



Diverse Founders Accelerator Impact Report

Authors:
Maud van Merriënboer
Aydan Islamova
Andre Damian

Accelerating the extraordinary

About Tech Netherlands Advocates

Tech Netherlands Advocates is the Dutch chapter of Global Tech Advocates. Headquartered in London, Global Tech Advocates is the only truly international grassroots tech community, uniting the private sector in multiple cities and regions worldwide. More than 20.000 business leaders, experts and investors volunteer their time to campaign for the betterment of the global tech industry. The objectives of Tech Netherlands Advocates are:

Supporting Dutch tech founders through mentoring and funding programmes, especially those with a diverse background.

Promoting greater global collaboration between The Netherlands and the global tech community.

Increasing international awareness and promote the benefits of joining the Dutch tech scene.

Driving more investment into the Dutch start up space, especially to diverse founders.

Building a community of like-minded individuals and companies who get together to have fun.

About the TNLA Accelerator

The Tech Netherlands Advocates accelerator programme offers solutions to underrepresented founders in the Dutch ecosystem. The pilot programme has included startups founded by diverse founders from all over the Netherlands in order to provide equal opportunities and reduce the funding inequality gap.

The programme takes place 3 days per month for 3 months, which allows the accelerator team to extensively follow each startup's progress throughout a longer period of time and gives founders an opportunity to build continuous relationships within and outside of the programme. Our team strives to provide maximum value for each founder. That is why we created a highly customized programme for each start-up based on their current needs, and continuously adapted the programme of the following months to meet the expectations.

The programme allows founders to make the connections they need, progress as individual entrepreneurs and gain the necessary knowledge on further development of their companies. To identify the relevant topics for each start-up, we have thoroughly read through founders' applications, got acquainted with their businesses through other relevant channels and stayed in close contact with all of the founders before and throughout the programme. The outcome? Each founder received an individual schedule with topics only relevant for their company, and, of course, continuous post-programme support from the Tech Advocates network.

Our mentors



Lizanne Atherly



Janneke Niessen



Maurice Bakker



Ton van 't Noordende



Tove Berkhout



Esther O'Callaghan



Nathalie Boevink



Kimberly Ofori



Jip Dresia



Rodrigo Olmedo



Angel Fugueroa



Jessica Ramkema



Ohad Gilad



Jasmijn Rijcken



Robin Keeris



Cinzia Silvestri



Gilles Meijer



Gianluca Valentini



Katerina Nichols



Mathieu Verger

..and many more leaders, founders and investors.

**Robin
Laird**



**Health
Curious**

What is Health Curious?

"Health Curious helps small healthcare providers build their own virtual care programmes. With easy-to-use virtual care software, more medical professionals can digitally support their patients at home. We currently focus on bariatric surgery support. Patients are at the centre of everything we do."

'Being part of Tech Advocates and (...) seeing how possible and close all these opportunities are is just the perfect confidence boost.'

Why did you join TNLA?

'I really loved the perspective on female and underrepresented founders. In hindsight, this is also what made it such a special experience. What I also was hoping to get out of it, was a strong network. We were traveling around last year, I wasn't sure if I would still have a strong network here in the Netherlands, so this programme was just such perfect timing.'

What insights did you gain?

"I feel like everything that has progressed in our business has a seed that started somewhere in the Tech Advocates programme, and I'm so grateful for that. We are a lot more focused on validation instead of product development. I also have a better understanding of the funding landscape, the investor mindset and being able to pitch to them in a strong way.

If we did want to raise a round, I would be equipped to do that, and I now also have the confidence to do that."

What else did you learn?

"I definitely learned a lot of things that will stay with me, but also just meeting other founders was inspiring. Having open discussions, and being able to have powerful and intimate conversations. It's a very lonely journey to start a company. And maybe, as a female founder, people take you a little bit less seriously sometimes.

All of those things compounded sometimes chip away at your mindset. But being part of Tech Advocates, seeing other amazing founders doing their thing, and just seeing how possible and close all these opportunities are is just the perfect confidence boost."

What was it like to be part of the cohort?

"With each of the individual founders, who are such cool people doing amazing things, I have now such a special relationship. There was just a level of intimacy and honesty that was present from the start. As an entrepreneur, you are often in pitching mode or performance mode, but this really felt like we could completely be present and let our guard down. There's a special collaborative energy that makes everyone - founders, funders, and mentors - excited to support you and your business goals."

Iris Skrami



Renoon

What is Renoon?

"Renoon is a SaaS platform that helps merchants communicate sustainability at the point of purchase and win where trust matters. The platform has everything you need to shop sustainably. We are providing a solution for brands and retailers that are investing in sustainability, but struggle in turning it into brand value and consumer trust, distinguishing themselves from greenwashing."

Why did you join TNLA?

