**PRESS RELEASE**

**SPA©E - The Human Quest, Europe's most impressive space exhibition, opens intergalactic doors**

**Antwerp - April, 23 2022 - With a push on the launch button, minister Hilde Crevits, organizer Jürgen Ingels, Antwerp alderman Erica Caluwaerts and former astronaut Dirk Frimout today opened SPA©E, the most impressive space exhibition ever to be held in Europe. The exhibition takes you on an unforgettable space journey through the past, present and future of space travel - from the first man in space to a residential unit on Mars!**

‘One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind’ - with these now world-famous words Neil Armstrong took the first steps on the moon on July 20, 1969. This feat of technical ingenuity left the world both astonished and amazed. SPA©E now wants to evoke that same excitement with all visitors, both young and old. And you will undoubtedly get that feeling when you face the 7.5m-high 1:1 replica of the former lunar lander!

But there is so much more to see: a replica of the Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the Earth, and replicas of the Vostok space capsule and the ejection seat of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. In the American zone (NASA) you will find 1:1 replicas of both a Gemini and a Mercury space capsule, the predecessors to the Apollo space program. From that same Apollo, the exhibition features a command module and a 1:10 replica of the three-stage Saturn V launch rocket, which was used on numerous lunar missions.

The NASA 3D-printed Mars hub - coming straight from the Design Museum in London - offers a glimpse of the future: if we were to live on Mars, what would that residence look like? The Belgian Xavier De Kestelier was selected by NASA to come up with a design and that result can be admired at the exhibition.

**DIY**

In addition to numerous spectacular space objects to see, there is also plenty to do: in the 'Docking Game' - developed in collaboration with Howest students - you can become an astronaut yourself and try to dock the Soyuz, Crew Dragon or Starliner to the ISS space station.

And in 'Mission astronaut' children are given special assignments: backed up by the audio guide they need to find answers to the quiz questions among the countless space videos, photos and objects.

None other than Lieven Scheire is the voice behind the audio guide and he invites you to discover crazy space anecdotes and fun facts, which is extraterrestrial entertaining!

**Buzzing Belgium**

Our small country may not be or hardly be visible from space, nevertheless Belgium has played and is still playing an important role in space. With Dirk Frimout and Frank De Winne we already had 2 Belgian astronauts in space and they both received a prominent place in the exhibition. For example, you can admire Frank De Winne's original Sokol space suit, but also the 1:1 replica of the 5-ton cockpit of the Space Shuttle Atlantis, in which Dirk Frimout orbited the Earth 143 times.

Belgium is a country of innovative technology entrepreneurs, as demonstrated in the overview of Belgian companies that are currently active in space programmes. For example, the heat-resistant parachute of the Mars lander Perseverance was woven on a weaving machine from the Ypres company Picanol. It is clear that the importance of innovation for our economy cannot be overestimated, explains Hilde Crevits, Flemish Minister of Economy and Innovation: "There are few things that make both young and old dream more than space travel: astronauts, satellites, space capsules, etc. Few people know that Flanders also has a small, but thriving space sector. The docking mechanism of the ISS, for example, is based on Flemish technology. The space sector is a high-tech sector with groundbreaking research, also impacting our daily lives. Just think of the GPS for example. The sector is an engine for innovation and economic growth, which is why space travel has become a prominent element in Flemish policy. We are even securing 11 million euros for the roll-out of the impulse program Space Economy. Making the limitless possibilities of space better known to the general public and making young people enthusiastic about a job in the sector are also part of our mission. And this exhibition equally succeeds in reaching those goals.”

Administrator General Mark Andries of VLAIO - the Flemish Government's contact point for all entrepreneurs in Flanders, including those active in the space industry – agrees with the Minister: "VLAIO helps entrepreneurs grow, even into space. We stimulate and support innovation and entrepreneurship, and contribute to a positive entrepreneurial climate that strengthens sustainable economic growth and job creation."

**Sexy science**

The assumption that becoming an astronaut is primarily a boy's dream seems to be outdated. Girls are also showing more and more interest in science and technology and are keen to start a STEM course. With the exhibition, entrepreneur Jürgen Ingels, organizer of SPA©E and founder of Startups.be I Scale-Ups.eu, wants to stir up that

enthusiasm even more: "With our unique range of replicas, objects, videos and technological gadgets we want the general public to embark on a journey into the past, present and future of space travel. And that future is accessible for everyone, boy or girl. Thanks to the interactivity and accessibility, we hope to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers or even astronauts and to show them that science is sexy!

Erica Caluwaerts, Antwerp alderman for economy, innovation and digitization, is also proud that this unique exhibition has settled in the city of Antwerp: "The impact of space on our daily lives cannot be underestimated. Moreover, space appeals to everyone's imagination. I am therefore enormously honoured that we can bring space a little closer to the inhabitants of Antwerp. Antwerp is ready to welcome anyone who wants to learn more about innovation in and around space."

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**Press information**

High-res pictures of the exhibition can be downloaded via www.xpospace.be/press

For further press inquiries, please contact:

Gloribox [Startups.be I Scale-Ups.eu](https://www.startups.be/" \t "_blank)

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**About the organization & partners**

SPA©E - The Human Quest is an organization of Startups.be I Scale-Ups.eu, founded by tech entrepreneur Jürgen Ingels, and was made possible thanks to the support by the Flemish Government and the city of Antwerp. Together with ESA, VITO, VRT, BELSPO, VRI, VERHAERT and numerous other partners, SPA©E - The Human Quest also highlights the importance of space in terms of climate and innovation, as well as the role that Belgian companies play in this fascinating world.

**Practical info**

- SPA©E - The Human Quest runs from 23 April to 30 June 2022.

- Venue: Antwerp Expo - Hall Avenue (with separate entrance located on Vogelzanglaan 7, 2020 Antwerp)

- A visit lasts 90 minutes on average. Tickets can be booked in advance via www.xpospace.be

- 1 normal ticket costs 14 €. Children's and other discount rates can also be found at www.xpospace.be.