



BLOG POST By Günther Oettinger  
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# **Guest Blog: Startup hubs converging towards a truly unified European startup ecosystem**

Karen Boers, co-founder & CEO Startups.be & European Startup Network, argues power movements are key for startups to be heard.

Entrepreneurs not only create new business and jobs, new ways to look at the world and interact with the people around us – they also invent and create, they break down and replace. As such, they often challenge the boundaries of legislation and regulation, pushing the barriers towards the emerging future. Bypassing these obstacles is often possible, but sometimes policy makers are required to modernize the framework instead. Yet entrepreneurs don't have a powerful lobby, as they are slaving away 24/7 to safeguard and build their

businesses and teams, putting out today's fires, rather than getting organized to shape their future. So all remained unchanged in many ways for a very long time.

In 2013, Neelie Kroes as Commissioner for Digital Agenda called upon the Startup Europe Leaders Club to craft a [European Startup Manifesto](#), a set of high-impact recommendations to create a better entrepreneurial climate in Europe. Yet many of the recommendations touched upon areas in which European Commission has little or no impact. It was up to the Member States to drive the change home. Still, the spark was there and kept simmering. The startup community started raising up to the challenge and got organised. An entire Startup Manifesto Movement emerged – with entrepreneurs in one country after the other voicing their solutions and suggestions !

**Now three years later, almost every European startup community has created their very own Startup Manifesto – often crowdsourced – and many have had considerable impact on local policy, as testified by the [Startup Manifesto Policy Tracker](#).** Tax shelters were introduced, legislation on e-commerce was modernised, crowdfunding was eased, governments and corporations started buying from startups, the procurement legislation got adapted, a startup test is being developed to stress test all new legislation for impact on startups, and much more!

European Commission stayed on a proactive course,

developing a [Startup Europe](#) program to connect startup hubs across Europe and allow more businesses to start in the EU – and the newly announced “Startup and Scaleup Initiative” will allow even more to grow. Entrepreneurs have also stepped up the challenge individually and started sharing their stories of success, but also on [\(how to learn from\) failure](#). **Understanding that challenges were shifting from starting business to fast-growing companies scaling across Europe, a [European ScaleUp Manifesto](#) was once more crowd-sourced from all those different communities, with clear action points for all involved at any level.**

It's important to have these powerful movements, joining all stakeholders in a single effort to raise the entrepreneurial voice when it really matters. But it's equally important to build data and insights on our European startup DNA, benchmarking the progress in our region to other startup areas around the world and develop data-driven and fact-based decisions – synchronizing efforts at local, regional, national and European efforts across stakeholders and communities.

The [European Startup Network](#) is such an effort, unifying over 20 national startup associations - representing 25.000+ startups all over Europe - to create a common voice and provide data analysis, facilitate international go-to-market and build strong national ecosystems. Continuously collecting and opening up data sets on startups and startup ecosystems (e.g. [European Startup Monitor](#)), allows for more consistent and continuous

research and provides opportunities to benchmark impact and progress. Knowing that speedy access to the market is key for startups to successfully scale, the network will also develop startup guides for every country as well as soft landing programs and pan-European PR, demo & matchmaking programs.

Let it be clear that the entrepreneurial voice is here to stay. And hopefully these voices will help construct a more inclusive world, a tolerant world, one in which change and diversity can be embraced rather than feared. We're on the barricades for all those who wish to develop their passion into their profession – their dreams into reality. **If you're a dreamer, make sure no one holds you back, for there is always a way to change whatever is in your way ! What you can do? [Sign the ScaleUp Manifesto](#) and join the movement !**

And for further reading, here is the blog of Commissioner Oettinger on [ScaleUp](#)