INNOVATION IS FOR EVERYONE
MISSION

CONNECTING

INNOVATORS

PEOPLE
- Startups, entrepreneurs, corporates, funders, students & other (governmental) organizations.
- Creating engineered serendipity

TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN

PURPOSE
- Provide entrepreneurs support to succeed with their ideas & grow their company
- Partner with local and national organizations to execute our programming

PROGRAMS
- Thursday Gatherings
- Innovation Visitors Bureau
- Talent Programs
LOOKING BACK AT 2020

Dear reader,

We are proud to share our Impact Report 2020. In the last 5 years we have continued to create an interesting, high quality, and high energy Venture Café program in order to build our innovation community and strengthen the innovation ecosystem in Rotterdam.

2020 was definitely a turbulent year as Covid-19 has changed the way we work, disrupting our daily lives, and confronted us with challenges unimaginable only a year ago. But innovation is also about opportunities. We reinvented the way we organize serendipitous encounters through online connections, organizing hybrid events and creating relevant programming such as our Venture School program during the summer months. It was also the first edition of Upstream Festival, as organized by Up!Rotterdam, where we proudly co-created multiple events with various partners such as Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), FunX EMPR, and The Next Women.

Overall in 2020, we organized 532 sessions as part of our Thursday Gatherings in collaboration with 310 program partners. In total, we welcomed 7000+ visitors to our weekly Thursday gatherings. 30% of these attendees joined Venture Café for the first time this year.

We would like to thank all our (online) visitors, sponsors, partners, ambassadors and volunteers who have helped us to continue to ‘make it happen’ in 2020!

And we look forward to continuing our journey in 2021. A year filled with online, hybrid and hopefully soon “real life” Thursday Gatherings again. We can’t wait to invite you to our home base at CIC Rotterdam later this year!

Anoesjka Imambaks
Executive Director, Venture Café Rotterdam

Photo by Antim Wijnaendts van Resandt
VENTURE CAFÉ 2020 AT A GLANCE

Thursday Gatherings

- **48** Thursday Gatherings
- **7k** Visitors
- **532** Sessions
- **310** Program Partners

Community

- **118K** Website Visitors
- **22k** Newsletter + Socials
- **99** Job Postings
- **55** Ambassadors
"An amazing experience building our Network, getting motivation by fellow startups, and a place to get ourselves started in the co-workspace."

VIKASH RAMJAS
Founder Studio HalfTone & Winner of Venture Café Summer School
WHAT IS VENTURE CAFÉ
Venture Café is a non-profit, sister-organization of CIC and part of a global network. The Venture Café movement started as an experiment in 2010 in Boston.

Our goal is to build an innovation community and to accelerate innovation within the regional ecosystem. We fulfill our mission by offering freely accessible programming and by nurturing connections that build relationships between students, startups, entrepreneurs, corporates, funders and other organizations. By connecting innovators, we create impact and foster innovation and growth.

Every week we host the largest innovation community event in the world, known as the Thursday Gathering, with more than 2,000 visitors globally weekly. The power of ‘offline’ contact initiates meaningful connections which can accelerate innovation. We call it ‘engineered serendipity’: we provide innovators with a place to meet, we offer programming to inspire and we facilitate in building relationships.

In March of 2020 we brought that offline feeling online in response to the global pandemic, and found new ways to engineer serendipitous collisions with more meaningful global reach than ever before.

- Provide entrepreneurs support to succeed with their ideas & grow their company
- Partner with local and national organizations to amplify the work of the community
- Help fill the gap in Rotterdam’s innovation community to support access to capital and opportunity
“During 2020 we all needed to find new ways to work from home, but, still needed to connect with our networks in the city and make new connections in the Netherlands and abroad. The team at Venture Café provided a great platform for this to happen virtually. It is really great to see how you inspire so many diverse networks to come together and find ways to connect and collaborate.”

