Rhineland is an epicenter for deeptech and B2B innovation. Driven by excellent research and engineering brilliance, startups are emerging here that have the potential to sustainably transform entire industries – and thus our economy. Yet the biggest hurdle for many of these teams isn’t the technology, but the market.

At denkwerk, we see highly intelligent products every day that still fail to translate their technical superiority into clear, purchase-driving customer value. There’s a critical gap between Business Model and Brand Experience. This is exactly where we come in as a strong partner to Gateway Factory to support its startups.

For us, startups are the engine of real change. Our mission: bring their innovation to market. Not with “pretty pictures,” but with real business impact – focused on two central questions:

1. What is the true value?

Many founders love their features. But customers don’t buy features, they buy solutions to their problems – the so-called “jobs-to-be-done”. We consistently challenge the teams from the customer’s perspective and sharpen the value proposition until it forms the stable foundation for every marketing and sales decision.

2. How does this value become tangible?

A strong value proposition is essential – but what gets purchased is the experience. In an overstimulated world, a good product alone is no longer enough to be relevant. With our MLB approach (Minimum Lovable Brand), we create the foundation for a consistent and compelling brand experience across all touchpoints, even with limited resources – from the website to the sales pitch to the customer portal.

About denkwerk

denkwerk is one of Germany’s largest independent digital agencies and has been accelerating companies in their digital transformation for over 25 years. With a focus on innovation and growth, denkwerk unlocks potential along the entire customer journey, develops new business models and implements future-ready tech solutions and outstanding brand experiences – together with a team of more than 240 strategists, designers and technology experts at locations in Cologne, Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich.

Our motto is: “Create positive Change”. We believe in real business impact and that technology and creativity must go hand in hand to create sustainable value. denkwerk’s long-standing clients include companies such as ARAG, Deutsche Telekom, Motel One, STIEBEL ELTRON and TeamBank.



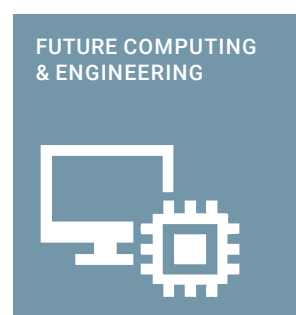
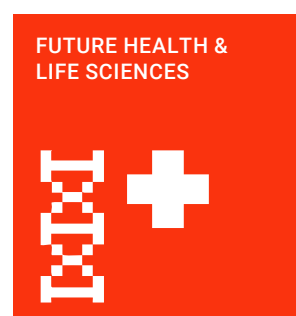
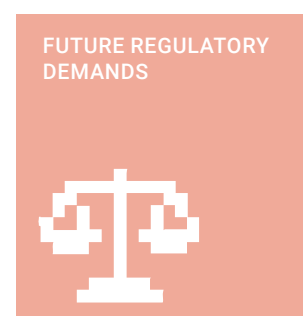
Meet our first *cohort!*

Today, we're introducing the 15 pioneering teams in our scale-up program. Each one is tackling a meaningful problem with the ambition and clarity it takes to scale. *Let's dive in.*

Gateway Factory Ready to Scale Batch #01

From the Rhineland. For Europe. *With real impact.*

Deeptech thrives where curiosity meets the right environment. When visionary minds find spaces designed for experimentation, and when infrastructure, capital, and know-how align, cutting-edge research evolves into market-ready products. Within the Gateway Factory ecosystem, deeptech startups demonstrate how targeted support, strong networks, and a shared ambition to solve real-world problems can turn complex ideas into impactful innovations.



Company	Founded in	Stage	Funding (Total)
ACCURIDS ■	2021	Seed	500,000 €
Aeroc ■	2024	Pre-Seed	1,500,000 €
Alteva ■	2023	Pre-Seed	1,975,000 €
Co-Reactive ■	2024	Seed	500,000 €
Detechgene ■	2024	Seed	4,800,000 €
experial ■	2022	Pre-Seed	2,025,000 €
foodforecast ■	2021	Series A	3,500,000 €
Limaa Technologies ■	2022	Seed	3,890,000 €
Manugy ■	2024	Seed	3,500,000 €
niostem ■	2019	Seed	3,300,000 €
RooflineAI ■	2024	Seed	4,240,000 €
sovity ■	2021	Seed	3,000,000 €
The Oater ■	2021	Seed	2,700,000 €
Urban Ray ■	2022	Seed	1,700,000 €
Vivalyx ■	2022	Seed	10,500,000 €

The data used was provided by the deeptech startups themselves in August 2025.

■ Future Regulatory Demands ■ Future Health & Life Sciences
■ Future Computing & Engineering ■ Sustainable Infrastructure

MANUGY

→
Founder:
Dr. Christoph Baum, Co-Managing Director;
Toni Christopher Voebel, Co-Managing Director;
Prof. Dr. Simon Lux, Scientific Advisor Battery

ELEVATOR PITCH

Manugy develops modular, high-flexibility production systems for next-generation battery cells, serving specialized markets beyond automotive gigafactories. Its machines enable scalable, energy-efficient small-to-medium-scale manufacturing. *USP:* adaptable architecture for diverse chemistries, rapid prototyping, and reduced time-to-market.

TEAM MEMBER

5

BASED IN



More about MANUGY:
<https://manugy.com>

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Winner of the ekipa challenge
- Funding through Grüne. Gründung NRW
- Successful completion of HighTech.NRW, German Kickstarter, Xplore by UnternehmerTUM

FOUNDED IN

2024

DESCRIBE YOUR TEAM

MANUfacturing
ener**GY**

“ If you buy cheap, you buy twice! For some things such as marketing it is better to take not the cheapest option. ”

STAGE



SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE



READY TO SCALE GOAL

Making the right decisions on our funding strategy.

niostem

Founder:
Dr. Carlos Chacón, CTO;
Dr. Christophe Ramstein, CEO

SCALING GOALS

Right now we focus in DACH and later this year in all high income countries in EU, starting with FR, NL BE, and then moving to the nordics and ES, IT. In 2 years we expect to enter the US and APAC markets.

