



Press release  
April 11, 2018

**EVERYONE CAN BE A BUSINESS ANGEL!  
ASTER AND SOWEFUND ARE TEAMING UP  
TO CREATE A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN VENTURE CAPITAL  
AND CROWDFUNDING: ASTER<sup>CROWD</sup>**

*Thanks to a shared vision of entrepreneurship and innovation, Sowefund, a crowdfunding platform, and Aster, a venture capital firm specializing in the digital transformation, have announced the launch of the Aster<sup>crowd</sup> program. This unique program for financing and supporting start-up companies selected by Aster, through joint investments with the Sowefund crowdfunding community, is intended to revitalize the financing of innovation in France and offer everyone the opportunity to become a business angel alongside an investment fund.*

**A shared desire: to professionalize and democratize investment on behalf of entrepreneurs**

Through this partnership, Aster and Sowefund will offer financing to selected companies through an investment and support from an investment fund combined with additional contributions from the crowdfunding community of the Sowefund platform.

The selected companies may therefore receive customized support as well as an additional source of financing along with that provided by Aster, all while offering individuals the possibility of supporting the real economy alongside a management company.

Since its creation in 2014, Sowefund has always sought to offer individuals the chance to invest alongside investment professionals in young, innovative French start-up firms with strong growth potential. This partnership now enables Sowefund to offer different investment opportunities, at more advanced stages of maturity, and thereby provide new opportunities to the 45,000 members of its platform.

As a leader in French innovation capital, Aster has backed more than 60 entrepreneurial teams in their efforts to transform the mobility, energy and industry sectors. With the launch of the Aster<sup>crowd</sup> program, the management company now adds crowdfunding to its quiver of support for start-ups.

Meanwhile, for the first time Aster also lends its expertise in identifying young companies with growth potential for a community of individuals who can thereby become genuine business angels.



*“Aster is thrilled by this unique partnership. In addition to providing an additional source of financing for companies we support, this association also opens up investment opportunities to the public that are often only available to venture capital. This partnership is therefore highly symbolic. French private equity has long maintained a relatively defensive posture with respect to crowdfunding, which is seen as either a bit player in the market or a potential rival. Aster<sup>crowd</sup> instead seeks to demonstrate the complementary aspects of the two worlds and enable everyone to become a business angel working with us.”*

Jean-Marc Bally, Managing Partner, Aster

*“Since its creation, Sowefund has sought to offer French savers the opportunity to access high-quality, meaningful investment products that are generally available only to investment professionals. This partnership is a first in France, and we are excited to be able to team up with a leading market participant in the ecosystem of innovation financing.”*

Benjamin Wattinne, Co-founder, Sowefund

### **The start-up company Optiréno kicks off the program**

Aster and Sowefund are thus officially launching this partnership with the start-up company Optiréno, a leader in global and sustainable housing renovation. Created in 2009 with backing from Saint-Gobain Group, it has since opened nine agencies in France and been involved in the successful completion of more than one thousand renovations.

As part of this transaction, a tranche of €500,000 will be reserved exclusively for members of the Sowefund community.

In September 2018, an initial collaboration with Sowefund was implemented for ekWateur, an Aster portfolio companies since 2016. This leading independent and alternative French supplier of energy then attracted 600 individual investors and raised more than €1 million invested through a holding company on the crowdfunding platform.

**About Aster:**

Aster is a venture capital firm with a presence in the world's leading innovation hubs: Cambridge (UK), Tel Aviv and San Francisco. Since 2000, we have backed entrepreneurs who are reshaping their markets with unique products and services. Specializing in mobility, energy and industry, we open our investment prism to all subjects involving the digital transformation. We finance start-ups at all stages of development, preferably starting with seed funding.

More than just an investor, we act as a catalyst for entrepreneurs by having them take advantage of our networks of experts, influencers and managers. From marketing to recruitment, our commitment to the growth of our portfolio companies also involves the commitment of our dedicated Operations teams, our innovation strategy consulting firm (Aster Fab) and a crowdfunding branch to further expand opportunities.

Solairedirect (acquired by Engie in 2015), Digital Lumens (acquired by Osram in 2017) and Avantium (IPO in 2018) are among our notable success stories.

**About Sowefund:**

Sowefund is the specialist investment platform for French start-ups. It enables everyone to become a shareholder of promising young companies on the same terms as investment professionals. Since 2014, the platform has enabled 38 start-ups to raise more than €30 million to accelerate their growth. With a goal of democratizing investment in innovative companies and offering French citizens the possibility of investing their savings meaningfully by supporting the real economy, Sowefund proposes to invest in innovative projects that have first been selected and analyzed by professionals. Sowefund also sponsors events and meetings throughout the year. Comprised of experts in the sector, Sowefund is a member of France Angels, recognized by the French Financial Markets Authority (AMF) and registered with Orias as a crowdfunding advisor (*Conseiller en Investissements Participatifs - CIP*).

For more information: [sowefund.com](http://sowefund.com).

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