



## **Orange Belgium launches an Orange Digital Center, a major hub for initiatives focused on digital inclusion and innovation**

To help reduce the digital divide, Orange Belgium today opened an Orange Digital Center in the heart of Brussels, in the presence of Petra De Sutter, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Administration, Public Enterprises, Telecommunication and the Postal Services and Mari-Noëlle Jégo-Laveissière, Deputy CEO of Orange Group, in charge of Orange's operational activities in Europe. The Orange Digital Center will serve as a support and development center allowing everyone to acquire and improve their digital and entrepreneurial skills, with activities ranging from digital training to coaching for small businesses and start-ups, offering a genuine trajectory for personal and business growth.

True to its commitment to act as an engaged and responsible operator, Orange Belgium today opened its Orange Digital Center at BeCentral, a major digital hub installed in the Brussels Central Station. Free and open to all, the Orange Digital Center will promote learning based on concrete projects, training courses, workshops and conferences for a wide range of publics: young people, men and women, with or without qualifications, students and job seekers. Consistent with the Group's purpose and its commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Orange committed to opening an Orange Digital Center in all of our operating countries by 2025.

### **A complete ecosystem for acquiring digital skills, testing and fine-tuning actual projects, with the possibility of then accelerating concrete entrepreneurial undertakings**

The Orange Digital Center will constitute a complete ecosystem, as it will serve as an umbrella for different initiatives, creating a real network of opportunities, developed by Orange Belgium and local partners:

- The Digital Academy, an educational space based on strong partnerships:

Firstly, thanks to a deepened partnership with BeCode, the Orange Digital Center will organise long-term training programs to enable participants to become web developers or data analysts with a specific focus on Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and CyberSecurity. They will also have the possibility of specialising in 5G network applications. After their training, the participants will get access to 2-month internships and will be able to rely on a dedicated coach to assist them in their job search.

Secondly, thanks to partnerships with local associations, the Academy will enable publics with less digital literacy to acquire essential digital skills. It will hold frequent events to help people understand how to use the web, their smartphone, etc. It will also organise specific "Train the Trainer" modules to help people support family members or contacts who lack basic digital skills.

- A Solidarity FabLab; a digital production workshop. By learning to use a 3D printer, a laser cutting machine or a digital embroidering machine, the beneficiaries will have the opportunity to prototype and learn by 'doing' through different modules, from one-day training sessions to understand the functionalities of the machines, to one-month training courses to work on actual projects. For the latter, the participants will not only benefit from the technical instruction, but will also be coached to acquire genuine business skills.
- These initiatives come on top of, and will create bridges with, other key Orange programs such as Orange Fab, a start-up accelerator that just launched its 5<sup>th</sup> season in Belgium, focused on AR/VR and the Metaverse, but also Orange Ventures, an Orange Group program that invests in promising start-ups to help them reach the next level and go international.

From acquiring digital skills to testing and fine-tuning actual projects, with the possibility of then accelerating concrete entrepreneurial undertakings: the Orange Digital Center offers a complete trajectory for personal and/or business growth.

Petra De Sutter, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Administration, Public Enterprises, Telecommunication and the Postal Services, officially opened the Orange Digital Center and commented: "Fighting the digital divide is a top priority for me. As many as 4 in 10 Belgians are at risk of digital exclusion. That figure is unacceptably high. We don't want to leave anyone behind. That's why we are investing a total of 6 million euros in projects that make the gap smaller. The new Orange Digital Center will be built thanks to federal support. People who lack certain knowledge or digital skills will be helped here in an easily accessible way. That is why the location, in the heart of Brussels at Brussels Central Station, is a nice bonus."

Xavier Pichon, CEO of Orange Belgium: "As a responsible operator, we are very proud to be able to deliver on one of our top priorities: digital inclusion. By allowing different publics to acquire basic or more complex digital skills, we can help reduce the digital divide. But we are going one step beyond by also addressing the needs of young/female potentials and supporting digital entrepreneurship with the training courses provided by BeCode, our FabLabs and our start-up acceleration program Orange Fab. In this way, we are contributing to positively shaping the society we're active in and are able to create a major network with local and national actors of the civil society."

Frédéric De Cooman, Chief Operating Officer of BeCode: "At BeCode, we are convinced that the future of the job market lies in a subtle mix of advanced technical skills and soft skills. With the launch of a 5G and network module in partnership with Orange, we are offering job seekers an additional specialisation in order to land a job of the future. Orange has been a historical partner since our inception and we have already launched several training courses thanks to this support, notably in the fields of AI, web development, DevOps and cybersecurity. By offering a complementary course in 5G and networking, we want to maximise the employment opportunities for our learners and allow Orange to best meet its talent needs in the Belgian market."

Laurent Hublet, Managing Director of BeCentral: "BeCentral is a place where anyone can learn digital technologies and become an entrepreneur. Our campus has grown from around 1500 square metres four years ago to almost 8000 today. It's an ever-expanding community of digital schools, start-ups and NGO's. We are very excited to welcome Orange's Digital Center in brand-new spaces on campus, offering new learning opportunities to digital entrepreneurs and partnering with our long-time resident BeCode".

Orange Belgium recently created the Orange Belgium Fund, its own corporate fund under the umbrella of the King Baudouin Foundation with the aim of supporting local initiatives. It kicked off the operations of this fund with a major partnership with ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir (TADA), a Brussels-based association that accompanies and coaches socially vulnerable teenagers to help them acquire skills and maximise their chances on the job market.

More info on [orangedigitalcenter.be](http://orangedigitalcenter.be)

### About Orange Belgium

Orange Belgium is one of the major telecommunication operators on the Belgian market, with over 3 million customers, and in Luxembourg, via its subsidiary Orange Communications Luxembourg.

As a convergent player, it provides next-generation connectivity services to residential and business customers through multi-gigabit mobile, cable and optical fiber networks, also relating to the Internet of Things. Its high-performance mobile network is equipped with the latest technologies and benefits from continuous investments preparing for the arrival of 5G. As a responsible operator, Orange Belgium is also investing to reduce its ecological footprint and promote sustainable and inclusive digital practices.

Orange Belgium is a subsidiary of the Orange Group, one of the main operators in Europe and Africa for mobile telephony and internet access and a world leader in telecommunication services for companies.

Orange Belgium is listed on the Brussels Stock Exchange (OBEL).

For more information, go to: [corporate.orange.be](http://corporate.orange.be), [www.orange.be](http://www.orange.be) or follow us on Twitter:

[@pressOrangeBe](https://twitter.com/pressOrangeBe).

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