FOUNDED IN

2019

BASED IN

CGN

BIGGEST F*CK UP

“ We were extremely ambitious when we started and we planned to develop and produce a wearable device is 1.5 year time. It took us 3 years and 100% over the initial budget. The learning: plan conservatively and account for delays and extra money needed form the start. It's better to overdeliver than to overpromised, both shareholders and customers will appreciate that. ”

TEAM MEMBER

5

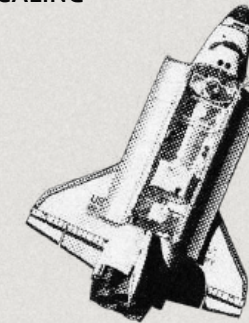
STAGE

SEED



More about niostem:
<https://niostem.com>

SCALING



FUTURE HEALTH & LIFE SCIENCES



FUN FACT

niostem's idea was born from basic research at the Max-Planck-Institute, while Dr. Chacón 8 years ago was *studying the origin of skin cancer* and discovered that hair stem cells can be stimulated to regenerate via mechanical stimuli.

CORE IDEA

We solve hair loss using *regenerative, wearable* technology.

Niostem, a Max Planck Institute spin-off, developed a clinically validated wearable device that reactivates hair growth via Stem Cell Reactivation Tech and patented bioelectrical stimulation. Drug-free, safe and non-invasive, it treats hair loss (pattern baldness) at its root cause. Our DTC (and B2B2C) model drives revenue through devices, consumables, and future AI driven hair-tracking tools.

sovity

Founder:
Sebastian Kleff, CEO & Co-Founder;
Dr. Sebastian Oprel, CTO & Co-Founder

ELEVATOR PITCH

sovity is a pioneer and the leading data space technology provider with a clear focus on tech development and a SaaS business model. With our products we pave the foundation for various data sharing use cases and data-driven business models connecting companies of any size or domain in Data Spaces recognized by automotive industries, energy sector or manufacturing.

FOUNDED IN

2021

FUNFACT

“ *Sebastian & Sebastian*
- one name to the customer helps, but at some time we had meetings with 5 Sebastian's, which doesn't make it easier. ”

TEAM MEMBER

28

SAY IT LOUDER:

No AI with shitty data!
We make it happen by enabling data exchange along all industries.

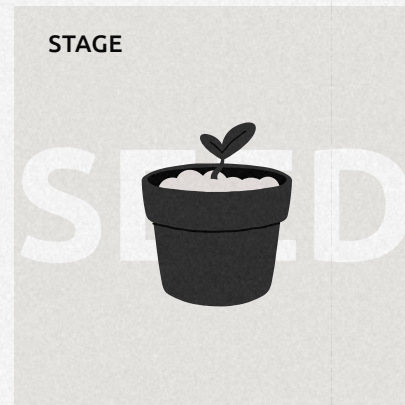
BASED IN



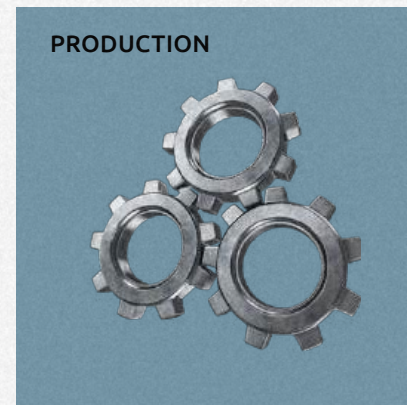
READY TO SCALE GOAL

With this program, we aim to develop an integrated and tightly interconnected series production.

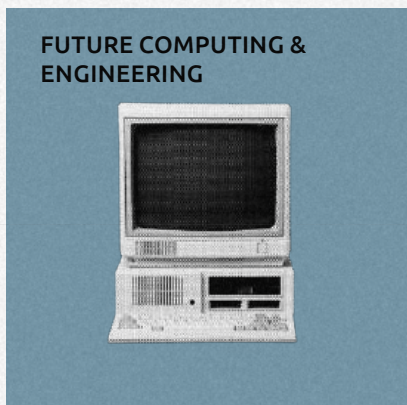
STAGE



PRODUCTION



FUTURE COMPUTING & ENGINEERING



ACHIEVEMENTS

- *Recognised on-eye-level with corps like BMW, BASF*
- *Customer saying „you are not a startup, you behave professional like a corporate“*
- *The team which is brilliant and the best we've worked with*
- *When our SaaS is used to share BMW production-relevant data*



More about sovity:
<https://sovity.de>

Urban Ray

Founder:
Henry Schmidt, CTO;
Fabian Binz, COO;
Cem Uyanik, CEO

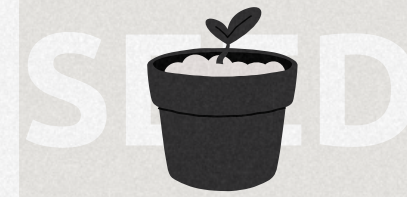
SCALING GOALS

Urban Ray's initial focus is Germany, scaling from Cologne across North Rhine-Westphalia and then nationwide to establish dense healthcare-driven networks. Our scaling goal is to build pan-European autonomous logistics networks that extend horizontally across healthcare, pharma, retail, and industrial sectors.

TEAM MEMBER

10

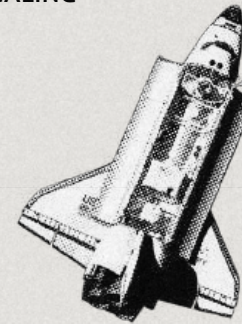
STAGE



DESCRIBE YOUR TEAM

Maximum efficiency is in our DNA.

SCALING



More about Urban Ray:
<https://www.urban-ray.com>

FOUNDED IN

2022

BASED IN



CORE IDEA

Building the *Physical* Internet

ONE THING THE ECOSYSTEM SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU

We're creating a completely new European economic area - the low-altitude economy.

