

# Περιεχόμενα

1. ACCELERATING CHANGE

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Ημ. Έκδοσης: . . .01/09/2021 Ημ. Αποδελτίωσης: . . .21/09/2021

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# ACCELERATING

Alexandros Charalambides, Associate Professor at the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) and Manager of the Maritime ClimAccelerator, explains how it is tackling the decarbonisation needs of the global maritime industry and aspires to discover and promote high-impact climate and sustainability innovations.



### What was the original concept behind the company and how has it evolved?

The idea of training academics so that they can 'see' their research being commercialized actually started back in 2012, when seven friends got together and decided to give something back to Cyprus. We had all lived abroad, had loads of experience and ideas, and thus, the first cleantech accelerator was founded in Cyprus. Since then, Chrysalis LEAP has trained more than 200 entrepreneurs,

with some of them now having successful startups. In 2019, the Cyprus University of Technology, Chrysalis LEAP and the Cyprus Energy Agency, with partners from across Europe and funding from EIT Climate-KIC, started working with the local maritime industry in order to find solutions and draw up action plans for its decarbonisation needs. One of the necessary actions was the establishment of a Maritime Accelerator, with a vision to develop high impact start-ups which would deliver breakthrough solutions to the maritime industry across the pillars of sustainability, supporting them in their transition to Climate Neutrality. Thus, the Maritime ClimAccelerator Acceleration Programme received funding in 2021 from EIT Climate-KIC and other sources, and more than 20 startups from around the globe have been accepted for the 2021 Cohort.

### Following the publication of the new IPCC Report (which has basically shown us just how bad the climate crisis is), how do you suggest we progress in order to have a genuine impact and help reverse and/or stop climate change before it really is too late?

The report shows that we cannot focus on small, individual steps. It is now time to focus on big solutions with a big impact. This is, however, easier said than done, as it requires many players to come together to solve the puzzle. You need researchers to come up with the solutions, banks and investors to finance them, governments to enable those solutions and, of course, the industry to implement them. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to have a clear vision of the future with clear targets, and to backcast the necessary steps. Do we want all ships to run on sus-



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# CHANGE CHANGE CHANGE

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE ONE STARTUP AT A TIME

By Antigoni Markitani

tainable green fuels by 2050? Then by 2040, we need (a), (b) and (c), and to have those, by 2030 we need to have...and so on.

**What are your thoughts about the companies and startups that have to navigate through the current political climate, increasing regulation and the many pieces of new legislation that are being constantly published and what do you suggest should be done to ease their way?**

There is no easy way out. Companies can either push against these changes and be left out of the game or they can embrace them and become leaders. The automotive industry faced the same challenges when stricter emission regulations were being imposed in the '70s. The Japanese automotive industry worked hard towards the targets and the American industry against them. Fast forward into the present and it is clear which of the two was the winner. The same applies to startups and researchers. Yes, what you are working on might be important now, but you need to 'see' into the future and solve those problems. Startups should be able to adapt, so that their solu-

tion and product is aligned with what will come. One of the dangers, however, is for a startup to be too early and thus unable to sell, as there won't be a current need for its offering.

**What do you hope the company's contribution to be in the future? What are the accelerator's long-term goals?**

The vision of the Maritime ClimAccelerator is to be the strategic partner of the maritime industry in the scouting, acceleration and incubation of high-impact climate and sustainability innovations. This is aligned with the overall goal of the Cypriot partners of the accelerator, which is to transform Cyprus into a carbon-neutral island. We want to diversify our economy and for it to also focus on sustainable development, by encouraging green, highly skilled employment while, at the same time, boosting societal resilience.

**When it comes to developing and sponsoring startups, what exactly is it that you are looking for?**

We are looking for startups that address the decarbonisation needs of the industry. Our partners, like Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, Multimarine Services, Petro-

nav Ship Management, and Fameline Holding Group amongst others, have provided 'challenges' and their personnel will be actively involved in the training that the startups will receive.

**How is it beneficial for a startup to become part of an accelerator? Is it more helpful than embarking on establishing themselves alone? Why does ClimAccelerator stand out from other potential sponsors or enterprises?**

In order of decreasing significance, a startup should join an accelerator for the connections and the investor network, the training and coaching provided and, lastly, the funding. If a startup or an entrepreneur is already well connected, one could argue that there is no real need to join an accelerator. In the case of the Maritime ClimAccelerator, we tick all three boxes. We have shipping companies, various ports across Europe and a small network of investors either participating in the ClimAccelerator or supporting us by providing free resources to the startups (i.e. access to ships for pilot installations). Secondly, we offer bespoke training and coaching based on the needs

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of the startup. The main trainer of the bootcamps will be Paris Thomas of Chrysalis LEAP and Strategyzer, while workshops will be provided by both industry experts (e.g. Martin Giese, Managing Director of the XPRENEURS Incubator), but also academics (e.g.. Thalys Zis of DTU). Lastly, we offer up to €20,000 per year, depending on the maturity level of the startup.