

PRESS RELEASE

AI Partnership: AI4I and Zest S.p.A. Sign Three-Year Agreement

Turin, 30 December 2024 – Driving innovation in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and fostering startup growth to strengthen the competitiveness of Italy's industrial system are the goals of the newly signed three-year partnership between AI4I, the Italian Institute for AI in Industry, and Zest S.p.A., Italy's leading early-stage operator with over 250 startups in its portfolio.

The core of this strategic partnership is the creation of a collaborative ecosystem to support emerging startups in key AI-related sectors. To achieve this, the collaboration will implement several initiatives. First, synergies between acceleration programs will allow startups accelerated through *Magic Mind*, Zest's AI-focused program, to leverage AI4I's technological expertise and resources. Additionally, close cooperation on real-world projects will lead to the development of tailored solutions to address the specific needs of SMEs and industrial partners. Finally, the partnership will establish a network of opportunities to facilitate connections among investors, researchers, and businesses, fostering visibility and collaboration at both national and local levels.

This collaboration will be further strengthened by the upcoming launch of AI4I's *System User Knowledge (SUK)* platform, designed to deliver bespoke expertise and services across the full lifecycle of AI solutions.

*"This partnership is a key pillar of our Institute's strategy," said **Fabio Pammolli**, President of AI4I. "Our goal is twofold: to develop AI-based and computational solutions to integrate into Italy's industrial framework, and to facilitate the creation and consolidation of an ecosystem where supply and demand for these technologies can meet synergistically. These objectives will be made possible thanks to the supercomputing infrastructure we are building and the research and development units we will establish in the coming months."*

*"We are proud," commented **Marco Gay**, Executive Chairman of Zest, "to be among the first partners of the AI4Industry National Foundation to sign a strategic multi-year agreement aimed at fostering the growth of Italy's AI-focused startup ecosystem. We believe this partnership will accelerate synergies between companies and startups and drive industrial experimentation with AI-based innovations. Already, 25% of our portfolio of over 250 startups consists of high-potential tech companies operating at the forefront of AI, and in 2024 alone, more than 1,100 new AI startups entered our proprietary deal flow. Our ambition - concluded Gay - is to be the key enabler of this industrial revolution for talents and the Italian production system, leveraging our acceleration, open innovation, and corporate venturing programs to generate even greater value through this partnership with AI4Industry."*

About AI4I

AI4I has been founded by the Italian Government to perform transformative application-oriented research in Artificial Intelligence, contributing to innovation, industrial transformation, and economic growth. With a firm institutional commitment and long-term national funding, AI4I aims to grow fast as the leading national AI Center, shaping the research and development AI agenda in Italy and Europe. To this purpose, AI4I will build on an on-premise HPC cluster and on the Leonardo HPC system (CINECA). Moreover, AI4I will leverage a key strategic partnership with the Italian Institute of Technology and a unique scientific, industrial, and financial ecosystem. AI4I aims to attract and empower a new generation of AI leaders in research and innovation, also thanks to competitive and incentive-based compensation schemes

www.ai4i.it



About Zest S.p.A.

Zest S.p.A., listed on Euronext Milan (Ticker: ZEST, ISIN: IT0005013013), is Europe's leading player dedicated to fostering innovation. As the Italian market leader in early-stage and seed investments, startup acceleration, and Open Innovation & Corporate Venturing, Zest was born from the merger of Digital Magics and LVenture Group to create a single, internationally competitive powerhouse. Zest provides 360° services and solutions to facilitate the 5.0 transition of Italian industry and support innovative entrepreneurial projects.

www.zestgroup.vc