FUTURE COMPUTING & ENGINEERING



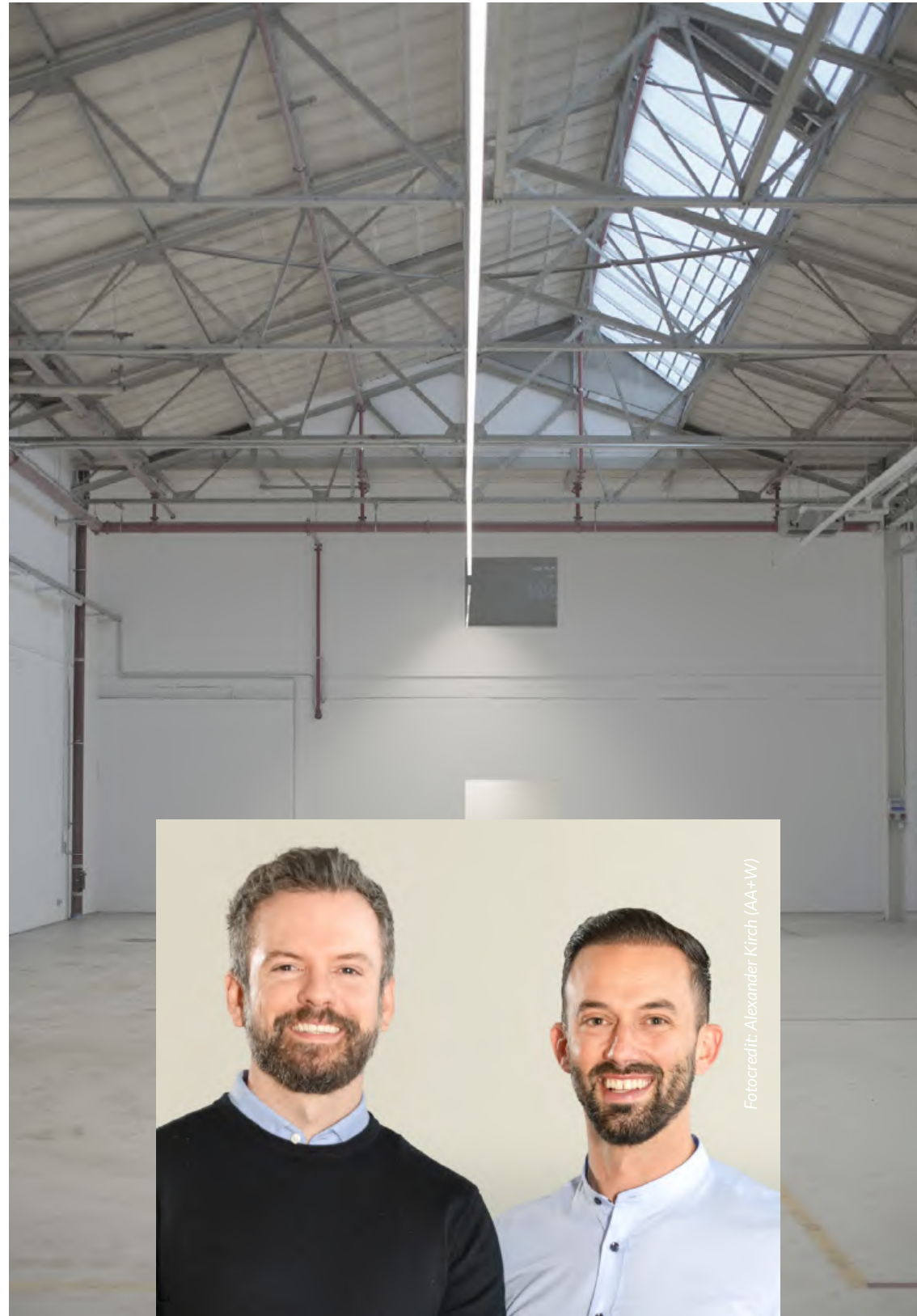
FUNFACT

“

We have *Urban Raves* on a regular basis.

”

Urban Ray is building the first autonomous logistics stack for cities, integrating micro-hubs, aerial couriers and the Ray Intelligence platform. Their dual business model combines full-stack operations in critical sectors with a scalable licensing model for partners. Unlike HW or SW only players, Urban Ray offers an end-to-end system with network effects, high margins and defensible infrastructure lock-in.



From lab idea to production readiness

The success story of IonKraft

When Dr. Montgomery Jaritz and Benedikt Heuer met while studying in the library, today's founders of IonKraft could not yet foresee where this journey would lead. What subsequently began during their doctoral studies not only brought the two founders back together but today represents an important building block for the future of sustainable packaging and the realization of a functioning circular economy.

*Montgomery Jaritz and Benedikt Heuer,
Co-Founder of IonKraft*

Co-Founder of IonKraft: Montgomery Jaritz and Benedikt Heuer

IonKraft develops innovative coating technology and corresponding that makes plastic packaging more efficient without losing its recyclability. Demanding contents can thus be in simple, recycling-friendly mono-material packaging. This offers an alternative to difficult-to-recycle multilayer solutions with high environmental costs and represents an important step toward closed material cycles in the packaging industry.

The origin of this technology lies in the university context. At the Institute for Plastics Processing, Montgomery investigated a new coating technology. It quickly became clear what potential it could offer for industry and the environment. However, it was equally clear that without active transfer from science to practice, this innovation would not find application in factory halls. Supported by RWTH Aachen, programs like exist Research transfer, and access to laboratories and experts, the team took the step out of the university and founded IonKraft.

From prototype to industrial system

The path from idea to industrial system was marked by technical challenges, strategic decisions, and important validation moments. A first milestone was the functioning prototype. For the first time, it became apparent that the coating works not only theoretically but also practically.

Shortly thereafter, a decisive moment for further development followed. Independent validation by Bayer confirmed that the early coatings offer advantages over established multilayer solutions. This feedback was more than a technical seal of approval—it was a signal to the team that the chosen path is promising and that circular economy solutions can be not only ecologically sensible but also technically superior.

Further steps followed quickly. Winning the EIC Accelerator, an initiative of the European Innovation Council, provided IonKraft with the financial and strategic leeway to purposefully advance technology and organization. Partnerships, including with packaging expert Greif, showed that the industry was ready to go along with the approach. The first customer contract was a clear signal. The technology did not remain in the demonstrator stage but found its way into real production environments. Additional VC financing made it possible to expand the team and create structures for sustainable growth.

The most tangible moment was probably the handover of the first industrial system to a customer. At that moment, it became visible that university research had become a product that functions reliably under industrial conditions.

Benedikt demonstrates how packaging materials are fed into the coating machine for processing.



High-tech at industrial pace: Why production is demanding

IonKraft develops and builds coating systems that are integrated directly into customers' existing production lines. This initially sounds straightforward but is highly complex in implementation.

The systems must:

- be integrable into different production environments with varying cycle times,
- fit into existing automation concepts,
- simultaneously ensure highly precise, reproducible coating quality.

The coating itself operates in the nanometer range. The smallest deviations in process parameters can affect performance. The system must therefore deliver two things simultaneously: maximum precision and maximum robustness in continuous operation.

