



Together,
we make Ghent
even better.

COMON



All aboard? Scientists, technologists and creatives? Together, we set course towards a healthier and more enjoyable Ghent. Comon organizes an experimental journey with the citizens of Ghent at the helm.

How? By collecting societal challenges, coming up with solutions, and testing them. The first challenge: "How do we make healthcare more understandable for all citizens of Ghent?" A dream challenge for mayor Mathias De Clercq. According to him, innovation cannot be limited to a laboratory or research institution.

"Listening, collaborating, and the drive to make something better are essential conditions for successful innovation," he says. "As a city, we want to be challenged through Comon to harness the power of co-creation and provide all citizens of Ghent with the opportunity to be healthy and stay healthy."

Collaboration across the boundaries of disciplines. With technology as the engine and combined efforts as the driving force. Or in the words of Piet Demeester, head of imec-IDLab-UGent, UGent Delta:

"Digital technology can make people's lives healthier, happier, and safer... in short, better. Provided that technology serves people, not the other way around. At Ghent University, we believe that we can only achieve this by working together. Across the boundaries of (academic) disciplines."

Technology can help improve the lives of citizens. But can citizens also help improve technology? Roger Lemmens, imec (Director of Digital Technologies), believes so:

"Thanks to Comon, we can involve citizens from the very beginning in imec's research into new technologies. This way, we create technological revolutions tailored to people's needs that make life healthier."

But if we want to achieve that, we need to get people on board. Maike Somers, De Krook Library:

"As a library, we consider it important to make people aware of, and familiar with technology."

The first Comon project is completed. In this brochure we zoom in on that journey, sail past the key highlights and discuss areas for improvement. Enjoy reading.



APPROACH

In what way does Comon want to make Ghent a better city?

CLEAR FOCUS

Comon starts with a clear focus: **one societal challenge** that keeps citizens of Ghent awake at night. A challenge that is relevant to a broad group of citizens and for which a solution really improves our society.

STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

Comon works according to the principles of **'design thinking'**. More specifically: we explore the problem, brainstorm possible solutions, develop prototypes and test them, and finally evaluate.

TANGIBLE SOLUTIONS

Comon makes solutions **tangible and testable**. Not just thinking but also doing. That's how we make a difference.

MAKING PROGRESS

Comon consists of an enthusiastic group of doers. You can feel that energy up to the top of Ghent's Belfry. **Not just words, but actions too.**



EXPERIMENTAL MINDSET

Comon creates a **safe environment** to try, fail and iterate. A space that stimulates thinking outside the box.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Comon works for and together with citizens. We give voice to the citizens of Ghent and involve them in the solutions. After all, **there's an inventor in everyone.**

COLLABORATION

As a matchmaker, Comon fosters encounters between researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers and citizens. **An unconventional collaboration of people who would not often cross paths.** With that unique blend of different disciplines, we inspire and push boundaries.

PHYSICAL LOCATION

Comon has a large, central location where partners and participants of activities meet. **We open our doors** to a wide audience.

EMPOWERING PARTNERS

Different partners help Comon move forward. Backed up by their expertise, we're able to move mountains. **In return, Comon helps them achieve their goals.**

BROAD COMMUNICATION

Comon aims to reach as many people as possible. To inform them and give them a voice. That's why we keep our **communication accessible**. Comon also serves as a platform between researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers and citizens.



WHY COMON MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

What was the added value for the people who participated? We asked them directly.

MAXIM



Personal development

“You learn a tremendous amount. Even if you know nothing about business, how to pitch, or develop ideas... Everything is explained to you. Thanks to the mix of people with different backgrounds, you gain a richer insight. Truly fascinating.”

Maxim Desmet, podiatry student,
Artevelde University of Applied Sciences

Engaging encounters

“Comon brought together a lot of different people, sometimes making me wonder: where did they find all of them? Engaging encounters. Also, I’m amazed by the amount of expertise in Ghent. It has definitely expanded my network.”

