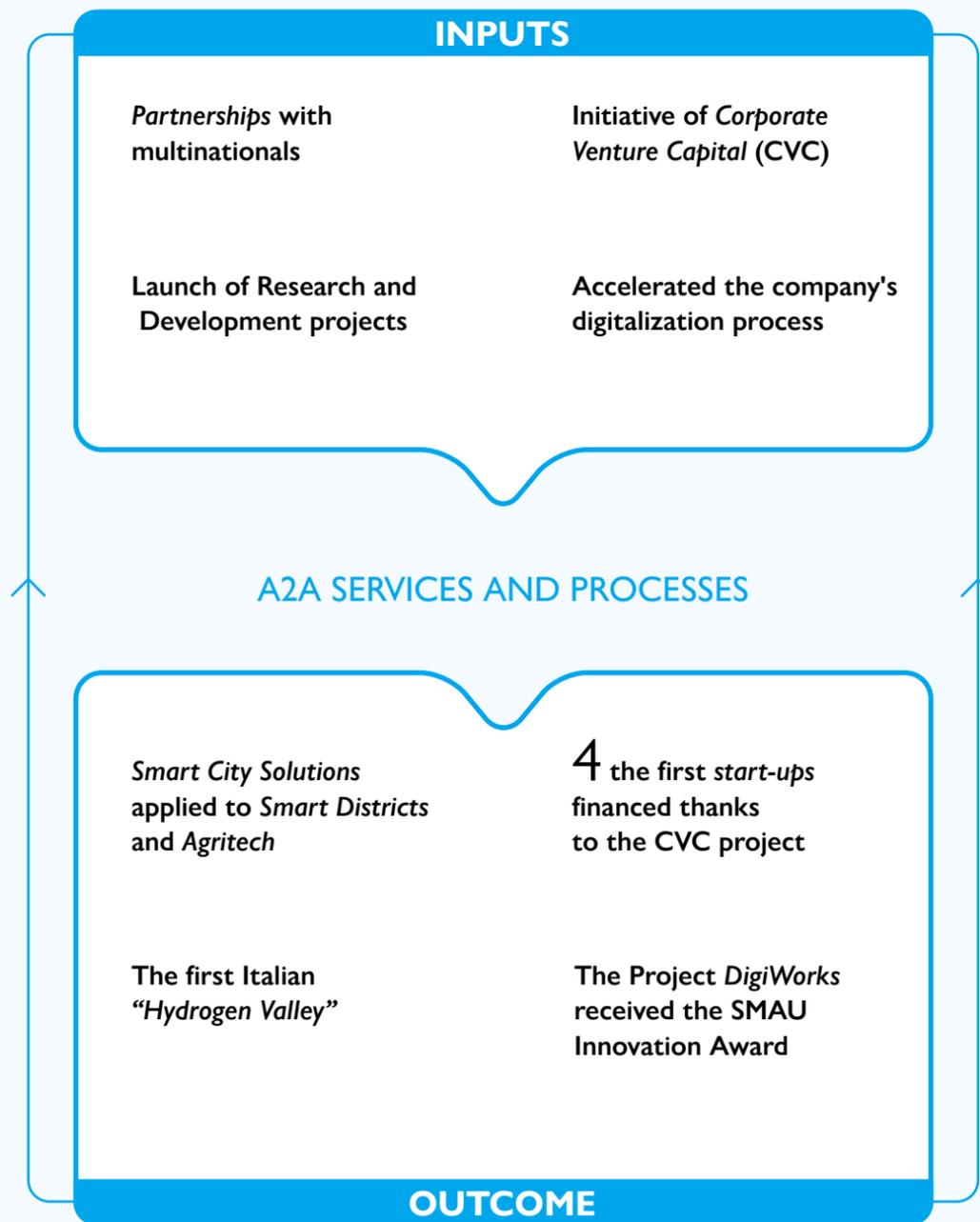




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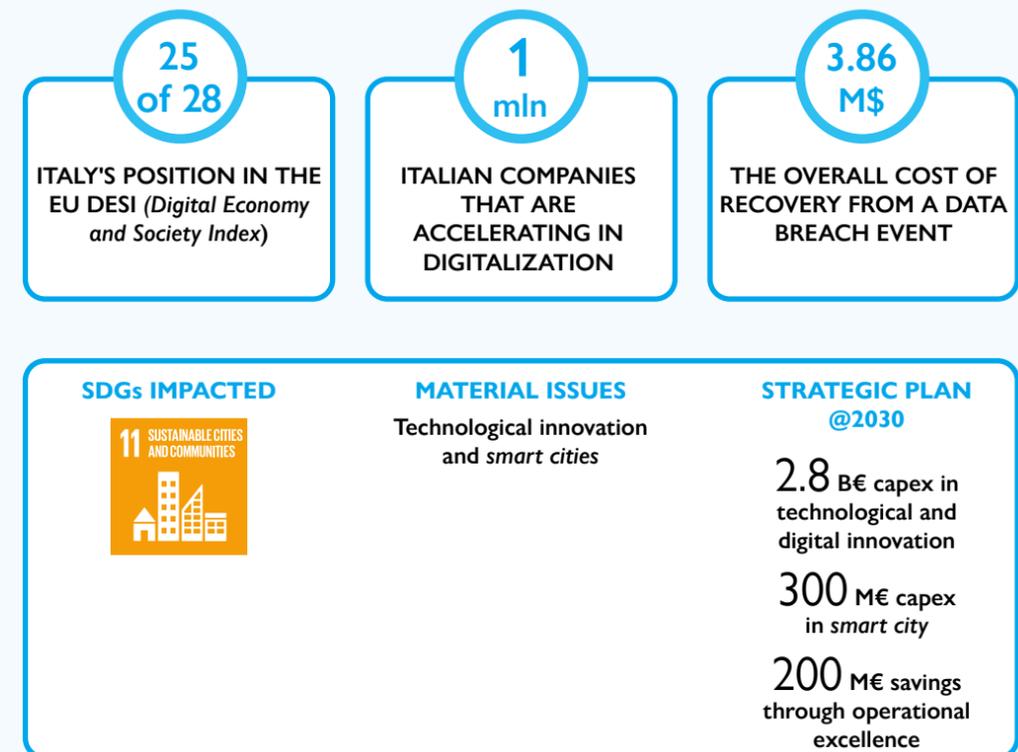
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Innovation and digital transformation

The smart city theme is not new, but the pandemic and the approval of the European Green Deal have certainly accelerated the process of making cities smarter, more digital and also capable of reacting effectively in emergency situations. In many ways, the construction of the city of the future today resides in the ability of multiutilities to re-imagine energy production, mobility (from public transport to car sharing), waste and water management in an innovative and smart way, maintaining a dynamic balance between current and prospective needs of the territory, economy and technological change. From a more corporate point of view, the Covid-19 emergency, and above all the effects that have resulted from it, has led companies to accelerate their digitalization processes and to focus more on those areas that have proved to be strategic in the management of the emergency. The *Excelsior* survey by Unioncamere and Anpal estimates, in fact, that there are more than one million companies in Italy that are accelerating on the digitalization front, investing in particular in 3 areas: technology, new organizational models and new business models. With reference to technology, compared to the pre-Covid situation, there is a growing interest among companies in the adoption of new solutions to improve cybersecurity (Cybersecurity and