"I had a really great impression of the team and what in general the network could bring. It's definitely an amazing programme to expand my network here in the Netherlands. That is what I was missing, because I have connections in London, Italy, and the USA, but I didn't have a group in the Netherlands."

What insights did you gain?

"The programme was so tailored to you as an individual, that it felt like a natural path that helped me to speed up different conclusions, different contacts, different things that I needed in this specific period of time. My biggest learning this month was to respond better to the needs of our company and to find more focus."

Right now, we are completely focusing on sales and growth. And I think what we are building is not as straightforward, which funnily enough I feel is also true for other companies in the cohort, so it was insightful to hear how they have been tackling this as well."

What else did you learn?

"Talking to people who have already been through the fundraising journey has been really helpful. Whenever I talk to a founder that is a bit ahead of me, it's helpful because the person has very recent experience that I can relate to and learn from."

"It is definitely an amazing programme to expand my network in the Netherlands, and that is what I was missing."

What about your fundraising journey?

"We made some connections with potential funders, who we're in discussion with. The plan is to open the next funding round towards the end of the year, and in the next months we will need to do some calculations on how much we want to raise."

Anything else?

"It was great to see Andre was the one building the programme because he had a lot of commitment towards the mission of the programme. And the people he has chosen to be part of it are all great. I've had a really, really great experience with them."

Anieke Lamers



Peekabond

What is Peekabond?

"Peekabond is an interactive video messaging app that connects young children with family members. The platform gives families access to a private account where members can use science-based prompts to create videos for young children. Families create memories together through sharing fun engaging messages with each other, turning family videos into positive screen time."

Why did you join TNLA?

'What attracted me was that there is a huge network of founders behind Tech Advocates. Knowing that there was a whole organization behind it gave me a sense of 'okay, these guys are professionals.' One of my goals was to get more contacts in terms of fundraising. My second goal was to join a community of diverse founders."

'It is good to surround yourself with diverse people to mitigate your own bias. That was something the programme brought me.'

What insights did you gain?

"My priority before the programme was 100% on fundraising. And then my job description, if you will, changed completely to a 100% focus on growth, marketing, and products. I also got some more ideas on how we could potentially pivot."

What else did you learn?

"I think each and every one of the sessions gave me an insight and gave me a very concrete thing to implement. In my PR session for example, I was able to ask so many questions about my current PR strategy, how to reach out to journalists, and how to choose the right angle. I immediately started experimenting with that."

What was it like to be part of the cohort?

"I feel like I really bonded with the group. Even as a group of underrepresented founders, it feels like a very diverse group. I am a female founder, but I am not a Black founder, for example, so there already might be some bias there. It is good to surround yourself with diverse people to mitigate your own bias. That was something the programme brought me."

Sharing what things we run into and how we deal with that. I think that is the most valuable thing, to be in a group with people who struggle with similar things, so you can help each other. Good relationships were built, and we will continue with monthly calls to see how we can keep supporting each other."

What is next for you?

"I'm a first-time founder and I have only been a founder for two years. A lot of people overestimate me because I have been an investor, but I'm humble. I just want to keep learning."

Varsha Tjakoering



IMcoMET

What is IMcoMET?

"IMcoMET has developed a technology that allows to continuously access and control fluid between cells - a new and rich source of bioinformation. This technology is integrated into various devices to accelerate biomedical research and drive personalized medicine forward."

Why did you join TNLA?

"What attracted me was that it was a tailor-made programme that really focused on what we needed as a company, and on what I needed as a founder. One of my bigger goals was to find a mentor, a more experienced med-tech founder who is further in the process and can help us along our journey. This was arranged for us immediately in the first month. We are still in contact with them and they have been very helpful."

What insights did you gain?

"During the Accelerator, we have gained some very practical insights when it comes to sales strategy, monitoring progress, and communicating that to investors."

As a scientist, the way that we market and communicate our product is very specific. One of my mentors showed me that I should build my own personal brand as well, and position myself as a thought leader. All of these things are very important.

During the programme, I could ask some specific questions that are very relevant to our field, such as what the actual sales funnel looks like if you have a med-tech device that you sell to hospitals."

What else did you gain?

"Through the programme, we also built an amazing network with experts who keep supporting and empowering us, even outside of the programme. We have all these people that not just come and give you their advice, tips, tricks and knowledge during the session, but they all tell us that we can reach out to them beyond the Accelerator."

It is very helpful to have these people in our network. It was also amazing to connect with fellow knowledgeable, helpful, and inspirational entrepreneurs."

"It was a tailor-made programme that really focused on what we needed as a company, and on what I needed as a founder."

What is next for you?

"Based on the regulatory insights we will get, I will make a roadmap for the development of our technology. I will also improve our pitch deck, and focus on telling our story better I already started a little bit with building our brand and communicating about it."

Those are things that I will implement in the coming months, or have already started to implement. Thanks to the Accelerator programme, we feel well-equipped to handle our current business challenges and are ready for the next growth phase of our company."