SHARON MULLEN
Business Manager Life Science & Health
Rotterdam Partners
ISOLATION IS THE ENEMY OF INNOVATION

Our flagship event is the Thursday Gathering, which is a weekly meetup that we organize 48 times per year. Every Thursday between 16:00 and 19:00 we host the largest innovation community gathering in Rotterdam, with an average of 300 visitors per week in non-COVID-19 times.

By offering a freely accessible program with a mix of break-out sessions, office-hours and info-tables, we create serendipitous encounters.

Venture Café’s inclusive platform, featuring the Thursday Gathering, empowers individuals and organizations across the world to learn, connect and share solutions for lasting impact.

We welcome innovators of every expertise, experience level and identity to our events and our physical and digital spaces as both participants and presenters. We intentionally collaborate with a wide range of moderators, educators and thinkers to lead our programs because the more diverse the group of people engaged in innovation efforts, the bigger and more meaningful the local impact will be.

"It's great helping entrepreneurs to take the next step by sharing my knowledge, expertise and experience. Continuing to be visible to the innovation community leads to inspiring talks, connections and leads."

PATRICK VAN GINNEKEN
Patent Attorney
AOMB Intellectual Property

[Image of Patrick Van Ginneken]
GLOBAL COLLABORATION AND LOCAL INCLUSIVITY

The year 2020 is one to go down in the history books. It’s been rough for all of us and shown us that now more than ever the value of collaboration and space to get together is priceless.

Hosting a virtual program has allowed Venture Café locations to collaborate on a whole new level and share knowledge quickly and efficiently between cities, countries and continents.

These collaborations have led to a new program series: Innovation Bridge. Originated in Venture Café Warsaw - Innovation Bridge connects startup communities across cities for soft-landing opportunities, partnerships and access to talent and investors.

In 2020 Venture Café locations hosted 12 Innovation bridges: Warsaw - Rotterdam, Tokyo - Sydney & Miami - Warsaw, to mention a few.

In the Fall, we ran our first ever virtual road show in partnership with Accenture Ventures. The program was focused on equity in innovation and travelled between St. Louis, Cambridge and Philadelphia.

Venture Café Philadelphia’s road show panel was their most attended session of the year showing that collaborations focusing on improving the human condition are incredibly important to our community.

Venture Café not only leads conversations on equity and inclusion, we strive to practice it. When we made our program accessible online in March 2020, we extended our reach to a whole new audience that can now join the discussion.

The global attendance of women has jumped from 35% to 45%, ethnic diversity has gone up and we’ve been able to welcome more mature age groups. People who, for variety of reasons, perhaps couldn’t attend our physical events.

This goes to show that given a clear pathway to access the innovation ecosystem, a diverse group of individuals will choose to opt in.
The transition of Venture Café’s Thursday Gatherings in 2020, from offline, to online, to hybrid, to online.
THURSDAY GATHERING PROGRAMMING

With 532 sessions taking place during Venture Café’s Thursday Gatherings in 2020, we housed an incredible amount of knowledge, expertise and inspiration on a week-to-week basis. A total of 310 program partners have dedicated their time and effort to host break out sessions, office hours or info tables as part of our Thursday programs.

In our Thursday program in 2020 we have explored topics such as sustainability, resilience, robotics, and life sciences & health. We work with monthly themes as a red thread for our programming as it allows for like-minded visitors to connect, share knowledge and exchange expertise around the subject at hand. Something we like to call engineered serendipity.

Our program partners are a mix of talented people from within our community as well as inspiring partners and experts from our (inter)national network.

Do you wish to share your expertise and/or inspire our community? To be part of the program, please contact Program@VentureCafeRotterdam.org
INFO TABLES

A place to showcase an upcoming event or test a new product with the Venture Café community. A great way to meet all the visitors on the floor.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours where you (as a coach, mentor, company or investor) can have a 1-on-1 meeting.

BREAK OUTS

A session such as a workshop, panel discussion or lecture on a specific topic. They tend to engage and go deeper into a subject.

