

# The Company<sup>+</sup>



## A Nine-Month Entrepreneurial Journey for Early-Career Researchers

**The Company<sup>+</sup>** is a hands-on, interdisciplinary training programme for early-career researchers who want to explore entrepreneurship, develop entrepreneurial skills, and turn early-stage ideas into meaningful value propositions. Over the course of nine months, you will work in teams, engage in practical workshops, and receive coaching from academic experts, industry partners, and CREO.

Participation does **not** require an existing business idea—only curiosity, motivation, and openness to learn beyond your own discipline.

## Programme Overview (2026 Edition)

Below you find the confirmed structure of the Company<sup>+</sup> 2026 trajectory. All sessions take place in person.

### Info Session & Testimonial

**16 January 2026 — 13:15–14:30**

Get introduced to the programme and hear from a participant of the 2025 pilot. An ideal moment for those still considering registration.

### Presentation of Domains & Getting to Know Each Other

**30 January 2026 — 10:00–13:00 (including lunch)**

Meet fellow participants, coaches and domain experts. The four programme domains are introduced, and participants explore early ideas and expectations.

### Team Creation

**24 February 2026 — 09:30–12:30**

Learn what makes an effective entrepreneurial team and form your interdisciplinary group. You explore complementary roles, skills and personality profiles to build a strong team foundation.

## **Ideation & Value Proposition**

### **5 March 2026 — 09:30–16:00**

Use design thinking to turn real-world problems into opportunities.

Teams shape and refine their initial ideas and develop a first value proposition.

## **Business Modelling**

### **17 March 2026 — 09:30–14:00**

Translate your value proposition into viable business model scenarios.

Receive expert and peer feedback to validate your concept and explore potential pathways.

## **Legal Basics & Intellectual Property Rights**

### **23 April 2026 — 09:30–12:30**

Gain essential knowledge on IPR and commercial contracting.

Work on your own case to identify potential IP and understand when expert support is needed.

## **Market Analysis & Go-to-Market Strategies**

### **May 2026 — 09:30–12:30 (TBC)**

Learn how to analyse your market, identify customers and prepare your first steps towards traction.

Explore practical tools for early validation and sales strategy.

## **Mid-Trajectory Wrap-Up & Pitch Preparation**

### **22 June 2026 — afternoon**

Before the summer break, teams share progress, challenges and business model ideas. Together with CREO coaches, you draft the first version of your pitch.

## **Finance & Funding Pathways**

### **September 2026 — date & time TBC**

Get an overview of grants, loans, investment and innovation funding. Experts from VLAIO and BDO guide teams through suitable funding structures and financial needs.

### **Pitching Essentials**

#### **23 October 2026 — 09:30–12:30**

Learn the key elements of building and delivering a strong pitch. Refine your team message and strengthen your story for the final event.

### **Optional Pitch Rehearsal**

#### **13 November 2026 — date & time TBC**

Optional session to rehearse and receive tailored feedback from CREO coaches. Helps boost clarity and confidence before the Dragon's Den.

### **Dragon's Den – Final Pitches**

#### **26 November 2026 — 14:00–18:00**

Teams present their final pitch to a professional jury. A moment to showcase your work and explore possible follow-up opportunities.

### **Individual Feedback Session**

#### **Date on request**

Participants can request a one-to-one feedback moment with coaches to reflect on their pitch and discuss next steps.

## Contact coordinator and coaches

### CREO – Creativity & Entrepreneurship Office

Barbara Tan

Nathalie De Schepper

Janina Meissner

### Academic Experts

Prof. dr. ing. Jelle Saldien

Prof. Dr. Esther Van Zimmeren

Prof. Dr. Pieter Billen

Prof. Dr. Philippe Nimmemeers

Prof. Dr. Valentin Carlan

Dr. Jasna Loos

Dr. Kris Bonnarens

## Interested in joining?

→ Register [here](#) for the information session on **16 January**.

→ Apply [here](#) for The Company+ 2026 programme.

## With thanks to our external partners

