

THE FOURTH EDITION OF THE ZERO CLEANTECH ACCELERATOR KICKS OFF

- *The fourth edition of Zero begins today with 12 startups entering the acceleration program's first phase;*
- *selected from over 260 Applications, 40% of which are international, the startups will spend the next two months advancing their market strategy and developing Proofs of Concept with Zero's corporate partners.*

Rome, December 5, 2024 – The fourth edition of **Zero**, the **Cleantech Accelerator of CDP Venture Capital's National Network**, officially kicked off today at the Gazometro Hub in Rome. Powered by **Eni** as the main partner through its entrepreneurship school **Eni Joule**, the program is managed by **Zest** and **Elis**, both co-investors alongside CDP Venture Capital, with the backing of leading corporate partners including **Acea**, **CNR**, **Microsoft**, **Vodafone**, **SACE**, and **Saipem**, and with support from **ESA**.

Following a call for startups that attracted **over 260 applications** - more than **40% of which were international**, coming from **35 different countries** - **12 cleantech startups have been selected** to join the first phase of the acceleration program.

These startups, specializing in innovative solutions for decarbonization, sustainable development of production systems, and infrastructure and land management, represent the forefront of cleantech innovation. Notably, 30% of them are leveraging cutting-edge Earth Observation technologies to drive their solutions.

During the initial two-month phase, participants will engage in two key growth tracks:

1. **Business Acceleration** – Focused on fast-tracking the go-to-market process for their solutions.
2. **Solution Integration** – Dedicated to designing and implementing experimental use cases (Proofs of Concept) in collaboration with mentors from corporate partners.

At the end of this phase, all startups will participate in **Pitch Day**, where up to five startups will be selected to receive a pre-seed investment of €120,000, funded by CDP Venture Capital, Zest, and Elis. Additionally, corporate partners will identify startups to continue working with on feasibility studies and extended pilot programs.

Industry-Driven Collaboration for Sustainable Growth

The Zero program goes beyond traditional acceleration by integrating industrial experimentation with leading corporate partners, fostering an ecosystem approach that accelerates sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship.

*"We are thrilled to launch the fourth edition of the ZERO Accelerator, which represents a remarkable opportunity to invest in startups shaping the future of sustainability and the green transition," commented **Stefano Molino, Senior Partner and Head of the Accelerator Fund at CDP Venture Capital**. "We strongly believe in the potential of the next generation of entrepreneurs and are proud to support their growth journey. We eagerly look forward to discovering the transformative solutions this startup cohort will bring".*

"Today, we welcomed the 12 newly selected startups to our Gazometro complex in Rome Ostiense," said **Antonietta De Sanctis, Head of the Startup Acceleration Program at Eni Joule**. "Together with mentors from Eni's business lines and other corporate partners, we are eager to embark on this new journey. This year, in line with the 'industry-driven' focus of the program's latest edition, we are optimistic about launching pilot projects that will engage not only Eni but also its entire value chain".

"The Zero acceleration program provides an extraordinary opportunity to create powerful synergies with startups and support them on their journey to success. Beyond tools and expertise, it enables startups to validate their solutions in real-world industrial environments, speeding up technology transfer and driving innovation for our businesses," said **Manuela Pagella, Open Innovation Manager, Acea Group**.

"The planet faces urgent environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource depletion, ocean degradation, deforestation, and rapid urbanization. The ESA Φ -lab supports the ZERO Accelerator to foster the development of commercial solutions leveraging Earth observation data to address these challenges and promote sustainable growth," said **Giuseppe Borghi, Head of the ESA Φ -lab**.

"Startups are the beating heart of innovation in Italy, driving economic growth and digital transformation. Supporting the startup ecosystem through programs like Zero fuels new ideas, promotes talent, and enhances national competitiveness. Microsoft has always been committed to empowering startups with technology and development programs to accelerate their success. We're proud to be a longstanding partner of this initiative, now in its fourth year," commented **Matteo Mille, Chief Sales Enablement & Operations, Microsoft Italy**.

"Saipem joined the Zero accelerator because this initiative aligns with our vision of 'Engineering for a Sustainable Future.' It underscores our commitment to driving the transition toward a greener economy by nurturing talent and ideas in the cleantech sector," said **Filippo Abbà, Chief Technology & Innovation Officer, Saipem**. "This project offers a concrete opportunity to foster Italian entrepreneurship and support the development of advanced clean technologies to reduce environmental impact. Through Zero and the backing of innovative startups, we can promote solutions that connect innovation, sustainability, and economic growth."

"The new edition of the Zero acceleration program is a significant opportunity to advance the innovation and sustainability values championed by Vodafone," said **Cinzia Campanella, Head of Innovation and Vertical Solutions, Vodafone**. "Collaborating with talented cleantech startups enables us to develop tangible technological solutions for sustainable development. Vodafone, committed to fostering a connected, inclusive society that respects the planet's resources, continues to promote innovative solutions that encourage sustainable lifestyles and operational models. Strong, inclusive partnerships like this are vital to creating value for the planet and society."

About Zero

ZERO is part of CDP Venture Capital's mission to establish a network of high-specialization physical accelerators, driving innovation by nurturing the growth of Italy's top entrepreneurial talent. With Eni's Joule Entrepreneurship School as the main partner, and the support of corporate partners like Acea, CNR, Microsoft,



Vodafone, SACE, and Saipem and the support of ESA, ZERO has already accelerated 30 startups in its first three editions. The program is jointly managed by Zest and Elis, who co-invest alongside CDP Venture Capital in the selected startups.

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