105 INFO TABLES
30 OFFICE HOURS
393 BREAK OUTS
VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS IN 2020

ROLE IN INNOVATION COMMUNITY

STAGE OF BUSINESS
We keep a close eye on the demographics of our Thursday Gatherings. By doing so we can continuously reflect on and improve our program and get to know our community. By tailoring our communication and sessions we can create a balanced and attractive event every week.
TOP 10 VISITOR INDUSTRIES

1. **SOFTWARE** 15,61%
2. **COMMUNICATIONS** 19,42%
3. **EDUCATION** 11,14%
4. **ENVIRONMENT** 9,87%
5. **SCIENCE** 8,48%
6. **FINANCE** 12,58%
7. **LOGISTICS** 8,14%
8. **DESIGN** 12,29%
9. **AI** 7,22%
10. **HOSPITALITY** 7,53%
I'm looking for Talented people!
TALENT PORTAL

Venture Café’s innovation community holds great talent and we want to support that talent by creating access to the innovation job market and transparency in recruitment procedures.

A large number of the visitors at Venture Café’s Thursday Gatherings are: 1) students or young alumni who are looking for an internship or job, 2) startups who are looking for new team members, 3) companies that are looking for innovative talent and, 4) experienced professionals who are looking for a new challenge.

The Talent Portal is a service that:
• Facilitates innovative companies that are looking for talent within our local innovation ecosystem. The portal provides them brand recognition and access to talent.
• Facilitates students/young alumni/unemployed who are looking for a freelancer/intern/full-time job or a traineeship position at an innovative company.

"The swift response of the Venture Café team and deployment of their Talent Portal greatly helped us to promote internships at the scale-ups in our region. This is just one example of the valuable partnership between Up!Rotterdam and Venture Café Rotterdam."

LARS CRAMA
Private Lead
Up!Rotterdam
TALENT PORTAL - JOB POSTINGS PER INDUSTRY

Software, Web & Mobile: 33.8%
Communication: 14.4%
Social Impact & Non-profit: 10.6%
Design: 7.5%
AI & Robotics: 8.1%
Mobility, Logistics & Maritime: 6.9%
Hospitality: 5.6%
Education: 3.1%
Arts: 1.9%
Other: 3.1%
Every last Thursday of the month is Talent Night at Venture Café. Talent Night connects the most innovative companies to the best international talent Rotterdam has to offer. During these gatherings we host a variety of companies actively looking for employees by organizing a job market. Our program partners offer coaching sessions and inspiring keynotes both for talent as well as for start-ups and scale-ups looking to form dedicated teams. By offering this programming, we accelerate connections and kick-start careers.

In November, Venture Café and Rotterdam Expat Centre combined to give current and future expats in Rotterdam a warm introduction to the city and life in Rotterdam during our monthly Talent Night.

"Thanks to the Venture Café we could still give expats a warm welcome to Rotterdam. Through the Remo platform, it almost felt as if we were there in person, and a lot of valuable connections were made."

LAURA SALM
Account Manager
Rotterdam Expat Centre
A YEAR OF TRANSITION

Events Bureau is a project by Venture Café and CIC that provides event spaces and services to the B2B market whilst supporting Venture Café in making connections with potential program partners and sponsoring our Thursday Gatherings financially.

Like many other organizations, 2020 was a year of transition for Events Bureau. Reduced group sizes and increased measures meant Events Bureau quickly had to transition from physical offline events to facilitating online and hybrid events.

High quality studio equipment was bought and online event solutions researched in an effort to allow Events Bureau to continue to facilitate high level events for their clients. Throughout the year, knowledge and experience came together to provide Events Bureau clients with the use of a state-of-the-art video studio at CIC in combination with a customizable dynamic online event environment to facilitate networking and connections for hundreds of people.

We are proud that in a year where events came to an almost complete standstill, we were able to grasp the opportunity and support our clients in taking their events online. We are proud that we were able to connect almost 5000 people through the power of events.

If you’re interested in taking your next event online, recording in our studio or checking out the event and conference spaces in CIC, please get in touch!

Events-Bureau@VentureCafeRotterdam.org

128 EVENTS
4,9k EVENT VISITORS
55 CLIENTS
37k DONATED SPACE
"Because of the Remo Platform, we were able to make our CVN meetings truly interactive and more international. With the support of Venture Café, the sessions were professionally organized. Looking forward to continuing our collaborations in 2021."

