

Rome, 28 February 2011

2010 Finmeccanica Innovation Award held today in Naples

The ceremony for the seventh Finmeccanica Innovation Award was held today at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples.

The Innovation Award was instituted in 2004 with the aim of encouraging innovative ideas and projects relating to the Group's different business areas. Finmeccanica regards innovation and individual talent as key factors for ensuring competitiveness in the high-tech sector. That is why, each year, the Innovation Award invites every employee at the Group to make their contribution to continuous progress at Finmeccanica, by offering visibility and recognition to those able to propose solutions that can be translated into specific industrial applications and improve company performance.

The Award, which is one of the most important and eagerly anticipated events at Finmeccanica, has produced tangible, measurable results over the years. The proposals submitted have been turned into effective new applications that can be used to develop successful products and processes. Participation in the initiative has grown continuously and, in the seven years that the Innovation Award has been held, it has involved a total of over 16,000 people and around 5,500 proposals.

Of the more than 1,000 projects submitted in 2010, just 20 made it through to the final stage, where they were judged by an international panel of experts co-ordinated by Stanford University (USA). The 2010 Innovation Awards went to:

SELEX Communications for its multi-role software radio

During the development of the software-defined radio, a new family of portable products was created to include small, low-cost products intended not just for military applications but also for security, governmental and private use. The ability of the software-defined radio to load different waveforms such as TETRA, DMR and military standards within a single hardware and software platform enables a new, advanced level of integration to be achieved. In particular, the software protocols developed allow these terminals to organise themselves into local networks without requiring the use of fixed stations. This product family makes it possible to achieve significant cost reductions thanks to the convergence of various portable products currently in production and in the catalogue.

WASS for its intruder and obstacle warning system

This is a sonar system built into a ship's bow that can identify obstacles on the surface of the water along the course that the ship is taking. It also provides a three-dimensional visualisation of the seabed along the route. The system can additionally be installed on the ship's stern, providing an excellent solution for the prevention of accidents during mooring. This technology is highly innovative thanks to the price/performance mix that it offers. The product is aimed at the motor-boat and sailing pleasure craft market, which is very large and has few competitive solutions. Based on the sonar system, the company also presented an underwater anti-intrusion system that can monitor and protect the body of water around the system up to a range of 300 m. This has many potential applications, from protecting ships at anchor and technical installations at sea such as oil pipelines and oil terminals to securing state-owned or private areas.

Finmeccanica plays a leading role in the global aerospace and defence industry, and participates in some of the sector's biggest international programmes through its group companies and thanks to well-established alliances with European and US partners. A leader in the design and manufacture of helicopters, defence and security electronics, civil and military aircraft, aerostructures, satellites, space infrastructure and defence systems, Finmeccanica is Italy's leading high-tech company. It also boasts significant manufacturing assets and expertise in the transport and energy sectors; it is listed on the Milan stock exchange and operates via a number of group companies and joint ventures. At the end of 2010, the Finmeccanica Group had around 75,200 employees, including over 42,500 in Italy, 11,900 in the US, 9,700 in the UK, 3,700 in France, 3,400 in Poland and over 1,000 in Germany. Over 85% of the Group's employees are based in our three "domestic" markets. As part of its drive to maintain and build on its technological excellence, the Finmeccanica Group spends 11% of its revenues on research and development.

Thales Alenia Space for its feed system with cross polarisation cancellation for reflector-based SAR

This is an innovative project relating to space synthetic aperture radars (SARs) developed using a combination of advanced antenna design methodologies, various enabling technological domains and practical experience from previous projects. The project solves the problem of the allocation, given the reduced amount of space available in the smaller class of launcher (VEGA), of high-performance solutions in reflector-based SAR systems that operate on cross polarisation and would otherwise require far greater focal lengths. This principle underpins the proposals made as part of the European Space Agency's BIOMASS project and can be extended to the entire class of low-frequency SARs, from P-band to S-band, submitted for scientific missions in Europe and in co-operation with NASA.

The following prizes were also awarded during the ceremony:

“Finmeccanica Group Patent of the Year”, to DRS Technologies for *A Pixel Structure Having an Umbrella Type Absorber with One or More Recesses of Channels Sized to Increase Radiation Absorption*

This innovation consists of sub-diffraction-limit holes applied to the sensing element of a microbolometer used as an uncooled sensor to obtain infrared images. This technique significantly improves sensor performance by optimising radiation absorption – and therefore increasing its sensitivity – while at the same time speeding up response times by reducing the mass of the sensor. The improvements can be obtained without disrupting the manufacturing process, i.e. without increasing costs, and the resulting rise in sensitivity and faster response times offer significant competitive advantages.

“Best Supplier 2010” to Pratt & Whitney Canada, a partner company of AgustaWestland

“Pratt & Whitney Canada” (P&WC) has been engaged for many years in fruitful collaboration with AgustaWestland in relation to numerous strategic programmes, demonstrating a high level of both professionalism and responsiveness in assisting AgustaWestland and its customers with any problems regarding the materials in use. Engines supplied by Pratt & Whitney Canada have proven to be extremely reliable: some of the engines replaced at the time-between-overhaul (TBO) were found to be in excellent condition. During the initial development phases for the AW169, Pratt & Whitney Canada played an essential role in defining, in conjunction with AgustaWestland, the mechanical, electric and aerodynamic aspects for the installation in the helicopter of the PW120 engine. Despite the very tight schedule, the companies collaborated so efficiently that AgustaWestland was able to complete the project precisely on time.

“Industrial Award 2010”, to Ansaldo Energia, for its *Gas burner assembly for a gas turbine project*

The VeLoNOx™ combustion system has been developed by Ansaldo Energia in order to meet the most severe and stringent requirements associated with the efforts towards a better environment sustainability. That system, patented on 2005, has been innovating the original concept of diffusion pilot supported premixed flame to a premixed pilot supported premix flame in order to reduce the NOx emissions to the stack thus fitting the environmental requirements. The invention made Ansaldo Energia increase its competitiveness and its position in the power generation market whereas the polluting emissions reduction is one of the main concern. Even more, the system has been demonstrating a very good performance resulting in low NOx emissions in a wide load range in the typical flexible operation required to fit the most severe grid requirements. Today, the system has equipped 25 units (both new units and retrofit units) cumulating more than 85.000 operating hours, demonstrating a successful performance in many different sites.