

Colruyt Group Academy in Hasselt celebrates its 10th anniversary

11.9.2026 - | Colruyt Group

A look back at a wonderful decade with over 50,000 participants in the various interactive workshops held in the provincial capital of Limburg.

On Tuesday 15 September, the Colruyt Group Academy (CGA) in Hasselt will celebrate its tenth anniversary. Since it opened 10 years ago, 3,414 workshops have taken place, with 43,066 participants cooking, learning about BBQ techniques, making sushi, exploring aromatherapy and personal care products, and so much more. Connection and inspiration have been at the heart of it all for a decade.

10 years of learning and enjoyment in Hasselt, for young and old

Since 2012, the Colruyt Group Academy (CGA) has been organising workshops, webinars and social events centred around five key themes: nutrition, health, sustainability, family life and budget management. With ten locations now spread across Belgium, the Academy aims to bring people together and inspire them with accessible activities, practical tips and opportunities to share ideas.

Colruyt Group Academy Hasselt first opened its doors in September 2016 as the seventh meeting place and can look back on a wonderful decade of connecting and inspiring people.

The most popular cookery workshops for adults in Hasselt were the sessions where they were introduced to world cuisine and could explore various BBQ themes. The workshops where parents get stuck in with their children on arts and crafts and cooking are also very popular and remain so. In total, 3,141 workshops took place, attracting 43,066 participants.

For children on their own, too, CGA Hasselt has been and remains a great venue over the years for celebrating their birthdays, for example. 824 children held their parties there, amounting to a total of around 9,000 children taking part. During these parties, parents are completely taken care of whilst the children enjoy a brilliant afternoon.

A place in the region for connecting consumers and businesses for 10 years

Amelia Goossens, who is in charge, has been running the Academy in Limburg's provincial capital since it first opened. She says: *"What I've always found so heart-warming are the friendships that form during these workshops. You have people who come here all on their own and then go home – and even arrange to meet up again – with a cooking buddy. We even once had a participant who met her boyfriend here. Even after 10 years, I still get a real buzz when I see people walking in here for the first time and being surprised by the space and the unusual, 'cosy' home-from-home feel. Even after a workshop has finished, people compliment us on the venue. That's when I feel proud of my 'second' home."*

Local businesses have also made use of the venue in Hasselt: no fewer than 135 corporate events have been held there, attracting over 2,000 participants. *"In terms of the business side of things, we still see a great deal of potential in the region. Together with my colleague Wendy, we'll therefore be focusing fully on renting out our rooms and organising team-building events in the future,"* says Amelia.

There is also room for completely new initiatives: for instance, CGA Hasselt – just like the other Academies – will open its doors for a day at the end of November to organisations wishing to carry out projects in aid of De Warmste Week and looking for a place to do so together.

10 years of local partnerships

A decade of presence in the region also means 10 years of local partnerships. In recent years, CGA Hasselt has taken part in vegan events organised by PXL University of Applied Sciences, as part of final-year students' dissertations. The 'Hippo and Friends Type 1 Diabetes Fund' uses the CGA kitchens to cook alongside dietitians, parents and children, teaching them new recipes and providing information. A long-standing partnership with Okra is also in place.

On 15 September, people from the region are welcome to come along for a bite to eat and a drink from 6 pm to 9 pm. There will be an opportunity to discover the full range of products and to win a place on a workshop.

10 years of CGA Hasselt: I'd like to give you a huge pat on the back!

September 2026

It's impossible to explain in a single sentence what makes a workshop at the Colruyt Group Academy so fascinating. I've already taken part in over 50 workshops – mainly cookery workshops – and all sorts of webinars, and to be honest: I still find them enjoyable and interesting. I've been an enthusiastic participant right from the start, and that's all down to the extra dimension that Colruyt Group brings to its activities: namely, its focus on the environment, fair trade products and the conscious choice of themes in which sustainability plays a key role.

The strength of the CGA workshop lies mainly in their approach, which takes place in their lovely venue. Working around a theme and the carefully considered choice of recipes ensure that the end result of an evening's cooking forms a beautifully cohesive whole. The additional background information we receive about the dishes, the cooking traditions of the country or region associated with the theme, practical tips and tricks, and specific ingredients is also a welcome bonus. As a result, I've learnt a great deal – indeed, I've even pushed my own boundaries.

A big thank you for this goes to the tutors. For instance, in the early years, I was introduced – in an accessible way – to vegetarian cuisine (the 'easy veggie' workshop); this sparked my interest and made me curious about more vegetarian dishes and international vegetarian cuisine. I've taken part in all those themed workshops, and we now often eat vegetarian meals. I also attended an introductory workshop on sourdough baking, which once again sparked my curiosity to learn more. I've now been baking my own sourdough bread for quite some time. I can tell the same story about fermentation. Isn't that great!

It's not just about gaining knowledge and practical experience. Attending a workshop at CGA is also a social occasion; I've made some lovely friends there.

The warm welcome at the start, the brilliant service and their friendly and professional manner towards the participants make such a workshop a brilliant evening. With complete confidence, I've treated a friend to a workshop for her birthday a few times now, because I just know it can't go wrong!

When, after an evening of cooking, you can taste all the dishes together, don't have to do any washing-up and can go home with a lovely 'goodie bag'... What more could you want?

Thank you so much for the lovely moments I've already experienced with you! I'm really looking forward to what's yet to come!

Monique Rutten

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