Arantxa Wille, BlueHealth
Innovation Center



DIRK

Domain expertise

“Comon is more than just exchanging knowledge. It’s also about creating new knowledge. I observed this during the presentation of the Make-a-ton. I was impressed.”

Peter Pype, Ghent University

Methodological expertise

“Through Comon, I acquired new knowledge. For example, how an innovation process works and how to go from a challenge to a tangible prototype. And everyone learns from each other.”

Dirk Martens, pain patient

New collaborations

“Comon makes it easy for us to explain on a European level what the library is doing and why we are in a partnership with Ghent University and imec. Moreover, it has led us to join an Erasmus+ project with Aarhus and Lisbon.”

Krist Biebaw, De Krook Library

Explaining complex stories

“At imec, we work with complex technologies. Communicating about them to a broad audience is not easy. An initiative like Comon helps to make those complex, often abstract technologies tangible for citizens and in this way, to better understand their perspectives on these topics.”

Roger Lemmens, imec

Finding meaning

"Innovation is also about communicating and inspiring. This dynamic is clearly reflected in the videos, social media and website of Comon, where you always get a nice overview of what's happening."

Tom Van Nieuwenhove, City of Ghent



An even better Ghent

"To me, Comon is a personal commitment. I have thrown myself into it with heart and soul, even after working hours. I want to work in-depth with the network and find solutions. Sooner rather than later."

Henk Maes, General Hospital Sint-Lucas

TESSA



Fun and well-being

"I think Comon is an incredibly fun team. That's why I enjoy working on the project. It reminds me a bit of a start-up. You can feel the entrepreneurial mindset. Just look at what Comon has achieved. Fantastic, isn't it?"

Freddy Mortier, Ghent University

Real solutions

"The reason I said 'yes' to this is because I truly feel that Comon is getting things moving. Something tangible is happening, solutions are being developed. It's time well invested."

Tessa Kerre, Hematologist
Ghent University Hospital /
Ghent University

PHASES

A healthy city is not built overnight.
That's why we opt for a step-by-step approach.



PHASE 1



“How can we make healthcare more understandable for everyone?”

Leyla Yüksel,
Ghentian physician

PHASE 1

Collect challenges

EXPLORE CHALLENGES

Comon listens to Ghent's society. What keeps citizens of Ghent awake at night? What is missing to make Ghent an even better city? We listen to citizens through an **online platform** and **inspiring events**. For this initial Comon project, we gather **39 challenges**. All citizens of Ghent (and Ghent-lovers) can vote for their favourite challenge.



SELECT A CHALLENGE

489 citizens of Ghent make their voices heard, amounting to **654 votes**. Now the experts get to work. For their final selection, they consider additional criteria such as Comon's available expertise, the areas in which we can make a difference, the scope of the challenge... We select the challenge: “How can we make healthcare understandable for everyone living in Ghent?”



PHASE 2

Explore problems



MAP PROBLEMS

Before we embark on our search for solutions, we explore the selected challenge. What are the problems at hand? Who is already working on them? To find out, we consult (practicing) experts, researchers and domain experts. We also identify existing (technological) solutions and investigate why the problem still persists. For the first Comon project, we talk to **67 experts**. Through in-depth interviews and playful activities, we stimulate discussion. The matchmaking event on little boats serves as an anchor point. Equally valuable are the conversations with citizens during a multilingual **Filocafe** and the **Dialogue tables**.

SELECT PROBLEMS

A challenge becomes manageable when you break it down. We delve into the various subproblems to address a few concrete ones in the next phase.

PHASE 2



“With diverse perspectives,
you harvest the most
insightful ideas.”

Jeroen Bourgonjon,
UGent Delta

PHASE 3



“Comon is an ode to imagination.”

Ben Robacyst,
imec-mict-UGent



PHASE 3

Brainstorm solutions

CREATIVE BRAINSTORM

All brains on deck. Everyone who holds Ghent dear is invited to brainstorm solutions. We set aside technological, practical, and other limitations and let our creativity flow during co-creation workshops. For the first Comon project, **nine innovative ideas** emerge. We highlight them through an exhibition.