This combination of high-tech process, strict quality requirements, and integration into existing production landscapes makes IonKraft's production particularly demanding while also forming the company's technological advantage.

GOOD TO KNOW

Regulatory framework: The EU *Packaging Regulation 2030*

With the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation, which is to be fully implemented by 2030, the European Union is setting binding standards for sustainability, recyclability, and circular economy.

The regulation pursues several central goals:

- **Recyclability as standard:** All packaging must be designed so that it can be completely recycled. Complex multilayer structures, which are still widespread today, will increasingly no longer be permissible.
- **Increasing recycling rates:** By 2030, significantly higher proportions of packaging materials must actually be recycled and returned to the cycle.
- **Reduction of packaging waste:** The total amount of packaging waste is to be significantly reduced (5 percent less waste by 2023 and 15 percent by 2040 compared to 2018)
- **Use of recyclates:** A growing proportion of new packaging must consist of recycled material.

For the industry, this means: Previous packaging solutions that are functional but not recyclable will no longer be marketable in a few years. Companies face the challenge of redesigning their products without being able to compromise on quality, durability or protective function.

This is exactly where IonKraft comes in.



Fotocredit: Alexander Kirch (AA+W)

Circular economy in practice: Recyclability without compromise

IonKraft offers the industry a bridge between legal requirements and technical demands, making circular economy implementable in practice.

A central success factor of IonKraft technology is its compatibility with existing recycling processes. While conventional multilayer packaging can hardly be recycled due to its complex material composition, the mono-materials coated with IonKraft enable pure-grade return to the material cycle.

Concretely, this means: Packaging coated with IonKraft technology today can become new packaging again tomorrow – without downcycling and without loss of quality. This forms the foundation of a functioning circular economy in the packaging industry. IonKraft thus closes an important gap between high technical performance and ecological responsibility.

Strategic support: The step to Gateway Factory

Over long stretches, IonKraft has mastered the central challenges independently – from building the technology through validation to the first industrial

Montgomery Jaritz, Benedikt Heuer
and the IonKraft team

system. With a view to the next scaling step, however, it became clear: For expanding its own production capacities, a structured, professional framework and additional external expertise were required.

In preparation for these next steps, IonKraft utilized the support of Gateway Factory, in the form of their Production Services. This joint project was designed as an ideal entry into expanded production setup and offered a protected framework in which the team could systematically further develop its production.

Together with the experts from Laboratory for Machine Tools and Production Engineering (WZL) of RWTH Aachen University arranged by Gateway Factory, every level of production was analyzed: every single component, every module and every single screw. This in-depth analysis formed the foundation for well-founded, long-term viable planning. What capacities will be needed in the coming years? How must processes, layouts and bills of materials be designed to remain scalable? Where are potential bottlenecks before they become a problem?

In this phase, it was not only about building better machines but about systematically developing the ability to scale itself.

“The project planning for the scaling project went very well. This was due both to our precise formulation of needs and to the fact that the Gateway Factory team understood the requirements and scope of work excellently. The scoping was right from the start.” – Benedikt Heuer, Co-founder IonKraft

Structure, trust and speed:
What defines the collaboration

The collaboration with Gateway Factory offered IonKraft the framework that a deeptech startup needs for such a scaling step:

- **Structured approach:** Clear project roadmaps and precise scoping ensured that ambitious goals were broken down into tangible work packages.
- **Confidentiality and security:** Dealing with sensitive technologies and business models requires trust. Gateway Factory offers a framework in which confidential content can be protected and yet efficiently processed.
- **Access to infrastructure:** Laboratories, test environments, and spatial proximity to relevant institutions like WZL accelerate development and validation.
- **Planability of scaling:** Clear processes and transparent cost structures reduce uncertainty and make growth plannable — a decisive factor for investors, customers, and the team itself.



Thus, from a single project, far more than an external service developed—it became a building block of IonKraft’s scaling strategy.

“The great added value that Gateway Factory can create lies in the structured framework: confidentiality, access to laboratories, clear processes, and transparent cost structures. When these roadmaps and frameworks are established, it significantly reduces uncertainty on both sides.” – Benedikt Heuer, Co-founder IonKraft

Particularly valuable proved to be the cross-institutional collaboration within the RWTH ecosystem. Benedikt Heuer emphasizes: “Particularly valuable was the collaboration between the various RWTH institutions. Gateway Factory made it possible to bring the right actors to the table and work together with us to figure out how we can implement our challenges in a start-up-oriented way. The possibility of carrying out a project uncomplicated within such a short time is otherwise difficult to realize in the university context.”

With this solid foundation behind them, IonKraft now faces a decisive step, that will change everything.

>>> OUTLOOK: 2026

Outlook: 2026 as the year of implementation

Today, IonKraft stands at an important point. The conceptual preparation is complete. Production was systematically planned in collaboration with Gateway Factory and the experts at WZL. Now the implementation and scaling phase begins.

The team is moving into new premises. A significantly larger production hall offers space for additional systems, processes, and growth. Adjacent office spaces ensure short distances and close integration of development, production, and management. Spatial proximity creates the connection that a growing deeptech team needs. In parallel, the team continues to grow. New colleagues bring additional expertise and help transform a technology platform into a scalable industrial company.

This image represents the next phase of IonKraft: high technology at industrial pace and at the same time a work environment where people are happy to take responsibility.

"In 2026, we want to implement what we planned within the framework of Production Services!" – Benedikt Heuer, Co-founder IonKraft

An ecosystem as amplifier

That this development could take place exactly here is no coincidence. The Rhineland startup eco-

system plays a central role for IonKraft. The Rhineland combines industrial strength with technological pioneering spirit. As a spin-off from the Institute for Plastics Processing at RWTH, IonKraft is firmly rooted in Aachen – a place where science and business work closely together.

The combination of excellent research at RWTH, strong industrial partners and institutional support through formats like Gateway Factory creates the environment that deeptech innovations need to not remain in the laboratory but to advance into factory halls, production chains, and markets.

IonKraft is ready for the next step

In a short time, IonKraft has traveled the path from university research to industrially deployable technology. The company has shown that high-tech innovation and entrepreneurial courage can successfully go hand in hand. More sustainable packaging solutions are no longer a distant vision but concrete industrial reality.

