

PRESS RELEASE

NANOCHALLENGE AND POLYMERCHALLENGE 2010 TOGETHER WITH THE INTESA SANPAOLO START-UP INITIATIVE

- ***The sixth edition of “Intesa Sanpaolo Start-Up Initiative” will be held in Padua in collaboration with “Nanochallenge and Polymerchallenge 2010” and will be devoted to nanotechnologies and to new polymeric and composite materials***
- ***Italian and foreign early-stage and start-up projects, after screening and a training process, will be presented before the potential investors of reference***
- ***An international panel will award 600,000 euros, made available by Veneto Nanotech and IMAST, for the best projects***

Milan/Padua, 22 July 2010 - **Intesa Sanpaolo** has signed an agreement for collaboration and partnership with **Veneto Nanotech** (the Italian district for nanotechnologies) and **IMAST** (the technological district for the engineering of polymeric and composite materials and structures) for the purpose of jointly organising “**Nanochallenge and Polymerchallenge 2010**” – the international business competition conceived and launched by Veneto Nanotech since 2005 and organized with IMAST since 2007, with the aim of financing and starting up new entrepreneurial realities – and the sixth edition of “**Intesa Sanpaolo Start-up Initiative**,” the first Italian platform devoted to business start-ups and to the investors ready to support them.

Italian and foreign scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs who have realised an innovative business project in the *seed* or *start-up* phase - projects or entrepreneurial initiatives that need early stage investments through Seed Capital Funds or Business Angels - devoted to nanotechnologies or to polymeric and composite materials may **submit the project no later than 20 September 2010** by following the instructions available at www.nanochallenge.com or may request additional information by writing to info@nanochallenge.com.

Veneto Nanotech, IMAST and the Innovation Team of the Corporate & Investment Banking Division of Intesa Sanpaolo will select the best projects from among the proposals received by 20th September, while in October and November the teams singled out will be assisted by experts of the sector in the drafting of the business plan and in preparing for the meeting with investors.

The conclusive event will be held in Padua on 26th November next at the Aula Magna of Palazzo Bo. At the end of the “**presentation in the arena**” before business angels, seed and venture capital funds, corporations and private investors, the start-up projects will be evaluated by an international panel on the basis of commercial potentiality, technological innovation, and the solidity of the economic and financial plan and of the entrepreneurial idea. The projects achieving

the widest support will receive **prizes totalling 600,000 euros from Veneto Nanotech and IMAST**, to be used to finance the start-up and development phases.

Through this initiative – which, after the event devoted to sustainable energy scheduled for September, will reach its sixth edition – **Intesa Sanpaolo** intends to reaffirm its role of support to the development and growth of Italian businesses, including by filling the role of ‘bonding agent’ and engine of a mechanism that until today was missing in our country, a role of actor *super partes* able to co-ordinate the energy and efforts of all the parties involved, for the purpose of supporting the micro-businesses that produce real innovation. Considering that the sector of nanotechnologies and new materials is expanding rapidly and is of strategic importance for global competitiveness, Intesa Sanpaolo seized the opportunity to merge its experience in this ambit with that of Veneto Nanotech and IMAST. The fruit of the common aims thus has generated a unique, organic process providing the start-ups with a path of selection, training, presentation to the market and finalisation of the investments, followed by the awarding of prizes for the most deserving projects.

Veneto Nanotech and IMAST represent the ideal partner for facing this challenge not only at the national level but also abroad. The Italian Nanotechnologies District has been engaged since 2005 in attracting talented Italians and foreigners to finance the start-up of new companies with high technological content and in attracting Italian and foreign capital to finance their growth. It does so through Nanochallenge, an initiative born thanks to the support of the **Cariparo Foundation**, which in five editions has evaluated the technological and business innovations of more than 400 participants, about 270 of which coming from abroad. Veneto Nanotech and then IMAST since 2007 have invested an aggregate amount of 2.4 million euros in eight start-up firms operating in the nanotech and polymers sector, which have located in the territory of the Veneto and Campania regions. The start-up companies are able to benefit for their development from the network of firms and investors and from the latest-generation instrumentation of the laboratories present within the districts. In fact, it is thanks to the utilisation of these assets and services that the start-up firms are able to speed up the time-to- market of their technologies and products.

For further information contact:

Intesa Sanpaolo
Corporate & Investment Banking Media Office
Tel +39 02.8796.3010/3531
stampa@intesasanpaolo.com

Veneto Nanotech
Start-up Investments Office
Tel. +39 049.7705500/26
Elisabetta.talarico@venetonanotech.it