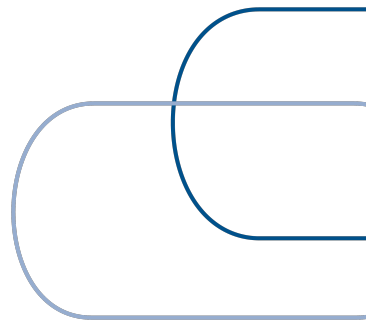




START ATTRACTOR

# **Venture Kneading**

## **Cohort 2026**



IGNITING INNOVATION, DRIVING GROWTH

## 1. Object and Purpose

Venture Kneading is designed for teams that have already validated their market and are ready to move into product development through prototyping and the early go-to-market phase (TRL 5–7). The program runs from May and ends with the October Demo Day. The curriculum focuses on Design Thinking & Product Development, Market analysis and Team building & recruitment. Hours can flex by module — the goal is measurable progress.

The candidate projects can relate to any of the following technology sectors: ICT, AI, DeepTech, MedTech, Pharma, AgriTech, GreenTech, Waste Recycling, FinTech, and Paper Manufacturing.

Projects from other areas and sectors may also be submitted, but their admissibility is subject to the Committee's decision.

## 2. Recipients

The call is open to:

- a. Teams composed of at least two members with an innovative business idea and the ambition to establish a start-up or a university spin-off, who have already conducted initial market validation and are ready to define a product direction and a prototype;
- b. Innovative start-ups and university spin-offs at the seed stage that aim to refine their market map, Ideal Customer Profile (ICP), and product positioning while progressing from prototype development to early investment readiness;
- c. Companies already operating on the market that are developing innovative business projects with the potential to establish new companies (corporate spin-offs) and that seek to structure and validate a dedicated venture initiative, including market positioning and investment readiness.

## 3. Offer

Start Attractor offers a personalized pre-acceleration path, lasting approximately five months, to a maximum of 3 selected entrepreneurial teams and Start-ups/Spin-Offs. This program, which will take place from May to October, aims to support them in transforming market-validated projects into a structured product, a clear market positioning, a scalable team setup, and full investor readiness.

The schedule is:

- a. May: Design thinking & Product Development; output: Definition of product direction and development of a prototype roadmap
- b. June: Market analysis; output: Market mapping, Ideal Customer Profile refinement, competitor analysis and positioning

- c. September: Team building and recruitment; output: Definition of key roles, hiring plan, and initial advisor network;
- d. October: Valuation & investments Demo Day; output: Investment readiness assessment and Demo Day pitch rehearsal

The program is organized with lectures complemented with personalized labs and mentorship from our Mentor pool. Lectures will be mainly held online, while labs will be preferably in presence. Networking meetings will be organized on an ad hoc basis, focusing on one-to-one interactions with start-ups, companies, and multinationals in related sectors, as well as investors and innovation experts.

The content of the activities and the timelines for developing the project proposals will be evaluated and established according to the needs of each selected project.

At the end of the course, participants will present their entrepreneurial projects to sector stakeholders and investors at a Demo Day scheduled at the end of October, to facilitate business matching and attract investments to accelerate the project.

### **3. Participation fee**

If the team participating in the program has not yet incorporated a company, or if Start Attractor decides not to acquire equity in the company, the participant signs a contract committing to pay Start Attractor 5% of the first funding raised within two years from the end of the venture program, for the services provided by Start Attractor, up to a maximum of Euro 20.000,00 (Twenty Thousand/00).

If the participant does not wish to accept the condition above, in order to take part in the venture program must pay the applicable enrollment fee of euro 12.000,00 (Twelve Thousands/00) for the program payable upfront.

### **4. Deadline and submission**

The application must be in English using the application form online by 3 April 2026, 12pm CET.

### **5. Selection method**

An evaluation committee, made up of experts and investors, will evaluate the proposals received based on the following criteria:

- a. Relevance of the market need, supported by evidence of initial market validation;
- b. Level of innovation of the proposed solution and technology
- c. Value adequacy of the proposal
- d. Market size and growth potential
- e. Development stage (TRL 5-7)
- f. Quality, multidisciplinary skills, competence, and commitment of the entrepreneurial team

g. Social and environmental impact

The Committee will also consider the quality and completeness of the information provided during the selection process. The Committee may request applicants to provide additional background materials on the project or company and to meet with the selection committee, as outlined below, to gain a deeper understanding of the project's potential. Candidates unconditionally accept any decision made by the Committee regarding project selection.