With its technology, IonKraft actively contributes to the realization of the circular economy: packaging that fulfills its function and can subsequently be completely returned to the material cycle.

With the systematic preparation of production expansion, support from Gateway Factory, and the upcoming move to larger premises, the next stage is clearly defined. In 2026, IonKraft begins to implement what was planned within the framework of Production Services.

The course is set—for scalable production, growing teams, and a substantial contribution to circular economy in the packaging industry.

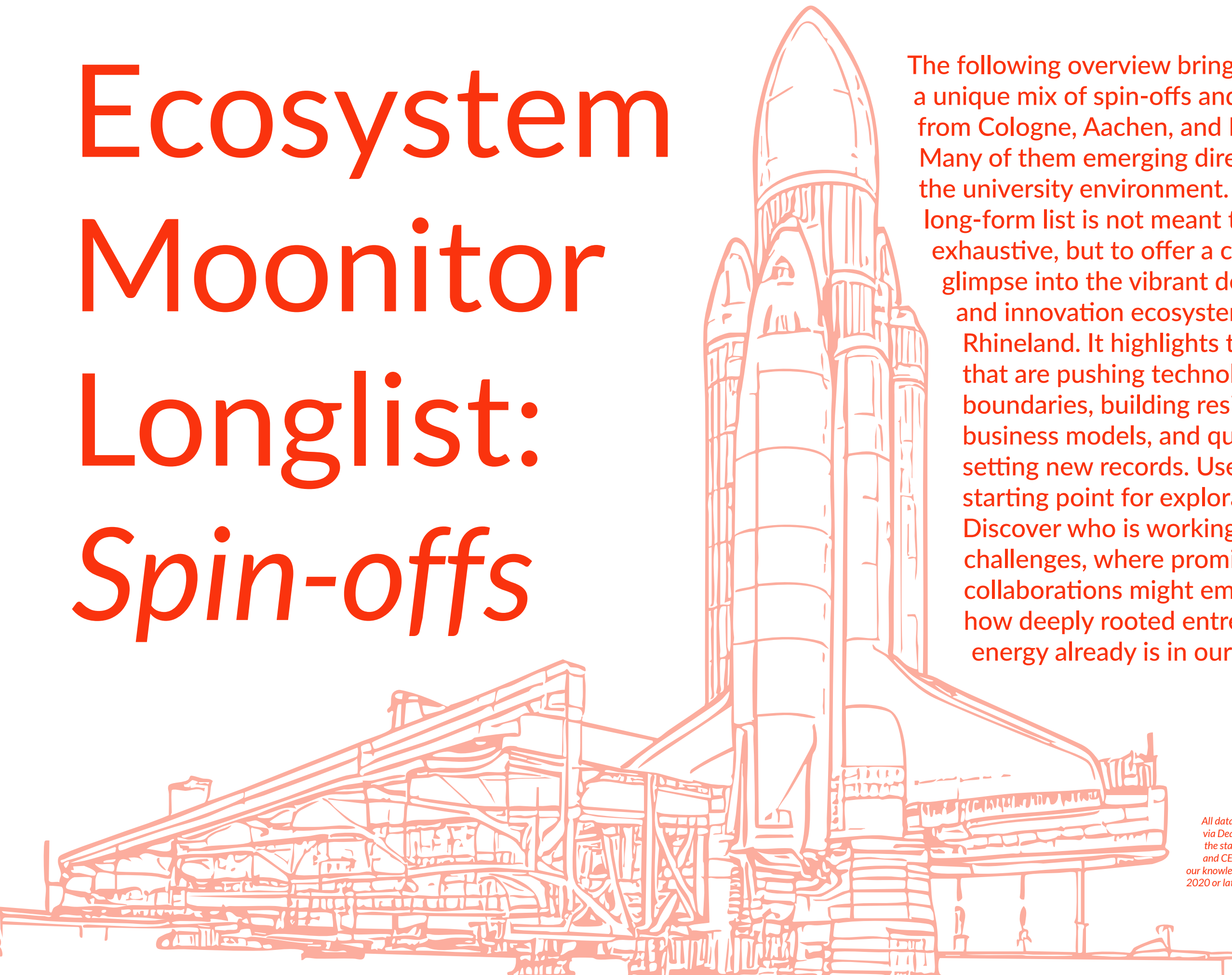
Closing words from Gateway Factory

"We at Gateway Factory would like to wish IonKraft all the best for the upcoming implementation phase and further development at this point. It is impressive to see how excellent research has given rise to a company that is not only technologically convincing but also makes a genuine contribution to the circular economy."

"We are very pleased to have such a promising scale-up as IonKraft in our ecosystem. We wish you a successful future, new spaces, growing teams and many more milestones!"



Ecosystem Moonitor Longlist: *Spin-offs*

A line drawing in a sketchy style. In the foreground, a rocket is launching from a launchpad, with a large plume of smoke and fire at its base. The rocket has a pointed nose cone and several cylindrical sections. In the background, there is a large, complex industrial building with many windows and structural elements, resembling a factory or a research facility. The drawing is composed of simple black lines on a white background.

The following overview brings together a unique mix of spin-offs and startups from Cologne, Aachen, and Düsseldorf. Many of them emerging directly from the university environment. This long-form list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to offer a curated glimpse into the vibrant deeptech and innovation ecosystem of the Rhineland. It highlights teams that are pushing technological boundaries, building resilient business models, and quietly setting new records. Use it as a starting point for exploration: Discover who is working on which challenges, where promising collaborations might emerge, and how deeply rooted entrepreneurial energy already is in our region.

All data used in this overview is sourced via Dealroom and has been provided by the startup support centers Gateway ESC and CEDUS. The list includes, to the best of our knowledge, only active startups founded in 2020 or later.

