

Drone Contest: An Open Innovation Challenge by Leonardo is on the starting line

- **Leonardo's Drone Contest was presented today, during a virtual symposium. The contest represents an opportunity for Open Innovation and collaboration between industry and universities which creates synergies between development and academic research in the fields of *Artificial Intelligence, Computer Vision, Sensor Fusion, and Machine Learning***
- **The objective of the project, promoted by Leonardo, in collaboration with six Italian universities, is to encourage the development of technologies related to Artificial Intelligence when applied to unmanned systems, generating an ecosystem by which large enterprises, universities, SMEs, spin-offs and startups can interact**
- **Drone Contest is the only competition in Italy with competing universities in an Artificial Intelligence race. The contest will develop over a three-year basis; the first race, scheduled for 18 September 2020, will see teams from the Polytechnic of Turin, the Polytechnic of Milan, the University of Bologna, the S. Anna School of Pisa, the University of Rome Tor Vergata and the University of Naples Federico II**

1st July 2020 - Today the first edition of **Leonardo's Drone Contest** was presented at a virtual symposium, titled "**Drone Contest. An Open Innovation Challenge**". It is designed and organised by Leonardo, a global high-tech company and national champion in the sectors of Aerospace, Defense and Security. The official launch of the contest took place during Leonardo's Innovation Day in Turin, last year.

The project is presented as an Open Innovation opportunity and a **collaboration between industry and universities** that aims to create a synergy between development and academic research in relation to the areas of **Artificial Intelligence, Computer Vision, Sensor Fusion, and Machine Learning**. Leonardo's Drone Contest aims to encourage the development of both technologies related to **artificial intelligence applied to unmanned systems** and **the creation of an ecosystem** that involves, in a virtuous intertwining, **large enterprises, universities, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), spin-offs and startups**.

The initiative, promoted by Leonardo, sees the collaboration of six important universities in the country: the Polytechnic of Turin, the Polytechnic of Milan, the University of Bologna, the S. Anna School of Pisa, the University of Rome Tor Vergata and the University of Naples Federico II. It is the only competition in Italy by which universities compete in an Artificial Intelligence competition.

The challenge, officially started in November 2019, will end in 2022, and during the contest the PhD students, supported by professors and in collaboration with the university and Leonardo teams, will have to develop and propose the most innovative capabilities of unmanned drone systems.

Leonardo, a global high-technology company, is among the top ten world players in Aerospace, Defence and Security and Italy's main industrial company. Organized into five business divisions, Leonardo has a significant industrial presence in Italy, the United Kingdom, Poland and the USA, where it also operates through subsidiaries such as Leonardo DRS (defense electronics), and joint ventures and partnerships: ATR, MBDA, Telespazio, Thales Alenia Space and Avio. Leonardo competes in the most important international markets by leveraging its areas of technological and product leadership (Helicopters, Aircraft, Aerostructures, Electronics, Cyber Security and Space). Listed on the Milan Stock Exchange (LDO), in 2019 Leonardo recorded consolidated revenues of €13.8 billion and invested €1.5 billion in Research and Development. The Group has been part of the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) since 2010 and became Industry leader of Aerospace & Defence sector of DJSI in 2019.

The first challenge of the Drone Contest will take place in Turin on 18 September 2020 and on that occasion the first results and potential of the respective projects will be analysed. Each year, the universities, divided into teams, will compete in a scientific symposium and with specific competitions. Leonardo supports, for three years, the activity of the six PhD students of the universities involved with scholarships for the annual comparison in competitions and aimed at fostering research and innovation.

The presentation symposium, held today in a digital mode and moderated by Federico Ferrazza, Director of Wired Italia, was introduced by Laurent Sissmann, Senior Vice President Unmanned Systems at Leonardo: *"In the future, the use of unmanned technologies will increase and the Drone Contest is a fundamental step in Leonardo's path to create today a strong ecosystem in the sector that can lead, thanks to technological progress and regulatory evolutions, to the development of new business models"*.

Afterwards a dialogue took place titled "The technologies and challenges that will change the future" with Roberto Cingolani, Chief Technology & Innovation Officer Leonardo. *"The Drone Contest is a test of the future. A future that will be characterised by the use of unmanned systems that will perform a spectrum of activities that man will never be able to perform with the same effectiveness and depth of analysis"*, said Cingolani.

During the symposium the Universities, with the PhD students of the Leonardo scholarships and the professors of the departments involved, presented the teams working on the project and the technological developments they have achieved and will use for the September challenge.

Creating and nurturing new goals in advanced technologies is at the heart of Leonardo's present and future objectives, perfectly in line and consistent with the Open Innovation process; the Drone Contest represents a new fundamental piece of the project that will show new and innovative results in the first competition on 18th September.

Today Leonardo is the only company in Europe able to provide complete remote piloting solutions - designing and developing all the elements of a "drone based" system - for intelligence missions, surveillance, monitoring, information acquisition, integrating platforms, radar and electro-optical sensors, mission systems and ground control stations. The development of *unmanned* technologies and applications is one of the key goals of Leonardo's strategic Plan, which aims to follow a path of sustainable growth and increase the Group's competitiveness in the long-term.