Artificial Intelligence are increasingly strategic), the introduction of IoT technologies and the more widespread use of cloud and big data. With respect to the new organizational models, companies are taking steps to adopt systems for the continuous collection and analysis of data in real time, also through integrated digital networks, to encourage improvement in all areas of business, from production to internal processes; the latter are also the protagonists of numerous investments related to the sudden implementation of new working methods. According to research by the HR Innovation Practice Observatory of the School of Management of the Politecnico di Milano, in "agile" companies, 85% of employees say they are motivated and involved almost three times more than in traditional companies. Finally, most of the new business models, which are being consolidated in recent months, are characterized by an increasing use of data for the analysis of markets, as well as for the analysis of customer behaviours and needs, aimed at the development of new digital tools for promotion and sales, a more advanced customization of products and services, and better management of relations with suppliers.



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Technological innovation and smart cities

Optimization of Group competences and know-how through research and development activities to stimulate a continuous evolution of services and infrastructures, contributing towards the development and creation of the smart city of the future, which integrates all energy, environment, water, heat, networks and optic fibre services in a single centre.



9.1 A2A Smart City

The A2A Group, through its subsidiary A2A Smart City, develops smart, innovative and digital solutions both in the urban sphere, to improve the liveability of neighbourhoods and cities, and in the agricultural sphere, to enable more sustainable production that saves pollutants and resources through the use of technology.

