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Hera Group boosts innovation in its own assets through Corporate Venture Building

The Group has launched a new programme intended to scale up development in its own innovations and bring them to the market, one of the first of its kind in the Italian energy sector. NexSuite, an asset portfolio for gas distribution network security, is now presented in Bilbao at the Enlit international trade fair

The Hera Group has launched its Corporate Venture Building (CVB) programme, an internal initiative that aims to systematically transform the industrial know-how and technological assets developed by its various business areas into new lines of activity, with the ultimate goal of bringing them to the market.

Hera Group's pilot Corporate Venture Building initiative, among the first in Italy in the energy sector, aims to create new revenue streams both within existing markets and in new segments, contributing to the multi-utility's growth while leveraging internal capabilities and assets, also through partnerships with industrial players. It enables the Group to manage innovation end-to-end: from ideas developed for the core business to assessing their potential evolution into independent market offerings. It also represents an opportunity to attract new talent and ideas, providing a stimulating environment within a solid corporate reality that is deploying significant investments, €1.3 billion by 2028, in cutting-edge technologies and innovative solutions.

The CVB model debuts with the presentation of the innovative NexSuite product portfolio at Enlit Europe 2025, the leading international trade fair for the energy sector taking place in Bilbao (18-20 November), a global meeting point for energy and technology leaders, focused on digital transformation and decarbonisation.

More specifically, NexSuite is a package of engineering assets designed to address the foremost challenges facing the gas distribution network sector, such as safety and environmental risks, lack of digitalisation, and the need for greater cost and resource efficiency.

Also available to support external distributors, NexSuite consists of three highly advanced solutions: in addition to NexMeter, the Hera Group's 4.0 smart meter that automatically shuts off the gas flow in the event of leaks or micro-leaks and during earthquakes, it also includes NexAction and Sentinel. NexAction is the first fully self-powered and patented system for remote automation of network valves (gas, water, district heating and fluids), which allows for rapid intervention in emergencies (within 150 seconds), thus minimising both the need for on-field operational teams and the dispersion of emissions. Sentinel, instead, is a patented device for remotely monitoring expansion compensators in geologically unstable areas. Installation is plug & play and includes real-time 3D visualisation of the tube's movement through an interactive web app. Its versatility makes it suitable for water networks, district heating systems and industrial liquid pipelines. A common feature of all these assets is that they respond first and foremost to real problems faced by operators and have undergone extensive on-field testing.

Corporate Venture Building is a model complementary to Corporate Venture Capital, a tool used by companies to invest in high-potential external start-ups in order to gain access to innovations. CVB, instead, leverages internal assets, skills and resources to develop and launch new businesses, following an approach that is growing rapidly in Europe and Italy. Italy is among the countries leading a structural adoption of this model: today, more than one in four Italian companies (26%) are already actively implementing forms of venture building, according to a recent McKinsey & Company survey. This is the context for the Hera Group's programme, which aims to leverage its own assets, such as NexSuite solutions, to create industrial and technological value, in line with the evolution that sees an integration of innovation, venture building and venture capital as the new driver of growth among the most advanced companies.