## 6. Call timeline

The timeline for the application, the start, and the conclusion of the pre-acceleration program is as follows:

- a. Application deadline: April 3, 2026, 12pm CET
- b. Final selection results: by April 27, 2026
- c. Confirmation of participation by signing an agreement by February 29, 2026
- d. Pre-acceleration program: from May 4 to October 22, 2026
- e. Demo Day: October 27, 2026

Please note that the above dates are indicative and may be subject to change due to organizational or unforeseen circumstances. Any updates will be promptly communicated to the applicants.

## 7. Obligations of participants

During the program, participants must adhere to the following obligations after signing a specific agreement:

- a. Ensure the complete implementation of the activities outlined by the program within the communicated timelines and methods;
- b. Complete weekly deliverables assigned by mentors. The mentors will review the deliverables and provide feedback for improvements and fine-tuning activities.
- c. Participate in periodic monitoring meetings and provide the relevant documentation requested by the program's chief regarding the entrepreneurial project development.
- d. Report any factors that may cause significant impediments or delays in project progress.

Unless there is a valid reason, participants who do not meet the required obligations will be excluded from the program. In the event of exclusion, any upfront participation fees already paid shall not be refundable. For participants subject to the success-based model, the success-based fee shall become due exclusively if the startup successfully raises external funding within 24 months from the programme's graduation date, provided that the startup has participated in at least 50% of the Venture Kneading activities.

## 8. Intellectual and industrial property rights

The proposers declare that they are the sole owners of all intellectual and industrial property rights related to the content of the presented projects and that they also hold the economic exploitation rights of the submitted material. Therefore, the participant asserts that all the materials presented do not infringe in any way, directly or indirectly, on the rights of any third party. Furthermore, by participating in this Call, the proposers commit, until the end of the process, not to license any rights attributable to the presented project and any other material that has been written, conceived, prepared, developed, or created, in whole or in part, for participation in the Call to third parties. If there is a violation of the provisions of this article, the project will be excluded from the pre-acceleration process. Ownership of the intellectual property relating to the project, even if generated during the process, will reside with the entrepreneurial team in accordance with current industrial property legislation.

## 9. Confidentiality guarantees

All subjects involved in each phase of the activities outlined in the Call, as well as for the five years following the conclusion of the pre-acceleration process, commit to maintaining the confidentiality of the information provided by the candidates, including the contents of their submitted projects. However, it is not mandatory for candidates to classify any information as confidential and/or reserved; this decision remains at their discretion. In any case, candidates are encouraged to submit a comprehensive and well-detailed proposal to facilitate its evaluation. The evaluation commission also commits to protecting and maintaining the confidentiality of the materials and information submitted for evaluation, using them exclusively for purposes directly related to the Call. Each participant in the Call agrees that their project idea, in compliance with confidentiality requirements, may be included in publications and dissemination activities promoted by Start Attractor.

## 10. Limitations of liability

Given the modalities of participation in the Call, Start Attractor assumes no responsibility for any technical, hardware, or software malfunctions, interruptions in network connections, or for participant registrations that are failed, incorrect, inaccurate, incomplete, illegible, damaged, lost, delayed, misdirected, or intercepted. This includes registrations that, for any reason, have not been received, as well as electronic or other communications that have been delayed or other technical issues related to the registration and uploading of materials within this initiative.

Start Attractor also reiterates its non-involvement in any actions or behaviors of individual participants during the program that violate current civil and criminal laws. In this regard, it reserves the right to exclude any participant if it believes their

behavior, even if not expressly against the law, is not in the spirit of the initiative or is inappropriate for its purpose.

## **11. Guarantees and indemnities**

Those who participate in the Call declare that they are aware that the responsibilities, including criminal ones, associated with the contents of the projects submitted for involvement in the initiative regulated by this Call are their sole and exclusive responsibility, indemnifying Start Attractor against any claims made by third parties. Proposers take full responsibility for the originality of the projects submitted and for any rights asserted by third parties regarding the project ideas, explicitly releasing the promoters from any related liability and committing to address any requests, legal actions, or claims for damages presented by third parties in any forum. The initiation of any disputes in this matter will immediately suspend the participation of the involved team and may result in the return of any received funds.

## **12. Processing of personal data**

Under EU Regulation No. 679/2016, the mandatory personal data provided will be processed by Start Attractor primarily using computerized methods, solely for the purposes and procedures outlined in the information that will be provided to the interested party at the time of their application to participate in the pre-acceleration program.

## **12. Final provisions**

Start Attractor reserves the right to modify or extend the deadlines for submitting applications for participation and to make adjustments to the pre-acceleration program if unforeseen circumstances impede the execution of the activities.

Submitting an application implies full acceptance of the provisions outlined in this Call.