

## ZERO LAUNCHES THE FOURTH EDITION OF ITS ACCELERATION PROGRAM: CLEANTECH STARTUPS AT THE HEART OF THE DUAL TRANSITION IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

- *Zero, the Cleantech accelerator, has opened applications to invest in and develop the best Cleantech startups, reinforcing its "industry-driven" approach through a system-wide collaboration between startups, corporates, and SMEs.*
- *Zero was created by CDP Venture Capital in collaboration with Eni – through its business school, Joule – and will be managed by Zest and Elis. This edition renews its strategic partnerships with the inclusion of CNR, SACE, and the support of ESA, alongside long-time partners Acea, Microsoft, and Vodafone.*
- *Selected startups will have the opportunity to access up to 120,000 euros in funding, along with a five-month program focused on acceleration, industrial testing, and impact.*

Rome, October 16, 2024 – Today marks the launch of the new call for startups from **Zero**, the leading Cleantech accelerator by **CDP Venture Capital's National Network**, with **Eni** as the main partner through its business school, Joule, and managed by **Zest** and **Elis**. This fourth edition reinforces Zero's commitment to supporting the country's dual energy and digital transitions.

This edition of Zero renews its strategic partnerships with key corporations and institutions to drive the growth of startups. In addition to long-standing corporate partners **Acea**, **Microsoft**, and **Vodafone**, new partners such as **CNR**, **SACE**, and **ESA** have joined the accelerator.

Launched in 2021 with the aim of accelerating corporate decarbonization processes along the "Road to Net Zero," this fourth edition strengthens its "industry-driven" approach, creating an investment and development platform for Cleantech startups. This platform is designed to facilitate integration with industrial partners and enhance the impact of the proposed innovative solutions and technologies.

*"ZERO is one of the programs through which we inaugurated the National Accelerator Network, and today, with the launch of the fourth call, it confirms its role as a strategic pillar of our approach. Over time, it has successfully engaged key partners in a collective commitment towards technological innovation in support of the energy transition" said **Stefano Molino, Senior Partner and Head of the Accelerator Fund at CDP Venture Capital**. "Through a structured and well-established ecosystem of mentorship, investments, and networking, we aim to accelerate the growth of innovative companies that can play a crucial role in reshaping the energy landscape and contributing to the achievement of European climate goals."*

*"The key innovation in this edition will be the acceleration of industrial testing," stated **Mattia Voltaggio, Head of Joule, Eni's business school**. "The new ZERO program, in particular, will provide Eni with the opportunity to integrate the best innovative startups into its value chain, with a focus on sustainable mobility and smart cities. In addition, startups will have the chance to test their technologies in a physical environment, specifically the Gazometro*

*Ostiense district in Rome, where we can expand our knowledge with an outward-looking perspective, seizing the right opportunities for investment at the right time.”*

*“Zero is a co-innovation and industry driven Cleantech platform that supports the growth of startups by addressing the needs of the ecosystem. Thanks to a partnership strengthened by the participation of key players, this new edition aims to accelerate the energy and digital transformation of the entire entrepreneurial landscape through a systemic approach and synergistic collaboration between startups, large companies, leading research institutions, and SMEs,”* said **Antonella Zullo, CEO of Zest Innovation.**

*“This year, Zero is evolving into a true industrial accelerator, with the goal of making prototypes more scalable. We are not only collaborating with large companies but also partnering with centers of excellence such as CNR and ESA, the European Space Agency, with whom we are intensifying interactions to develop co-innovation and industrial scaling projects, always aiming to generate significant impact. Our role is to coordinate projects, develop prototypes and Proofs of Concept, selecting the most promising companies and accelerating them through venture funding, followed by industrial testing, often conducted within companies in collaboration with professionals and centers of excellence that enrich both academic and experimental perspectives,”* commented **Luciano De Propriis, Head of Open Innovation at ELIS.**

The five-month program is divided into two parallel tracks:

- a) **Business Acceleration**, where startups will work on developing their product for a "go-to-market" strategy, with the opportunity to rapidly validate their solutions in the market, attract investments, and promote business growth.
- b) **Solution Integration**, where startups will collaborate closely with corporate mentors to define and plan an experimental use case.

Both tracks consist of an initial two-month phase during which all 10 selected startups will work on product development and an experimental use case. At the end of this first phase, five startups will be eligible to receive pre-seed investments of up to 120,000 euros from CDP Venture Capital, Zest, and Elis. Corporate partners may also select these startups to develop a Proof of Concept (PoC) during the remaining three months of the program.

With a fund of 4,1 million euros for pre-seed investments and follow-on funding over three years, Zero has accelerated 30 startups, raising over 3 million euros from accelerator co-investors and leading venture capital firms, including international players.

Cleantech startups with innovative software (with a functional MVP) or hardware (with a working prototype and a defined roadmap for industrial production) in the following sectors are encouraged to apply: alternative energy sources, circular economy and waste management, sustainable operating systems, and sustainable land conservation and development. Innovative and transformative solutions for Earth Observation (EO) will also be positively evaluated during the selection process.

**Applications are open until November 13th**, and startups can apply via the website: [zeroacceleratorcleantech.com](https://zeroacceleratorcleantech.com).

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## About ZERO

*ZERO is a Cleantech startup accelerator created by CDP Venture Capital Sgr with the goal of building a National Network of specialized physical accelerators to foster entrepreneurial skills and support the growth of the best Italian innovation talent. ZERO is developed in collaboration with key financial and industrial players, including Eni as the main partner, through its Joule business school, established to promote innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship, along with Acea, CNR, Microsoft, SACE, and Vodafone as corporate partners, with the support of ESA. The acceleration program is managed by Zest and Elis, who co-invest alongside CDP Venture Capital Sgr in the selected startups. Over its three editions, ZERO has accelerated 30 startups. For more information, visit: [zeroacceleratorcleantech.com](http://zeroacceleratorcleantech.com).*

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