
PRESS RELEASE

COMPLEX MISSIONS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SANT'ANNA SCHOOL WINS LEONARDO'S DRONE CONTEST

The challenge held once again in the company's Piedmont site attracted the participation of seven Italian universities, with institutions from outside the country acting as observers

This year's edition introduced a broader range of action, putting the solutions developed by the participating teams to the test and determining their degree of maturity

Turin, 10/11/2023 – Having drones collaborate with autonomous terrestrial vehicles, using localisation and navigation solutions based on Artificial Intelligence algorithms, to perform complex missions in the absence of human or satellite GPS guidance: this is the main challenge of Leonardo's Drone Contest, held in Turin once again this year. The second edition, the first in a series of challenges due to conclude in 2025, was won by the team from Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

A collaborative approach among platforms is the key to a new combined system that significantly improves awareness of the operational scenario, speeds up the decision-making process, and reduces response time in the event of an emergency, due to the greater efficacy and efficiency of operations.

The solutions may be applied in complex scenarios such as inspection of natural disaster sites, and can also be used to reconnoitre sites that are hard to reach with other vehicles or emergency response personnel, as well as for general surveillance of high-risk areas. The involvement of Leonardo's expertise in these platforms (helicopters and aircraft) testifies to the company's interest in importing some of the logic developed in these experimental scenarios on a broader scale in the near future.

In addition to promoting the development of AI applied to drones (aerial and terrestrial), the event - organised by Leonardo in collaboration with seven Italian universities - is intended to promote creation of a nation-wide network of experts combining the technological capabilities of large enterprises, universities, SMEs, spin-offs and start-ups in Italy.

The institutions competing at Leonardo's Piedmont site were Politecnico di Torino, Politecnico di Milano, Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, Tor Vergata University of Rome, University of Naples Federico II, and a new addition: Politecnico di Bari.

The Drone Contest is also beginning to attract the attention of universities outside Italy, several of which expressed interest in participating as observers for the first time at this year's competition, in view of the possible international expansion of the event. The 2023 edition introduced a broader range of action capable of putting Artificial Intelligence solutions developed by different teams to the test and determining their degree of maturity.

In its Drone Contest, Leonardo sponsors a research contract for the 2023-2025 three-year period in each of the seven universities. The level of difficulty involved has gradually increased since the first Leonardo Drone Contest was launched in 2019, leading to the inclusion of some of the students and their research work within the company.

Leonardo, a global high-technology company, is among the top world players in Aerospace, Defense 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 that include 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 Solutions and Space). Listed on the Milan Stock Exchange (LDO), in 2021 Leonardo recorded consolidated revenues of €14.1 billion and invested €1.8 billion in Research and Development. The company has been part of the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices (DJSI) since 2010 and has been confirmed among the global sustainability leaders in 2022. Leonardo is also included in the MIB ESG index.

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