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(1/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
Adprimus	University of Cologne	https://www.adprimus.de	2024
Adventusart	University of Cologne	https://www.adventusart.de	2023
AiConver	University of Cologne	https://aiconver.com	2021
Alteva Technologies	University of Cologne	https://www.alteva.tech	2023
ANTICIPATE	RWTH Aachen	https://www.anticipate.ml	2021
Anymate Me	University of Cologne	https://anymateme.com	2023
AnySign	University of Cologne	https://www.anysign.app	2023
Apollo Green Solutions	University of Cologne	https://www.apollo-gs.com/de	2023
Arque	RWTH Aachen	http://arque.systems	2022
Athlete Capital	University of Cologne	https://www.athlete-capital.de	2025
automated	RWTH Aachen	https://www.automaited.com	2020
AV8	University of Cologne	https://drinkav8.com	2025
Avoplan	University of Cologne	https://avoplan.de	2023
Axess Intelligence	University of Cologne	https://www.axessintelligence.com	2022
Berghaus & Cie	University of Cologne	www.berghauscie.de	2021
BETTER CAKEZ	University of Cologne	https://bettercakez.com	2024
Black Capture	University of Cologne	https://blackcapture.de	2024
Black Semiconductor	RWTH Aachen	https://blacksemi.com	2020
Blockstars	University of Cologne		2023
bnear	University of Cologne	https://bnear.io	2022
Burner Helmet	University of Cologne	https://burnerhelmet.de	2022
CatchHR	University of Cologne	http://www.catch.hr	2020
CDL Therapeutics	University of Cologne		2020
CGN esports	University of Cologne	https://www.cgn.gg	2020
CHARGEUNITY	University of Cologne	https://chargeunity.de	2023
ChatDok	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://chatdok.de	2023

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(2/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
Colourful Giants	University of Cologne		2023
comdaily GmbH	University of Cologne	https://comdaily.ai	2025
COMESO	University of Cologne	https://gloryhealth.care	2024
Compounder	University of Cologne	https://www.compounder.eu/de	2020
Concept-e	University of Cologne	https://www.concept-e.solutions	2025
COTRAINER	University of Cologne	https://www.cotrainer.com	2022
Coursespace	University of Cologne	https://coursespace.de	2023
CRCL	University of Cologne	https://crcloflife.de	2023
Crop.Zone	RWTH Aachen	http://crop.zone	2020
CS Car Social	University of Cologne		2024
culinu	University of Cologne	https://culinu.eu	2023
CUPGRADE	University of Cologne	https://www.cupgrade.de	2021
cylib	RWTH Aachen	https://www.cylib.de	2022
Delphi AI	University of Cologne	https://delphi-ai.de	2025
Detechgene	University of Cologne	https://www.detechgene.de	2022
Detection-X	University of Cologne	https://www.detection-x.de	2024
DigiEP	University of Cologne	https://digiep.com	2023
DISCO Pharmaceuticals	University of Cologne	https://discopharma.de	2022
DRN. TECH UG	University of Cologne	https://www.drn.tech/de	2025
Durava	University of Cologne	https://durava.de	2024
eEmployed	University of Cologne	https://eemployed.de	2025
Ehrenfelder Ernte	University of Cologne		2021
Elanto Science	University of Cologne	https://elantosscience.com	2022
Elevear	RWTH Aachen	http://elevear-tech.com	2021
elona	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://www.elona.health	2021
emiigo	University of Cologne	https://www.emiigo.de	2022

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(3/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
ENTENDIX	University of Cologne	https://www.entendix.com	2024
Epiprocare	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://epiprocare.de	2021
Equaly	University of Cologne	https://www.joinequaly.com	2023
Exseede	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://www.exseede.com/de-de	2024
ezyaa	University of Cologne	https://ezyaa.de	2024
feelfood	University of Cologne	https://feel-food.com/de-de	2020
FibreCoat	RWTH Aachen	http://fibrecoat.de	2020
Fizzy Fit	University of Cologne		2024
Flink Fokus	University of Cologne	https://flinkfokus.de	2024
Floodwaive	RWTH Aachen	https://www.floodwaive.de	2023
fobimarkt	University of Cologne	https://www.fobimarkt.com	2022
ForesAlight	University of Cologne	https://www.foresaight.ai	2024
Foundfactory	University of Cologne	https://www.foundfactory.de	2021
gemineers	RWTH Aachen	http://gemineers.com	2021
Gleea Educational Software	University of Cologne	https://gleea.de	2022
Glossy Genetics	University of Cologne	https://www.glossy-genetics.com	2025
Green INGergy	University of Cologne	https://www.green-ingergy.de	2024
GreenKaufen	University of Cologne	https://greenkaufen.de	2023
Greenlyte Carbon Technologies	RWTH Aachen	https://www.greenlyte.tech	2022
Grievy	University of Cologne	https://grievy.de	2023
Gymian	University of Cologne	https://gymian.ai	2023
HdV Handwerker des Vertrauens	University of Cologne	https://handwerkerdesvertrauens.de	2022
heygrün	University of Cologne	https://www.hey-gruen.de	2023
IndiViva	University of Cologne	http://www.indiviva.de	2024
InKlub	University of Cologne	https://inklub.eu	2023
Innovative Robot Delivery	University of Cologne	https://www.innovative-robot-delivery.com	2021

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(4/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
Insitute for Legal Transformation ILT	University of Cologne	https://legaltransformation.io	2022
IonKraft	RWTH Aachen	http://ionkraft.com	2020
JUGAD	University of Cologne	https://jugad.eu	2024
juniorjob	University of Cologne	https://www.juniorjob.de	2021
kaarlo (ehem. somate)	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://www.kaarlo.de	2024
Kerith	University of Cologne	https://www.rizm.de/?lang=de	2023
KiaB	University of Cologne	https://knowledge-in-a-box.de/de-de/welcome	2023
KISS	University of Cologne	https://kiss-ev.org/ueber-uns	2024
KlausurenKiste	University of Cologne	https://www.klausurenkiste.de	2025
KoellnService	University of Cologne	https://koellnservice.de	2022
Kumo Cloud Solutions	University of Cologne	https://kumo-cloud.com	2024
Legalexo e.K.	University of Cologne		2024
Lernigo	University of Cologne	https://lernigo.de	2021
Lernschauspiel	University of Cologne	https://lernschauspiel.de	2024
LIQOMICS	University of Cologne	https://liqomics.com	2021
look2x	University of Cologne	https://www.look2x.de	2024
LOPPI	University of Cologne	https://www.loppl-kids.de	2024
LUBYO	University of Cologne	https://lubyo.com	2025
Maison Africaine	University of Cologne		2023
Mapletics	University of Cologne	https://mapletics.de/index.html	2025
Matyushkin, R.	University of Cologne		2024
MBK E-Truck Power Solutions	University of Cologne	https://www.nanuq.tech	2024
medifey	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf		2025
Medlink	University of Cologne	https://www.medlink.de/de	2020
MEMoRiA MoMENTS	University of Cologne	https://memoria-moments.de	2025
Mentalkraft	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://mentalkraft-akademie.de	2022