CORINA KUIPER
Managing Director
Corporate Venturing Network

"We could focus on the content & interaction as Venture Café took care of the technology!"

MENNO KOK
Director
EIT Health Belgium-the Netherlands
Interested in our (online) event spaces or studio?
Get in touch! Events-Bureau@VentureCafeRotterdam.org
CONNECTING INNOVATORS FROM THE SOUTH-HOLLAND REGION

Venture Café is a part of a global network which positions Rotterdam as an international ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through our Innovation Visitors Bureau (IVB) we welcome (inter)national delegations to the innovation ecosystem of Rotterdam (South-Holland), with the aim of creating concrete, valuable outcomes. By meeting specific key players and touring innovation hubs we aim to provide visiting delegations insights into our ecosystem.

We also organize meetups with startups from our community, such as workshops, luncheons, panel discussions, and lectures on a specific topic or trend.

Next to this we organize inspiration tours focused on our innovation ecosystem and connecting & meeting startups. Tours are provided to corporates, governmental organizations and educational institutions from primary school up to MBO, HBO and universities.

COVID had a drastic impact on the ability to receive foreign delegations. However, we’re happy to have hosted several IVB’s, including delegations from our neighbors Germany and Belgium. On top of that, we welcomed several groups of corporates and educational institutions for inspiration tours.
Venture Café Rotterdam provides an international position as an attractive city for innovation, startups and scaleups. The Venture Café community is therefore connected to a global network of innovators which provides easy access to other ecosystems to expand business.

The network is supported by the Venture Café Global Institute, the umbrella organization that provides ongoing training, resources, convening opportunities, and guides new site expansion.
PARTNERSHIPS THAT CREATE IMPACT

We are proud to have built a solid base of dedicated partners over the past years. In 2020, like our programming, our partnerships evolved into different shapes and forms and now include hybrid and virtual elements.

The main question we pose our partners is: “How can we help you?” We always tailor our proposals to our partners’ needs, we like to think out-of-the-box so we can create the most value for both the partners as well as the community we serve.

We are humbled to have partners on board who were able to continue to collaborate with us in 2020 and 2021, despite the current trying times. We take great pride in the fact that they recognize the value of having access to the talented innovation community we serve and our efforts to connect them to their desired target groups. A big thank you to all of our partners for their continued support to our non-profit mission!

FOUNDING PARTNER

Venture Café began as a simple idea within the Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A longtime global leader in building innovation campuses and shared workspaces, CIC began evolving from its concept of physical spaces to one of greater meaningful community in 2009. This new iteration grew into a global movement known for its entrepreneurial resources and inclusivity. Today, Venture Café Global Institute – now its own enterprise – expands to new cities on its own as well as alongside other CIC ventures.

LEARN MORE ON CIC.COM
We'd like you to meet Dunya Ressang & Rachid Kbiri. Members of the Venture Café Rotterdam community.

Dunya & Rachid are social entrepreneurs behind PPEneeded.com, which helps with the supply & demand of PPE equipment. Not just in the Netherlands, but worldwide!

PPEneeded presented during a Virtual Thursday Gathering, allowing them to reach out to enthusiastic volunteers who help run this platform on a volunteer basis. Currently, they are in the process of expanding the platform into a full-time venture and are looking for funding and people to help out. Dunya says she feels connected to all of the hard-working entrepreneurs and feels a sense of belonging to a great community, enthusiastic to help people for the greater good.

GET TO KNOW PPE NEEDED

Happen Magazine is Venture Café’s own story book! It allows us to share what’s going on in the local Venture Café communities around the globe! If you want to be featured, please, send us an email at hello@venturecafeglobal.org

GET TO KNOW TECHGROUNDS

We’d like you to meet Saskia Verstege from TechGrounds Rotterdam, member of the Venture Café Rotterdam community.

She has created TechGrounds, tech hubs in vulnerable areas meant to bring digital skills to underserved communities, making tech accessible for everyone.

