

INTESA SANPAOLO INNOVATION CENTER AND CARIPLO FACTORY TEAM UP WITH MICROSOFT FOR “CIRCULARITY GOES DIGITAL”

- **Selection of innovative digital startups capable of enabling circular strategies in company processes**
- **Circular open innovation programmes developed by the Circular Economy Lab to form partnerships**

Milan, 3 September 2020 - The "**Circularity goes digital**" initiative kicks off with its aim of accelerating adoption of the **circular economy** by Italian companies through **digital technologies** and **open innovation**.

Circularity goes digital is promoted by **Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center**, an **Intesa Sanpaolo Group** company dedicated to the world of innovation, **Cariplo Factory**, the innovation hub created by Fondazione Cariplo, and **Microsoft**, a leader in the technology sector. **Circularity goes digital** will be developed by the **Circular Economy Lab (CE Lab)**, the laboratory created by **Cariplo Factory** and **Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center** to support circular business models and support companies moving towards the new economic-productive model.

The **circular economy** aims to decouple business and local area economic growth from the consumption of finite natural resources to safeguard a planet that will host 10 billion people by 2050. **Digitisation** is an enabling factor for the transition to the circular model: digital platforms, artificial intelligence, internet of things and blockchain are already streamlining the design, production, consumption, reuse, repair, regeneration, recovery and end-of-life management of products. The aim of **Circularity goes digital** is to create an **open innovation ecosystem** through which the opportunities offered by technological and financial tools available for the dissemination of the circular economy can be leveraged in the best possible way.

Circularity goes digital will expand over the next 12 months to include a **selection of projects** from innovative digital startups focused on developing zero waste products and processes based on renewable sources, streamlining circular business models with a view to an integrated supply chain and extending the useful lives of products and materials.

Startups will be sought that can enable circular approaches in the processes of mature companies through **circular open innovation** with the aim of forming partnerships.

The **first phase** of **Circularity goes digital** will be held between September and December with the **selection of the startups**. Startups can take part in the first phase by visiting the website <https://trace.cariplofactory.it/>.

The chosen startups will have the opportunity to participate in the **second phase**, which includes an **introductory workshop on open innovation methodologies and matchmaking with interested companies**.

In the **third phase**, which will take place in the first six months of 2021, **partnerships between companies and startups** will be activated with the launch of possible **pilot projects** and a development programme coordinated by **CE Lab. Microsoft** will provide technological support and access to the **Microsoft for Startups** programmes, while **Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center** will evaluate the merit and feasibility of the projects for access to the 2018-2021 **Intesa Sanpaolo** circular economy fund with up to 5 billion euro made available to businesses that commit to adopt the circular model.

Circularity goes digital culminates with the startups and enterprises establishing roadmaps to develop industrial and commercial relationships.

*"Intesa Sanpaolo was one of the first banks in Europe to embrace the circular economy, supporting the vision and initiatives of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and becoming its first global financial services partner" - stated **Guido de Vecchi, General Manager Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center**. "The launch of an open innovation programme, in collaboration with an organisation like Microsoft, which is already a member of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation network, is synonymous with a shared desire to guide business towards more competitive and resilient models. Through this initiative, the best digital startups will have the opportunity to meet and present themselves to corporations and SMEs that capitalise on the strategic opportunity afforded by the circular economy".*

*"The Coronavirus pandemic has exposed the fragility of our economic development model" - explained **Carlo Mango, Managing Director of Cariplo Factory**. "Now more than ever, we need to rethink the economic cycle in terms of a circular economy: a system designed to regenerate, based on the valorisation of waste, the extension of the product life cycle, the sharing of resources, the use of recycled raw materials and renewable energy. However, a change in direction of this magnitude must not be a burden on individual companies. We also need to be able to bring the open innovation model into the circular economy so that companies that need to modernise can meet with organisations that can provide them with the tools to do*

so. This project, developed by two partners like Microsoft and Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center, does exactly that".

"Ecosystem partnerships between large companies, startups and innovative SMEs can play a key role in recovering from the emergency by supporting individuals and businesses not only as they manage the delicate process of returning to normal, but by focusing on new sustainable and equitable growth so that together we can build a more inclusive and green society" - says **Barbara Cominelli, COO and Marketing and Operations Lead of Microsoft Italy**. "Technology represents a key driver for rethinking processes and relationships in this area, and we are committed to making the latest digital innovations available to industry players, from traditional to emerging companies, to enable them to identify new ideas, perspectives and projects for sustainable growth using open innovation models".

CE Lab

The Circular Economy Lab is an innovation initiative resulting from the partnership between Cariplo Factory and Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center. It aims to support the evolution of the Italian economy and promote alternative models of value creation for the collective good, accelerating the transition to the circular economy. From an open and inclusive innovation perspective, the Circular Economy Lab seeks to involve large companies and transformative agents such as startups, innovative SMEs, universities, research institutions and technology transfer centres. Through its wealth of expertise, the Circular Economy Lab seeks to help spread circular economy principles and methods through training initiatives and by providing networking opportunities to the players in the innovation ecosystem. The Circular Economy Lab was created in 2018 by Fondazione Cariplo and Intesa Sanpaolo.

Intesa Sanpaolo Innovation Center is the company of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group dedicated to the world of innovation. The company invests in applied research projects and high potential startups, to encourage the Group's and its customers' competitiveness and speed up the development of the circular economy in Italy. With an office in the Turin skyscraper designed by Renzo Piano and a national and international network, the Innovation Center aims to represent an engine enabling relationships with other stakeholders from the innovation ecosystem such as companies, startups, incubators, research centres and universities, promoting new forms of entrepreneurship to access venture capital, including through its wholly-owned subsidiary Neva Finventures.

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Cariplo Factory

Cariplo Factory is an innovation hub that empowers a talent chain that can provide experiential training, entrepreneurial support programmes, open innovation projects, venture capital investments and international expansion support activities.

Cariplo Factory was founded in 2016 by Fondazione Cariplo and acts through an inclusive model involving a national network of universities, technology transfer centres, incubators, accelerators, fablabs, science and technology parks, startups, business angels, venture capital funds, SMEs and corporations.

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Microsoft

Microsoft enables organisations to implement their digital transformation projects with new innovation scenarios, such as Cloud Computing and Artificial Intelligence. The company's mission is to support people and organisations throughout the world to achieve more through technology and digital solutions. More information about Microsoft is available at <https://www.microsoft.com/it-it/>

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