

**PRESS RELEASE**

**The first Italian platform dedicated to start-ups and their key investors - now in its fourth edition**

**“START-UP INITIATIVE”: FOURTH EDITION OF THE INTESA SANPAOLO PROJECT DEDICATED TO START-UPS AND INVESTORS READY TO SUPPORT THEM HAS JUST ENDED**

- **Over 120 start-ups asked to be involved in the fourth edition of 2010. 26 got through to the training and assessment stage and 12 (including 4 non-Italian businesses) were selected for meetings with Seed Capital Funds, Venture Capital Funds, Foundations and Business Angels.**
- **Over 50 potential investors attended the final day**
- **Collaboration with the no-profit association Fondazione Prospera, for start-up mentoring**
- **Agreement signed with TOP-IX for the use of its facilities**
- **Another 2 editions coming up in 2010 – in September and November.**

*Milano, 5 July 2010* – After the success of the previous editions of the “Start-Up Initiative” – created and promoted by the Corporate and Investment Banking Division and its Innovation Team and presented in Milano at the end of last year – **Intesa Sanpaolo has reopened its doors to the first Italian platform dedicated to start-ups and their key investors.**

This event, which ended a few days ago in Milano, saw the participation of **26 start-ups** identified through a selection process involving over 120 new businesses, both Italian and international, that followed the three separate steps of the programme:

– the first step involved the businesses in a **training programme** on preparing the **business plan** and on the organisation and management of the **meeting with investors**. The two days’ classroom training course was held by **John Dilts**, a business economics professor from the most prestigious US universities, founder of Maverick Angels LLC in California - a network of real "Business Angels", informal investors focusing on investments and mentoring for new businesses - and a business consultant specialising in sustainable innovation strategies;

– the training course was followed by one day dedicated to the **assessment and selection of the businesses**. With input from a panel of **experts** from the spheres of **Venture Capital, University Incubators** and

**Foundations** active in this field, **12 start-ups** including 4 non-Italian businesses, successfully moved on to the next step.

– The operational step saw **encounters between the selected businesses and over 50 potential investors** (including **Business Angels, Venture Capitalists, Seed Capital Funds and Foundations**) and **Corporates**, following the usual format for this type of event: presentation of the company and business plan, and Q&A sessions between investors and the company on economic, financial and technical issues.

New to this edition was the **agreement with the Prospera no-profit association** which offered free mentoring to participating start-ups and will also extend their cooperation to the next editions of the event. In addition, an **agreement was signed with TOP-IX (Torino Piemonte Internet Exchange)** which provides support to start-ups at infrastructural level (i.e. broadbands, servers, hosting, housing, etc.) and for the pre-competitive testing stage in terms of technology, services, operating models and business models. During the mentoring, participating start-ups were also given an illustration of the logistics services and value added available from a selection of Italian Incubators and Technology Parks, including the Milano Polytechnic Business Accelerator, I3P, the Firenze Incubator, Sardegna Research and a further 10 Incubators associated with the APSTI.

On conclusion of this step **90 statements of interest** had been expressed by the investors involved, which could see the **finalisation** of investments **in the next few months**. Another **2 “Start-Up Initiative” events** are planned in **2010** – to be held in **September** and **November**.

“The power of a country lies in finding the players that constantly encourage the growth of initiatives with a strong innovative content,” claims Gaetano Micciché, General Manager and Head of Corporate and Investment Banking for Intesa Sanpaolo and CEO of Banca IMI, “and this is why a Bank like ours is committed to aiding start-up development. It is a duty we feel very strongly about - input our efforts and professional expertise to select new businesses characterised by innovative projects, to help them "communicate" with the market and to put them into contact with potential partners or investors. Selection, training and communications are three vital steps in the success of a start-up; three steps that have to be taken if we are to discover the Apples, Googles and Nokias of tomorrow”.

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It is through the **Start-Up Initiative** that the Intesa Sanpaolo Group **expands the product and service mix** made **available to Italian businesses**.

In particular, to those intending to follow a growth path through innovation and research, from **university spin-offs** to **start-ups**, from **high-tech SMEs** to **technology groups**, the Bank offers support, advice, funding and equity through dedicated units such as:

- **Intesa Sanpaolo Eurodesk**, a European desk to facilitate companies' access to EU financing schemes;
- **MedioCredito Italiano**, which manages various credit facilities for innovation, including **Nova+**;
- the **Corporate and Investment Banking Division**, through its **Merchant Banking** and **Innovation Team**;
- **Atlante Venture** and **Atlante Venture Mezzogiorno**, the two Venture Capital funds for businesses aiming to grow through innovation and research;
- **Banca IMI** through its advisory services on stock market quotation and/or other growth strategies;
- the **Fondazione Filarete** partnership, along with Milano University and Fondazione Cariplo;
- participation in the **SME Development Fund** promoted by the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance.

*For information*

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