We are particularly interested in the opinions of the citizens of Ghent. That's why we hop on our **cargo bike** and travel through different neighbourhoods for a week to gather feedback. **Over 90 citizens of Ghent** share their thoughts.

SELECT SOLUTIONS

42 students from various disciplines continue working on this multitude of innovative ideas during the **Make-a-ton**. Under the supervision of experts, they transform some of these wild ideas into nine initial prototypes.



PHASE 4

Experiment

EXPERIMENT WITH SOLUTIONS

Enough talk, time to roll up our sleeves. During the **Microlabs**, we set up a real experiment for the first time. How? Diverse teams, composed of engaged citizens, researchers and entrepreneurs, turn into **inventors**. They further shape and develop some of the innovative ideas from previous phases. After that, they create prototypes and test them out. There is room to experiment and to fail, to be creative and to dare. Technologists are ready to assist the teams in **prototype development**. And then there's the moment of truth: during **Experiment cafes**, the inventors present their

prototypes for the first time. Everyone can come and **test them, and most importantly, provide feedback**. Does it work well? What is still missing? What can be improved?

MAKE SOLUTIONS SUSTAINABLE

The final step is connecting the Microlab teams to some of our partners. These partners can support them in further developing prototypes into solutions and services **accessible to as many people as possible**.



PHASE 4



“Creating a prototype in just five days? It’s possible!”

Nell Vanhansewyck,
imec

PHASE 5



“Comon is very dynamic.
It makes things happen.”

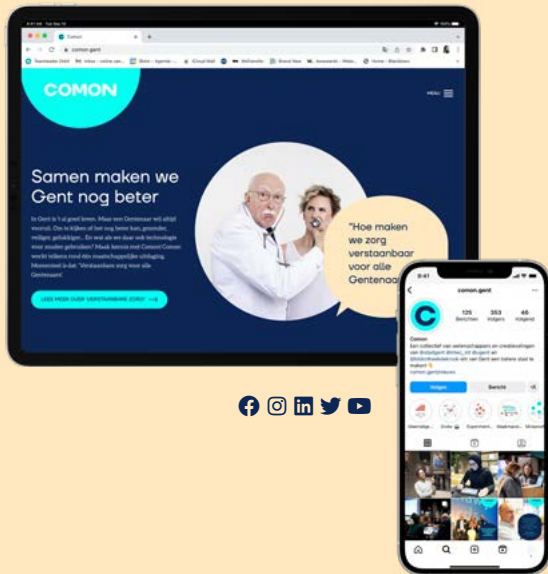
Tom Van Nieuwenhove,
City of Ghent



PHASE 5

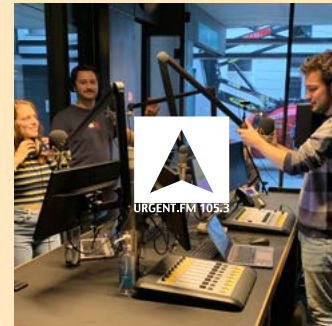
Evaluate and learn

At the end of the Comon project, we evaluate our approach and way of work. We talk to everyone who contributed to Comon. This includes organizing evaluation workshops with partner organizations. Additionally, we interview various stakeholders, such as citizens, researchers, entrepreneurs and policymakers. Why? By learning from the evaluation, we can improve the next Comon project. This way, we not only make Ghent even better, but also ourselves.