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(5/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
Mentisialog	University of Cologne		2025
Minth Innovations	University of Cologne	https://www.minth.io	2023
Mooncamp	University of Cologne	https://mooncamp.com/de	2020
MPG Solar	University of Cologne	https://www.mpg-solar.de	2023
NARDY UG	University of Cologne		2025
naro IQ	University of Cologne	https://www.naroiq.com	2022
Naughty Nuts	University of Cologne	https://www.naughtynuts.de	2020
Nclip	University of Cologne	https://nclip.io/de	2024
Nclip Collectibles	University of Cologne		2021
Neonto	University of Cologne	https://neonto.de	2024
nerou	University of Cologne	https://www.nerou.de	2021
Novulations	University of Cologne	https://www.novalutions.de	2024
OhCircle	University of Cologne	https://www.ohcircle.de	2022
OnBeat	University of Cologne		2025
Orderfy	University of Cologne	https://www.orderfy.eu	2021
paged	University of Cologne	https://www.paged.ai	2023
pandaloop	University of Cologne	https://pandaloop.de	2024
Parsimonit	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://www.parsimonit.com/company/index.html	2023
PartiEval	University of Cologne	https://partieval.de	2024
Pathmonk	University of Cologne	https://pathmonk.com	2022
Pelicad	RWTH Aachen	https://pelicad.com	2021
Pixit	University of Cologne	https://www.pixital.io	2024
Plastic2Beans	University of Cologne	https://impact-coffee.de	2021
Pomelos Group	University of Cologne	https://www.calltime.co	2024
pooldown	University of Cologne	https://pool-down.com	2025
PPICTURES	University of Cologne	https://www.immo-pictures.de	2024

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(6/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
ProcessM	RWTH Aachen	http://processm.com	2020
Prosion	University of Cologne	https://www.prosion.eu	2020
Raketenstart	University of Cologne	https://www.raketenstart.de	2021
Rheingarnelen	University of Cologne	https://www.rheingarnelen.de	2021
Rivopump	University of Cologne		2025
Rock Your Thesis	University of Cologne	https://rockyourthesis.com	2023
RooflineAI	RWTH Aachen	https://roofline.ai	2024
schnaq	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://schnaq.com	2022
Senf	University of Cologne	https://senf.app	2021
SHEERS TL	University of Cologne	www.sheers-drinks.de	2024
ShiftSpace	University of Cologne	https://shiftspace.com	2022
Sieve Plastik	University of Cologne	https://www.sievefins.com	2021
Sight	University of Cologne	https://sight.social	2023
Silberfische essen Staub	University of Cologne	https://www.silberfische-essen-staub.de	2021
SimpleJob	University of Cologne	https://simple-job.de	2020
socialbnb	University of Cologne	https://www.socialbnb.org/de	2021
Sportzfreunde	University of Cologne	https://sportzfreunde.com	2025
Steuerboard	Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf	https://steuerboard.net	2025
SwimPal	University of Cologne	https://www.swimpal.de	2024
The Oater	University of Cologne	https://oater.de	2021
TheMingo	University of Cologne	https://www.themingo.de	2021
ThoraMedia	University of Cologne		2021
Unfallnavi	University of Cologne	https://www.unfall-navi.de	2020
VeedelMat	University of Cologne		2023
VIR-Immune	University of Cologne	https://www.vir-immune.de	2022
Visaflow	University of Cologne	https://www.visaflow.app	2025

Rhineland Spin-offs ^(7/7)

Company	Spin-off University	Website	Founded in
Vitrofluidix	University of Cologne	https://www.vitrofluidix.com	2024
Voltfang	RWTH Aachen	http://voltfang.de	2020
Vytal	University of Cologne	https://www.vytal.org	2020
W1NNAS	University of Cologne	https://w1nnas.com	2023
Webshop KI Chatbot	University of Cologne		2025
xPolicy	University of Cologne	https://www.xpolicy.de	2024
Youro	University of Cologne	https://youro.shop	2024
ZENTRAS	University of Cologne	https://www.zentras.de	2023
Zentras Systems UG	University of Cologne		2025
zerio	University of Cologne	www.zerio.de	2024

After exploring this overview, one thing becomes clear: the Rhineland’s startup and spin-off landscape is already rich in talent, ideas, and ambition.

“ We wish all teams from Cologne, Aachen, Düsseldorf, and the wider region the very best for the road ahead – as they scale their technologies, build strong companies, and shape the industries of tomorrow. We are excited to watch how this ecosystem continues to evolve, deepen its roots, and set new benchmarks for deep-tech and innovation in Europe.

At the same time, strong foundations are only the beginning. For deeptech ventures in particular, the real challenges – and opportunities – emerge when it comes to scaling: Building robust structures, accessing the right partners and markets, and growing without losing focus. This is exactly where Gateway Factory comes in with programs like Ready to Scale, designed to support teams on their way from promising idea to scalable company. We are excited to see which of the startups from this list we might one day welcome into one of our cohorts – just as we have already done with teams like alteva and Detechgene.

”

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Coming Soon

Event	Date	Location	Website
Gateway Factory PULSE Workshop 	14.01.2026	Online	https://gateway-factory.de/pulse
DLD München	17.01.2026	München	https://dld-conference.com
1 Year Anniversary Gateway Factory 	21.01.2026	Aachen	https://gateway-factory.de
Startup Your Idea Contest	04.02.2026	Cologne	https://gateway-unikoeln.de/events/start-up-your-idea-contest-das-finale-2026
VC Lunch x HTGF 	05.02.2026	Cologne	https://gateway-factory.de
Gateway Factory PULSE Workshop 	11.02.2026	Online	https://gateway-factory.de/pulse
Road to Green (R2G)	05.03.2026	Cologne	https://road-to-green.de
R2G x Sustainable Infrastructures Meetup 	05.03.2025	Cologne	https://gateway-factory.de
Gateway Factory PULSE Workshop 	11.03.2026	Online	https://gateway-factory.de/pulse
Startupland	18.03.2026	Cologne	https://startupland.de/startup-land-2026
TRANSFORM	18.03.- 19.03.2026	Berlin	https://transform.show
Cologne Investors Evening	19.03.2026	Cologne	https://koeln.business
Web de Cologne Startup Breakfast	20.03.2026	Cologne	https://www.eventbrite.de/o/web-de-cologne-ev-10043603509

