

Rome, 26 October 2007

Winners of Finmeccanica Innovation Awards 2007 chosen

SELEX Sistemi Integrati receives Patent of the Year

The ceremony to present the winners of the Finmeccanica Innovation Awards took place at Alenia Aeronautica's Grottaglie plant today. Now in their fourth year, the aim of the awards is to enhance the value of research and innovation within the Group. Since the start of the initiative in 2004, more than 2,000 proposals have been submitted, involving 6,000 people. Of particular note has been the increase in the number of entries from employees based overseas: from 10 projects in 2004 to 203 in 2007, thus confirming the international nature of the initiative.

The Finmeccanica Innovation Awards - open to all Group companies - were created to promote value creation through research and development, that is fundamental to growth and competitiveness. This year, 750 proposals were submitted, from which 73 finalists were chosen. The selection of the three equal winner projects was made by a committee chaired by Professor Nick Lieven, Head of Aerospace Engineering at Bristol University (UK), and comprising professors and researchers from this University - a centre of academic excellence in the aerospace sector, with which Finmeccanica has a long history of fruitful collaboration.

One of the three prizes went to MBDA, which has developed a Linux-based operating system able to fully utilise the capacity offered by new multi-core microprocessors, that enable calculations to be made in real time using several CPUs on a single microchip. The many potential applications of this system range from graphics simulators to navigation, radar systems and video games. Research on this project was carried out in cooperation with the University of Rome Tor Vergata and benefited from the contribution of a number of Group companies: Alenia SIA, Ansaldo Breda, Elsag Datamat, SELEX Communications, SELEX Sistemi Integrati and Telespazio.

Oto Melara, a company whose activities are increasingly focused on protection and security, received one of the awards for the system it patented and produced to protect vehicles deployed in danger zones from pressure wave damage generated by improvised explosive devices. The system is a shield consisting of composite panels of foam, ceramics and metal that become flexible in the event of a collision, providing protection for the underlying vehicle structure and, above all, its occupants. Though devised to increase protection for armoured vehicles such as the Ariete, Dardo and Centauro, the system can be applied to any vehicle.

The third award went to Alenia Aermacchi, which produced hardware and software that optimises the design and bending properties of tubing in hydraulic systems, generating substantial savings and making the manufacture of aeronautic and aerospace platforms more efficient. This technology has the potential to be used by all Finmeccanica Group companies that use hydraulic circuits, and may be licensed to third parties.

During the ceremony, Antonio Cetronio of SELEX Sistemi Integrati received the Patent of the Year award for patenting a special power transistor using PHEMT (Pseudomorphic High Electron Mobility) technology and the related production process. The electronic components used in PHEMT technology are essential to mobile phone manufacture and are of particular interest for satellite communications and advanced radar systems.

The award was also made in consideration of Antonio Cetronio's expertise in the area of gallium arsenide and nitride technology, which are recognised all over the world.

There were also two special mentions.

The first was for Luciano Armato of Oto Melara, who, together with design colleagues from the technical department at the La Spezia plant, and with the support of the entire management, patented an innovative system for motorising a wheelchair. By making small modifications to a standard wheelchair and electric scooter, the team produced a new flexible, low-cost means of transport with a range of up to 20 km, which can be used indoors or outside.

The second special mention went to Davide Bonaffini of Ansaldo Breda for the development of an analytical tool to quantify the environmental impact of the production, use and decommissioning of a "typical product". This leads to Environmental Product Declaration certification, which summarises the main technical, energy and environmental characteristics. The analysis enables simulations to be carried out that identify optimal solutions in terms of eco-design, materials, technologies and costs. This award highlights the Group's commitment to environmental protection.

Pier Francesco Guarguaglini, Chairman and CEO, commented: "These awards demonstrate Finmeccanica's focus on process innovation and individual talent. We are convinced that to be successful in the high technology sector you need to give people free rein and enable them to work with tools and methods that can bring out the abilities of each person. Only in this way can we obtain important results in the context of finding additional applications in sectors other than Aerospace, Defence and Security".

The Grottaglie plant, the venue for the 2007 Innovation Awards, has a strong symbolic value as it is the production location for two of the main sections of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, the world's first commercial aircraft to be made using carbon fibre rather than aluminium, based on a patent held by Alenia Aeronautica.