Sartou Djibril



Enlight Ed

What is Enlight Ed?

"Enlight Ed is a two-end platform that helps increase efficiency for students and teachers. Enlight Ed enables teachers to author exercises with steps and targeted feedback that help students develop their problem solving skills. The platform provides an individual approach for students in large groups and tracks their progress. The end result? Increased exam scores. The platform is already available in a number of educational institutions."

Why did you join TNLA?

"I like the way it focused on underrepresented groups because the way I experience the entrepreneurial world and investor landscape is very opaque. This is the case for a regular entrepreneur, and it is even more opaque for those on the periphery. My expectation was to really get a deeper insight, not just the stuff you read about in blogs, but what's really happening behind the stage. I uncovered a lot of information, and it did give me a little bit more visibility."

"We are more aware now how to approach investors, what they're looking for and how to stay in touch with them."

What insights did you gain?

"To grow a business you need capital, and we have accepted that now. It is clear that we can't avoid fundraising. Now it's important to understand what loose ends we need to fix to be able to start this process."

I also learnt that with the growth trajectory ed-tech solutions usually have, we might not be very suitable for venture capital. But the programme made us realize that there are other ways of financing.

Before joining the programme, the way we approached investors was like we were blindfolded. We shot in the dark a lot. Now, we're more aware how to approach investors, what they're looking for and we know how to stay in touch with them.

Even when you send them a cold e-mail and they don't get back to you, the contact is still stored in a CRM. We haven't even thought about these things, but now we are aware of these small tricks."

What else did you learn?

"The programme was very timely for us. With the experts, we had concrete things to discuss, and I would get very good feedback and insights on our most relevant current priorities. I had very valuable discussions with all my mentors and experts."

Maurice walked me through every slide of our pitch deck and told me how investors would look at them. It really helped me to gain a new perspective.

Our pricing strategy session was very helpful. Maybe we were a little bit too fixed in the way we set our pricing, we learned how to be a little bit more flexible and allow for growth."

Nelson Ajulo



Zarttech

What is Zarttech?

"Zarttech is a HR tech company that aims to spread economic opportunities from the West to the abundance of senior IT experts in Africa, enabling them to access high-paying jobs from the comfort of their homes. Our experts from the top 15 African countries with the strongest IT pool fill the demand in the job market, and create sustainable economic benefits for both parties."

Why did you join TNLA?

"It was recommended to me by a trusted connection. They told me that the programme ensures that minority founders gain knowledge about the Dutch market. As a minority founder who was not well integrated yet into the ecosystem, I thought it would be very useful to develop my skills and gain new connections."

What insights did you gain?

"The programme was a big eye-opener for me to start rethinking our scaling and expansion strategy. Before the programme, I was focused on short-term growth. Since the programme, I have started thinking about long-term business development, and how investors view our business."

What else did you learn?

"It was good to learn from founders who have raised funding successfully, and to hear how they have done it. To also learn from the struggles and barriers they faced. It was useful to speak with Dutch founders who have scaled their business successfully, and what steps they took to get there."

Being connected to other founders in the Dutch ecosystem makes you feel that it is possible to succeed. I've never had so many resources in one place before. Through this programme, I've received a large network and pool of resources that I can tap into. I think that's really valuable."

What about your fundraising journey?

"I am more prepared to raise funds now. I feel like the fundraising opportunities are unlimited now! Because of the insights I've gained in the Accelerator, I can be a lot more strategic. Before the programme, I would have responded from a position of not fully being aware of my options. Now I can create a strong fundraising strategy and plan to execute it."

"I have received a large network and pool of resources I can tap into. I think that is really valuable."

What is next for you?

"The programme came at the right time for us. We were already generating revenue and we've validated the product. The Accelerator was a good catalyst for us to take our business to the next level. Our priority right now is to grow our revenue and expand the team. Then, I can start focusing on fundraising."

Programme Team



Andre Damian - Director

Andre leads the day-to-day operations at Tech Netherlands Advocates. Prior to TNLA, he has founded and led two charities, ran Accelerator programmes for five years, supported 40+ social enterprises across five continents, and advocated for children rights at the United Nations. Andre holds an MBA at Quantic University, a law degree, and is a WEF Global Shaper.

Aydan Islamova - Programme support

Aydan is a graduate International Business Administration student at Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her interest in impact-oriented projects led her to becoming part of the team for the Tech Advocates accelerator. Aydan has helped with building the programme and other day-to-day operations.



Maud van Merriënboer - Researcher

Maud is a PhD candidate at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research focuses on the experiences and identities of underrepresented founders in the Dutch start-up ecosystem. She has extensive experience in qualitative and ethnographic research. Maud teaches at the School of Business and Economics and the Faculty of Social Sciences. She joined the TNLA Accelerator as researcher and evaluator.





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