RWTH Tech Impact Festival	25.03. – 26.03.2026	Aachen	https://www.techimpactfestival.de
Kick-Off Ready to Scale Batch 2 	16.04.2026	Cologne	https://gateway-factory.de
Hannover Messe	20.04. – 24.04.2026	Hannover	https://www.hannovermesse.de
Tech.eu Summit 	20.04. – 21.04.2026	London, UK	https://tech.eu/events
EU-Startups Summit 	07.05. – 08.05.2026	Valletta, Malta	https://eu-startups.com/summit
HTGF Family Day	11.05. – 12.05.2026	Berlin	https://www.family-day-htgf.de
ViennaUP The Startup Festival 	18.05. – 22.05.2026	Vienna, Austria	https://viennaup.com
Deep Tech Momentum 	20.05.- 21.05.2026	Berlin	https://www.deeptech.build
SXSW London 	01.06.- 06.06.2026	London, UK	https://www.sxswlondon.com
MACHEN Festival	03.06.- 04.06.2026	Leipzig	https://machn-festival.de
ODDO BHF Young Entrepreneurs Awards Award Ceremony	10.06.2025	Frankfurt a.M.	https://pwm.oddo-bhf.com/de/initiativen/oddo-bhf-young-entrepreneurs-awards
VivaTechnology	17.06.- 20.06.2026	Paris, France	https://vivatechnology.com
Hinterland of Things Conference	18.06.2026	Bielefeld	https://hinterlandofthings.com
GITEX Europe2026	30.06.- 01.07.2026	Berlin	https://www.gitex-europe.com



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Ready to be part of Europe's deeptech revolution?
The Gateway Factory invites you to connect with us!

Thank you to our partners and enablers

The Gateway Factory's mission to bridge European innovation with startup ambition would not be possible without the dedication and vision of our remarkable partners. We extend our deepest gratitude to the institutions, investors, advisors, and industry leaders who have joined us on this journey to build deeptech champions in the Rhineland and beyond.

Special thanks to denkwerk and Roland Oetker for their invaluable contributions to this magazine and to our broader ecosystem.

We also acknowledge the founders and teams featured in this report, who exemplify the pioneering spirit that is reshaping our industrial landscape. Your work inspires us daily.

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- **Founders:** Whether you're developing ground-breaking technology or seeking to commercialize research, we provide the resources, expertise, and connections to help you scale.



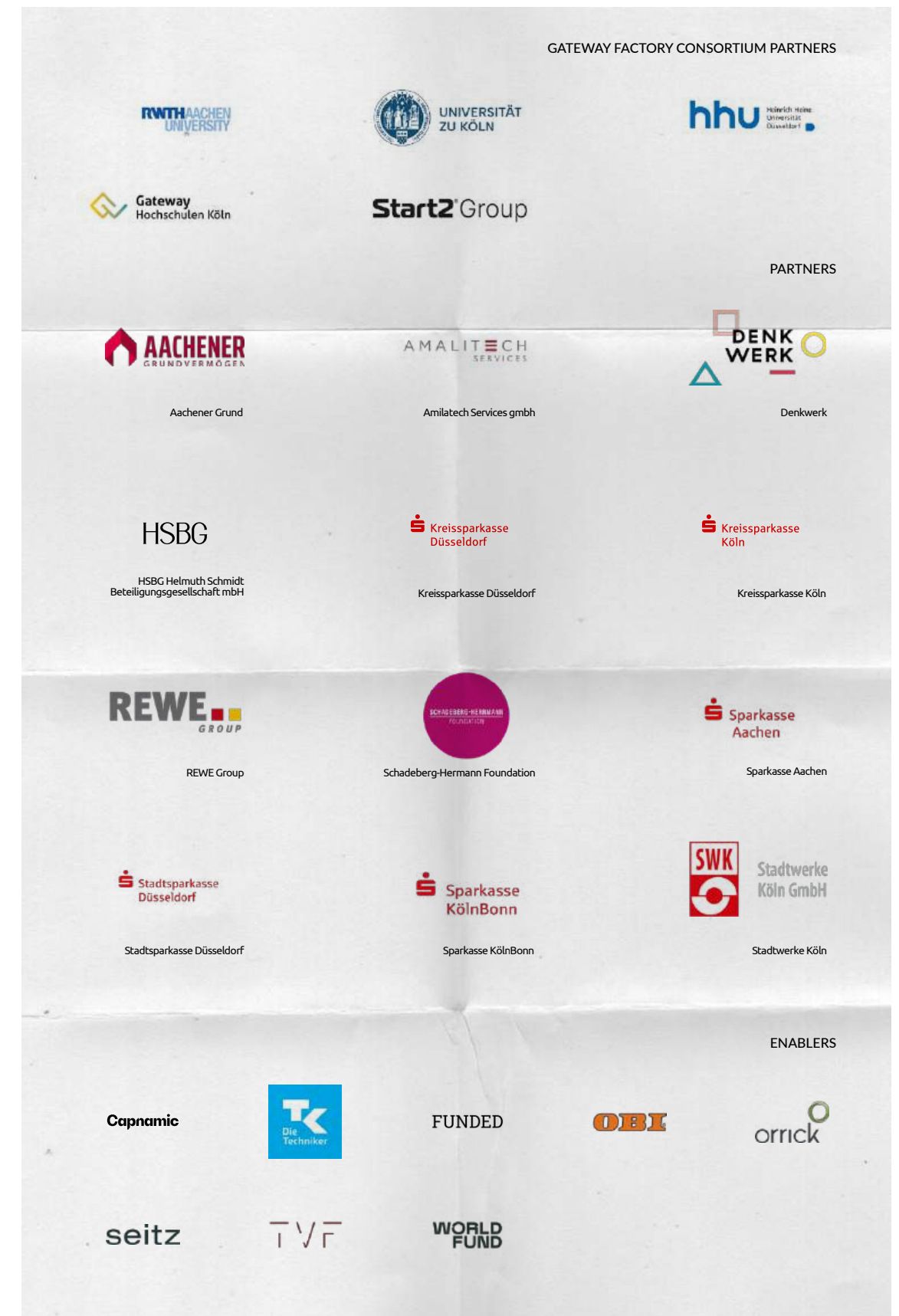
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