ONLINE

- 38,000 unique website visitors
- 2,000 followers on social media
- 30 newsletters sent to 800 contacts, 43% open rate



RADIO

- Live radio coverage during the Make-a-ton by Radio2 and Urgent.fm
- Radio2 interviews about two of our Microlabs

BROAD COMMUNICATION



PARTNERS

- Exhibition at De Krook
- Portraits of citizens of Ghent in the City Magazine, De Krook Library newspaper, and the Avansa regio Gent magazine
- Portraits of Ghent University staff in the DurfDenken magazine



PRESS

- Make-a-ton and two of our Microlabs featured on vrt.nws, Radio2 and HLN
- One of our Microlabs featured in De Morgen
- Mediawijs Innovation Award featured on vrt.nws



SOME OF OUR EVENTS

Comon is a citizen participation project. That means we aim to involve as many citizens of Ghent as possible. This helps increase support, raise awareness and encourage interaction. The ideal catalyst for this? Various events in collaboration with partner organizations Avansa regio Gent, Urgent.fm and BlueHealth Innovation Center. Here are some of our activities.



DAFALWADDE FESTIVAL

A vibrant festival where visitors playfully discover Comon and the theme of understandable healthcare. You can engage in philosophical discussions, experiment, reflect, and yes, even have conversations with a Living Book. It's wild.



MAKE-A-TON

Students from various backgrounds tackle the selected challenge together, under the supervision of experts. The result? Innovative solutions with a touch of technology, transformed into prototypes.

LIVING LIBRARY

Everyone is a walking book. In a Living Library, you can borrow a living book, meaning you have an intimate conversation with someone who entrusts you with a story about vulnerability. The goal? To listen without filters and foster connection.



EXPERIMENT CAFE

The prototype developed in a Microlab is presented here for the first time to a broad test audience, including patients, healthcare professionals, technologists and citizens. In exchange, they provide valuable feedback.

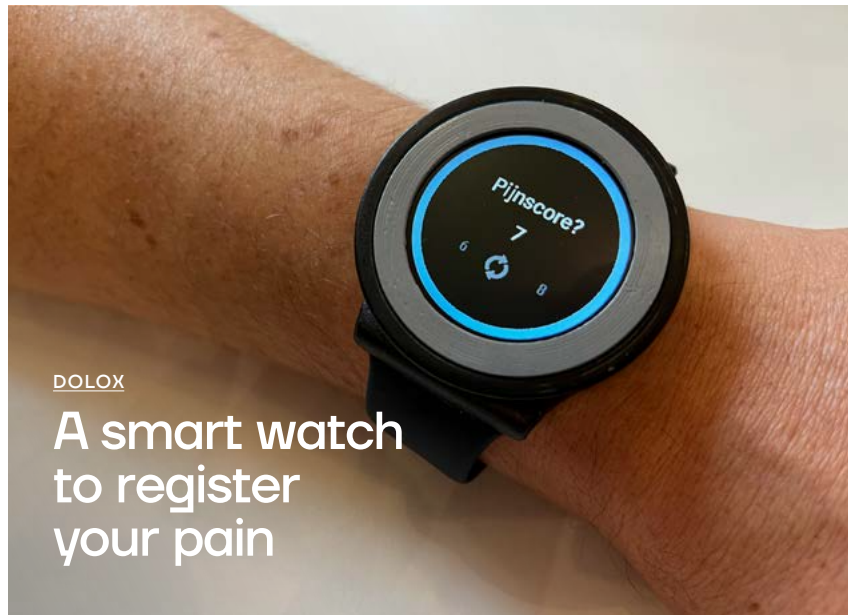


DIALOGUE TABLES

Citizens talk to each other about the selected challenge. Together with an experienced facilitator, they share personal experiences, dream about the future and contemplate the ethical aspects of technological development. In multiple languages, because at Comon we want to welcome all citizens of Ghent.



PROTOTYPES OF OUR MICROLABS



DOLOX

A smart watch to register your pain

What if... there was a smart device that registers your pain and communicates it to the doctor? No more misunderstandings about the pain you experience. Because not everyone can express pain equally well. Especially older people. Dolox was primarily designed for them. A simple device with only two buttons. Nothing more. Patients indicate their pain level using the dial. With a single button press, the watch records it. At a later time, doctors read that data and can propose the appropriate treatment based on precise information.

The minds behind Dolox

Maxim, Jeroen, Dirk,
Lotte & Tomas.



