PRESS RELEASE
HOPLR RAISES 1 MILLION EURO FOR NEXT PHASE:
THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Brussels/Ghent/Waregem, 22 March 2023 – **The Belgian start-up, Hoplr, has just completed its fourth round of raising capital, which generated investments of 1 million euro. Thanks to investment funds from Matexi, CAREvolution and Belfius, Hoplr can now embark on the next phase in the age of Artificial Intelligence.**

Hoplr was established in 2014 as the social network that brings neighbours closer together. The Hoplr platform enables local residents to connect with each other, organise community activities, exchange help or items, find a babysitter or local plumber – and so on. Currently, **more than 850,000 families in nearly 3,000 neighbourhoods** use Hoplr – 72% of them more than once a week.

Hoplr works with **over 150 local authorities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Turkey**, which use the platform for neighbourhood assistance, communication and civic participation. Over the past year, the company has undergone a strategic metamorphosis. Not only has Hoplr prepared itself for further international growth, but it has also added to its offering, creating three standalone or combinable community engagement solutions: Neighbourhood Network, Public Participation and Neighbourhood Concierge. Hoplr is now ready to take the next step: into the age of Artificial Intelligence.

"With Hoplr, Belfius Insurance wants to fully support the connection between people via local neighborhood networks. Making our society and citizens stronger and more resilient fits perfectly in our role as a Belgian bank-insurer. With the Neighborhood Concierge, Hoplr now also ensures that citizens can live longer in the neighborhood that they love and where they get help where and when they need it" says **Frédéric Van Der Schueren, CEO of Belfius Insurance.**

Neighbourhood Concierge, innovation in preventative care

Hoplr has spent much of the past year building a new service for vulnerable citizens, called the Neighbourhood Concierge. The role of the Neighbourhood Concierge can be filled by a social worker or by someone from the local council. This person can be reached by phone and acts as a 'bridge', calling on neighbours if someone needs some small jobs doing or if they could use some help in the garden or are looking for someone to run errands. Hoplr makes it possible

to take a quick look to see if there is a possible match in the area for the job in hand. The new funds raised will allow us to use Artificial Intelligence to make our "smart matchmaking software" even more efficient and effective. As a result, vulnerable citizens will receive the assistance they need, faster and tailored to their needs. In June, Hoplr plans to share the results of a successful pilot project in Brussels at the European Social Services Conference in Malmö, (Sweden).

"To meet the challenges posed by an ageing population, we need solutions that complement or expand the forms of assistance already in place," **says Jo Dumortier, CEO CAREvolution**. *"Caring neighbourhoods where a range of local help is easily accessible and where different generations can help and support each other have an important role to play in this. We firmly believe that Hoplr's solutions – particularly the Neighbourhood Concierge – can provide a major springboard in this regard."*

"Vulnerable groups often have no access to digital platforms or older people simply don't not engage with mobile apps, whereas there is great need for care and social contact," **adds Jennick Scheerlinck, founder of Hoplr**. *"We have started working internally to serve that target audience anyway and now want to make handling requests for assistance even more efficient by implementing AI."*

AI for Neighbourhood Network and Public Participation, too

This new investment will also enable the two other solutions – Neighbourhood Network and Public Participation – to receive a significant update in terms of AI. For example, existing semantic and sentiment analysis will be taken to the next level. It means that new insights can be generated for each neighbourhood (e.g. a much-discussed intersection, some form of nuisance, or concerns within the community, etc.), based on anonymised and aggregated neighbourhood messages (fully in line with European GDPR privacy legislation). This will enable local authorities to keep their finger on the local pulse much better and help them meet the needs of every neighbourhood. The processing of participation projects (such as open questions, ideas, feedback, etc.) will also be fully automated using AI.

"There is a great social need for more cohesion, away from individuals living next to each other without any contact. Hoplr is a powerful tool to achieve this, neighborhood by neighbourhood", **says Gaëtan Hannecart, Chairman of the Investment Committee at Neighborhood Developer Matexi**

"Over the past five years, we have been building an all-in-one platform for community engagement, step by step," **adds Jennick Scheerlinck, founder of Hoplr**. *"Today, Hoplr combines 3 powerful solutions for local government on one platform. We are definitely ready for the age of Artificial intelligence."*

About HOPLR:

Hoplr – pronounced "hopler" – is a Belgian initiative that was set up in 2014 by Jennick Scheerlinck and Jonas Heirwegh to reflect their social vision and conviction. Hoplr shifts the focus from the individual to the local community and aims to harness the power of the collective to anticipate tomorrow's societal challenges, such as ageing, neighbourhood care, inclusion and civic participation. Hoplr gives you easy access to neighbourhood social capital such as people, knowledge, time, materials and infrastructure.

Hoplr offers local residents a digital neighbourhood network (hoplr.com, iOS, Android) for inclusion, civic participation and neighbourhood care. The focus is on social interaction between residents and engagement within the neighbourhood. At the moment, Hoplr is used in over 3,000 neighbourhoods by in excess of 850,000 households, with more than 72% of them going online for the service at least once a week. Hoplr works with around 150 local authorities in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Turkey.

Hoplr provides local authorities, utility companies, organisations and project developers with a service dashboard (**services.hoplr.com**) featuring 3 solutions for community engagement:
- Neighbourhood Network
- Citizen Participation
- Neighbourhood Concierge

Hoplr has also won a number of international awards in recent years:
- Seal of Excellence from the European Commission for innovation, impact and implementation
- European Social Services Award for best social technology tool
- World Summit Awards for civic engagement

Photographer:
Joachim Van Belleghem

Press contacts:

Hoplr
Jennick Scheerlinck, +32 485 51 33 84, jennick.scheerlinck@hoplr.com
www.hoplr.com

Matexi
Kristoff De Winne, +32 478 50 56 86, kristoff.dewinne@matexi.be
www.matexi.be/pers

CAREvolution
Jo Dumortier, +32 476 49 59 09, jo.dumortier@carevolution.be
www.carevolution.be

Belfius Bank & Insurance
Ulrike Pommée, +32 2 222 02 57, ulrike.pommee@belfius.be / press@belfius.be
www.belfius.be