

Rome, 20 October 2006

Winner of Finmeccanica Innovation Award chosen**New method of identifying fires from a height of 36,000 km**

Thanks to a system designed by Finmeccanica subsidiary Telespazio, in partnership with the civil protection service, the prevention and control of fires has now become easier. With the new system, optical sensors mounted on geostationary satellites make it possible to identify fires covering less than a hectare from a height of 36,000 km.

The idea received a special mention today during the ceremony to present the third Finmeccanica Innovation Award, which was created by the group, a leader in the aerospace, defence and security sectors, to reward the research and innovation efforts made by all its employees—engineers, manual workers and office staff—involved in the manufacturing process at various levels.

For the award this year, 625 proposals were evaluated (30% more than last year), of which 82 went through to the final. Five equal winners were chosen by a committee comprising Italian and foreign university professors, and by top managers of industry.

As part of the "Technology and talent: towards the future" exhibition in Rome, Alcatel Alenia Space and Selex Communications received awards for developing enabling technologies for software radio, a product that is indispensable for all network-centric operations. Another award was won by the Italian and UK operations of AgustaWestland, for a new technology that improves helicopter performance by sharply reducing vibrations.

Also receiving an award was Selex S&AS, for an advanced image visualisation application. A new system known as "topomorphic design" means that current limits on pixel-based applications can be overcome, thus allowing the introduction of complex analogue functions: as a result, three-dimensional images can be generated from two-dimensional ones.

For the first time, Alenia Aeronautica won the award for the best patent, for an invention of exceptional strategic significance, created by Finmeccanica in partnership with a smaller company.

The Finmeccanica Innovation Award is designed to create value through research and development and thus increase competitiveness, as well as promoting integration between the group's companies, products and services. This strategy has also been recognised by the European Union, which put Finmeccanica in fifth place in its global list of companies with the most rapidly growing R&D investment.

The award-winners were chosen by a committee headed by Aldo Romano, Director of ISUFI at Lecce University and professor of innovation management in the university's engineering department. The committee also comprised seven leading academic and industrial figures: Roberto Cingolani, Director of the technical department of ISUFI; Marco Iansiti, Director of research and lecturer in strategic management at Harvard Business School; Nick Lieven, head of the department of aerospace engineering at Bristol University; Maria Luisa Luchi, head of the engineering faculty at Calabria University; James McGroddy, former Chief Technology Officer at IBM and member of the IBM Academy of Technology; Benedetta Spadolini, head of the architecture faculty at Genoa University, and Emilio Vitale, head of the engineering faculty at Pisa University.