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CNES honours innovation champions

CNES took advantage of the 52nd International Paris Air Show, where industry, institutional and business representatives are in attendance, to honour France's national champions who are spinning off CNES patents and technologies.

Dedicated since its inception to research, CNES has shifted its focus in recent years towards providing a framework to spark innovation and boost uptake of the resulting applications. Far from pushing technology for technology's sake, the agency is now working on space projects that are improving citizens' daily lives and of major economic importance. To honour firms that are driving this dynamic, its Directorate of Innovation, Applications and Science (DIA) brought together 30 companies and awarded prizes to five for their efforts in this area.

The "Large Corporation" award went to Airbus Defence & Space for its spin-off of image-processing software and satellite systems on Pleiades. The "Software" prize was awarded to Capgemini Technology Services for its spin-off of Pleiades satellite tasking software. The "SME" prize was presented to M3 Systems for its spin-off of the GNSS NAVYS multi-constellation software environment. The "Know-how" prize went to MAP for its spin-off of expertise in satellite paints and coatings. And the "Patent" prize was awarded to Sodern for its spin-off of patented star tracker technology for the new-generation HYDRA multi-head star tracker.

The laureates were among those who proved most effective in spinning off CNES technologies in 2016 through licencing agreements with the agency. This ecosystem helps to accelerate development of start-ups like FLYOPS, which specializes in communications for airline ground services and wireless connectivity solutions for passengers. The company started out with a team of just five people in 2015 and now has 36 employees.

Maintaining France's position among the leaders in space is going to prove vital in the fiercely competitive global marketplace and synergies between public and private partners offer a way to boost competitiveness, both in the field of upstream research and in downstream applications. CNES has therefore launched a fully-fledged programme to nurture nugget technologies by promoting its intellectual property (patents, software, know-how and research results) and, at the other end of the chain, turning this intellectual property into sales of products and services, thus ensuring effective use of taxpayer funding while helping to stimulate the nation's economy and employment. By way of illustration, every euro invested in space generates €20 in spin-offs in the field of telecommunications.

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