RINGME

A telephone bot for non-native speaking patients

What if... there was an intelligent telephone bot that calls patients in their own language before a doctor's appointment? After all, a consultation is only successful if you understand each other. RingMe asks a number of questions and checks if the patient still plans to attend the consultation. Afterwards, RingMe provides information on how the patient can prepare.

The goal? Patients show up better prepared for their doctor's appointments. The hospital can save unnecessary costs, such as those of an interpreter, when patients follow through with their appointments. And the patient feels better heard and helped. RingMe is there primarily for the patient. It shows how one phone call can save lives.

The minds behind RingMe

Henk, William,
Lucie & Youri.

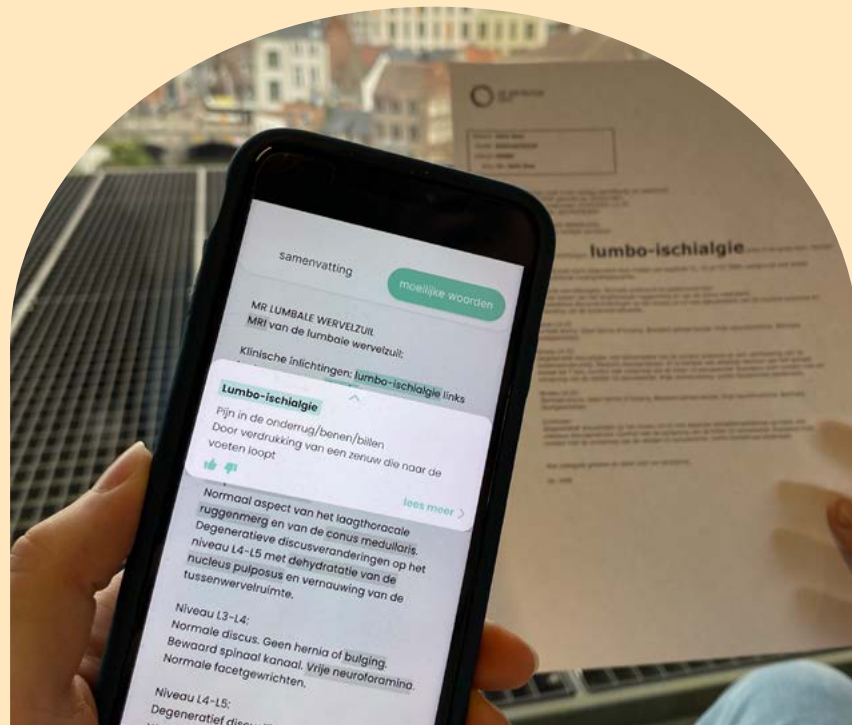
SPEXTER

An app that translates your medical report to understandable language

Do you want to understand your medical files? Not an easy task, because most reports of your tests and consultations are full of medical jargon. Spexter helps you understand as much of these reports as possible. You scan a (digital or analogue) document from your record, and the app digitizes the text. If there are medical terms in that text that you don't understand well, you can click on them, and Spexter will provide more explanation in understandable terms.

The minds behind Spexter

Marie, Thomas, Anton, Alina & Stephanie.



MIA

A web tool that matches patients and psychological care providers



Do you have symptoms of burnout or depression? Do you need a psychiatrist or a psychologist? Which therapy is right for you, and where can you find a suitable care provider? Many people struggle with these questions. The result? They don't feel a connection with their care provider and hop from one to another. Even worse, they give up.

MIA wants to prevent this based on a few simple questions. How? With a web tool to find personalized psychological help. By answering questions about your needs, you get an overview of the best possible matches. This way, as a patient, you can find a care provider that suits you more quickly.

The minds behind MIA

Mathilde, Jessica, Kathy, Nora, Frans & Valentijn.

COMON



“Together,
we make Ghent
even better. And
that works best
when we have
some fun in the
process.”

Pauline De Wolf,
Coordinator Comon



Want to participate?
Let us know!
hallo@comon.gent | comon.gent

Want to learn more about
the 1st Comon project?
Read the final report.



imec



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