

Press release

Contact: Isabel Box
Title: Senior Marketing & Communications Manager
Tel: +32 (0)2 302 25 51
Mobile: +32 (0)485 31 79 63
Email: ibox@deloitte.com

BELGIAN TECH SCALE-UPS ARE GROWING FASTER THAN EVER

Analysis of ten years of Deloitte's Technology Fast 50 shows that scale-ups are increasingly putting growth ahead of profitability.

Brussels 30 November 2023 - Each year for the past ten years, Deloitte has announced the nominees of its annual **Technology Fast 50**, a list of the country's fastest-growing and most promising technology companies. In honour of its tenth anniversary, the company has analysed ten years of data and published a study on the evolution of the Belgian scale-up landscape over that period. It finds that **Belgian tech scale-ups have never recorded higher growth figures and that, following the example of their American counterparts, they are letting growth take precedence over profits.** The full study can be found [here](#).

Deloitte's Technology Fast 50 has become an influential benchmark for scale-ups in recent years. For ten years in a row, it has brought together the top players from different corners of the Belgian tech scene to measure and rank their revenue growth over the past four years. For companies that have been operating for less than four years, Deloitte organises the Rising Star competition. After a decade, Deloitte is now looking back. How have the scale-ups evolved over the years? Key findings follow.

Belgian tech scale-ups are growing faster than ever

Today's list of the fastest-growing technology companies is more competitive than ever. For example, the revenue growth required to be included in the select group of Fast 50 has increased over the years from 87% in 2014 to more than 200% in 2023. It is harder today than it was a decade ago for a technology company to secure a nomination.

The increasing competition is further highlighted by the upward trend in average growth rates. For instance, the average growth rate among Fast 50 companies was 525% in 2014, while it was 1482% in 2022. Moreover, in the past four editions, all Fast 50 winners achieved an exceptionally high minimum growth rate of 7000%, demonstrating the remarkable progress and increasing maturity of the Belgian technology sector.

Belgian tech scale-ups place growth above short-term profits

The increasing growth rates are no coincidence. Deloitte notes that in general technology companies are investing heavily and increasingly prioritising growth over profit. This has led to a significant decline in EBITDA and EBIT figures among a large proportion of Fast 50 finalists. In 2014 and 2015, almost all finalists showed positive EBITDA figures, but the percentage has steadily declined by an average of 5.2% per year, to 60% by 2023. EBIT margins also experienced a downward trend of 5.4% per year, with only 54% of companies reporting positive EBIT figures in 2023. Overall, EBITDA and EBIT margins declined at annual averages of 10.9% and 25.6% respectively.

The downward trend is less visible when looking at gross margins, suggesting that scale-ups are increasingly investing and thus increasingly choosing growth above immediate profit maximization, with the aim of gaining market share and laying a strong foundation for future expansion.

Media & entertainment, Life Sciences & Health Care and FinTech lead the list, but new entrants look set to take over soon

Three sectors consistently scored higher growth rates than others over the years. The Media & Entertainment category has particularly emerged as a frontrunner, with exceptional average growth rates of almost 600%, driven by pioneers such as Venly, Maxflow and THEO Technologies. The Life Sciences & Health Care and FinTech sectors also showed impressive growth trajectories, with average growth of 525% and 481%, respectively. Fast growers such as Loop Earplugs in Life Sciences & Health Care and Silverfin or Keypoint in FinTech are making their mark.

Although new in the Technology Fast 50, Mobility and Digital Commerce set very impressive average growth rates of 2432% and 629% respectively in the past three editions, with trailblazers such as Optimile or Deliverect. It remains to be seen whether this growth will continue and potentially lead the list in a few years.

Fastest growing technology companies come from Brussels and East Flanders

It is notable that technology companies from Brussels grew the fastest over the past decade, with an average growth rate of 448%. In second place we find East Flanders (398%) and West Flanders (330%). East Flanders specifically stands out, as the province produced 25% of the total number of Fast 50 companies.

In recent years, Limburg has emerged as a strong region for fast-growing scale-ups. The region accounts for the nominees with the highest average growth in 2021 and 2023, driven by the success of companies such as Bullswap, MobieTrain, Nexushealth or UgenTec/Velsera.

Belgium as a seal of quality for start-ups and scale-ups

It is not surprising that the Belgian start-up and scale-ups scene is flourishing. The Belgian ecosystem acts as an ideal test market and accelerator for start-ups. The high-quality threshold allows them to grow into attractive scale-ups. Consequently, many of these companies opt for an exit strategy only after being brought to maturity in the market. This releases new capital that can be reinvested in the further maturation of the ecosystem.

"In Belgium, funding rounds are much smaller, government policies are complex and our culture is rather risk averse. As a result, start-ups must distinguish themselves more to survive, leading to a higher quality threshold. Belgium is therefore an attractive environment for foreign investors to identify promising companies. Our ecosystem is ideal for start-ups to scale and reach a certain level of maturity," says **Sam Sluismans, Programme Leader Deloitte's Technology Fast 50**

Deloitte in Belgium

With more than 5,900 employees in 11 offices in Belgium, Deloitte is the largest organisation in the field of audit, accounting, legal and tax advice, consulting, financial advisory services and risk advisory services.

Our services are aimed at the largest national and international companies as well as at SMEs, the public sector and non-profit organisations. Deloitte Belgium is an independent and autonomous organisation and a member firm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. For the financial year 2023, a turnover of EUR 786 million was realised.

Deloitte Belgium BV is the Belgian affiliate of Deloitte NSE LLP, a member firm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited that focuses on the highest quality in delivering professional services and advice. Its services are based on a global strategy covering more than 150 countries. To this end, the expertise of over 457,000 professionals is available in all continents. For the financial year 2023, the turnover was more than USD 64.9 billion.

Deloitte refers to a Deloitte member firm, one or more associated companies, or Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, which is a private limited liability company in the UK ("DTTL"). DTTL and its member firms are each legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also known as "Deloitte Global") does not provide services to clients. Please visit <http://www.deloitte.com/about> for a more detailed description of the legal structure of DTTL and its member firms.