Through her contacts with Venture Cafe, she managed to arrange 50 assignments for the first coding class TechGrounds will open in Rotterdam in October.

GET TO KNOW PPE NEEDED

CONNECTING...

INNOVATORS...

TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!

GET TO KNOW TECHGROUNDS

CONNECTING...

INNOVATORS...

TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!
OUR TEAM AND AMBASSADORS

TEAM

AMBASSADORS

Venture Café wouldn’t be possible without our wonderful ambassadors. Every week volunteers help us facilitate connections by ensuring Thursday Gatherings runs smoothly.

We are always looking for people who want to help us out and further support our mission!

Are you interested in innovation and do you want to contribute more to Venture Café? Do you want to join a dynamic, international, and friendly group of 55 ambassadors? Then we’re looking for you! To receive more information about these roles please do not hesitate to get in touch.

TEAM@VENTURECAFEROTTERDAM.ORG
OUR BOARD

TEAM

PATRICK POLAK
Managing partner, Newion

VARESKA VAN DE VRANDE
Professor of Collaborative Innovation and Business Venturing, RSM Erasmus University

WILBERT LEK
Managing director, Rotterdam Partners

PETER PAUL VAN VOORST TOT VOORST
Founder, Skoon Energy

JAWAD HANDIZI
Vice President Business Development Western Europe, GE Healthcare

BURCU TAS
Portfolio & Innovation Manager Ice Cream Europe, Unilever

"Venture Café (VC) offers different opportunities to support innovation ecosystem through creative programs, events and collaboration.

I became a VC Board member at the beginning of my expat journey. I have discovered the innovation ecosystem in the Netherlands, have met some passionate people about innovation, have supported my colleagues with VC-Unilever collaborations, have elevated my perspective with different workshops within the diverse, friendly and open-minded VC family.

The genuine dedication and commitment of VC to bring together students, startups, investors and corporates is deeply appreciated."

BURCU TAS
PORTFOLIO & INNOVATION MANAGER
ICE CREAM EUROPE AT UNILEVER
LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021
2021 PROGRAM

December
FUTURE FORWARD
The Next Economy & Philosophy

January
TRANSFORM, INNOVATE, ADAPT.
New Year Resolutions, Goal Setting

February
BEING SMART, RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE
Communities, Cities & Society

March
RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRY INNOVATION
Looking Beyond Profit: Societal Impact, Corporate Social Responsibility

April
HEALTH, SAFETY & SECURITY
(Tech) Innovations to Improve our Safety and Health

May
(DUTCH) DIGITAL DELTA
Blockchain, Big Data & Human Capital

June
CREATIVE COLLECTIVE
Culture, Arts, Architecture & Creative Industries

August
VENTURE SCHOOL
Build Your Business & Skill Development

September
GLOBAL CHALLENGES, LOCAL SOLUTIONS
SDGs: #TheWorldWeWant

October
CAPITAL & GROWTH
Capital & Finance & UpStream Festival

November
PASSION, PURPOSE & IMPACT
Impact Days, Purpose Day, CEW, Stadmakerscongres.
2021 PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- **LSH010 Café**, every first Thursday of the month to connect LS&H players in collaboration with InnovationQuarter, Rotterdam Partners, Erasmus MC and Gemeente Rotterdam.

- **Female Leadership Sequence**, starting March 2021 - a quarterly recurring, get-together dedicated to inspire, connect and empower women.

- **Venture School Program Summer 2021** - supporting those with an idea to kickstart their business during summer months.

- **International “Innovation Bridges”/“Expansion Cafés”** - aimed to support those who are on a mission to internationalize or those who wish to locate in the Netherlands.

**INTERESTED IN BEING PART OF VENTURE CAFÉ’S PROGRAM? EMAIL US!**

**PROGRAM@VENTURECAFEROTTERDAM.ORG**
ISOLATION IS THE ENEMY OF INNOVATION.

LET’S BUILD COMMUNITIES TOGETHER!

LEARN MORE AT VENTURECAFEROTTERDAM.ORG