The technologies of A2A Smart City

LoRaWAN® Ecosystem

A smart city is a city in which a multiplicity of devices work together to make cities smarter through the use of technology. LoRaWAN® is a network protocol, which empowers cities to do so by enabling long-range connectivity for Internet of Things (IoT) devices in an efficient, scalable, flexible and streamlined manner. To contribute to the deployment of these devices in cities in 2020, A2A Smart City and the company DEKRA have signed a part-

nership agreement aimed at simplifying and accelerating the design and certification process for devices using the LoRaWAN® network. The project therefore offers companies a solution to accelerate time to market by providing the assurance that the devices designed and marketed will fully meet LoRaWAN® security features, operating as intended in any network condition.

IoT&Security for infrastructures

Developing and integrating IoT&Security services for infrastructures, cities and districts is the goal of the new partnership with the multinational Rina signed in December 2020. The idea is to combine the technological skills of A2A Smart City with the engineering skills of the partner, in order to strengthen the Group's position in the complex

market of infrastructure and transport, through interventions to improve the efficiency of Italian infrastructure assets (bridges, dams, viaducts, etc.) in compliance with regulatory standards, quality and safety checks, cost control and project timing.

A2A Smart City solutions

A2A Smart City contributes to the design of innovative solutions to improve housing sustainability both in terms of safety and liveability and in terms of energy efficiency. In residential areas, in fact, it realizes and installs energy, acoustic and environmental monitoring systems, electric recharge, trackers, health assistance call buttons in common areas, smart lighting and irrigation. By way of example, A2A Smart City has designed and implemented the entire smart section with particular reference to safety, energy saving and innovative services in various newly built residential districts in Milan: Figino, Cenni, Merezzate, Moneta, Rizzoli, Quintiliano for a total of over 1,500 housing units. In addition, in the *City Life* district in Milan, the company designed and built a smart security system for common areas based on intelligent video surveillance, SOS stations and Wi-Fi area with the Open Wi-Fi of the Municipality of Milan.

A2A Smart City also contributes to the creation of smart districts, a sort of city within the city, which manages resources intelligently, aims to become economically sustainable and energy self-sufficient, and is attentive to the quality of life and the needs of the citizens who live there every day.

For example, the **Smart District Uptown – Cascina Merlata** is the result of a partnership between A2A Smart City and twelve other economic entities active in the area. It is a project that is part of broader urban redevelopment of an area northwest of the city of Milan, of about 900,000 m², inspired by the international model of the wellbeing city and based on the principles of sustainability, thanks to buildings with zero impact materials, services dedicated to people and innovation.

Agritech

Enhancing local agri-food traditions with environmentally friendly farming practices, cutting-edge strategies and innovative technologies is one of the activities undertaken by the Group in recent years.

A2A Smart City, thanks to its experience in the field of proximal sensors, offers in fact a complete

solution for the advanced monitoring of soil parameters, measuring leaf wetness, air and soil temperature. The combination of the monitored data, with those obtained from the weather forecast, allows to obtain a powerful tool that helps companies, in a logic oriented to sustainability, to optimize production, with significant savings in time and costs.

Among the projects carried out in the agricultural field, **Around the Ground** has been awarded by Coldiretti Brescia with the **Oscar Green 2020**: it is an experimental project, realized in partnership with different entities of the entrepreneurial world of viticulture, oenology and cultivation in Brescia, which guarantees benefits in terms of water saving and management of treatments with fertilizers and pesticides, through technological innovation and digitalization.

The **Franciacorta Consortium**, for example, has decided to create a new agro-meteorological network that is much denser and able to give information on weather events in real time, through sensors that transmit via LoRaWAN[®] network. This choice is once again dedicated to environmental protection, providing a decision support tool to optimize treatments. In this case too, A2A Smart City's intervention concerned the activation of a monitoring service aimed at collecting meteorological data (air temperature and humidity, rain gauge and dew point) and data relating to the soil (temperature and humidity), necessary for determining the soil's capacity to store water and thus making it possible to control the vigour of the vines. Today, thanks to a data collection platform, the Consortium and the wineries can consult fundamental data in real time in order to define precise interventions on crops, optimizing the use of water resources, fertilizers and pesticides.

Also at the **Consorzio Casalasco del Pomodoro**, thanks to the moisture sensors and a monitoring platform installed by A2A Smart City together with IBF Servizi S.p.A., it is now possible to have precise and representative data of the field and the crop at all times, to monitor the water content of the soil and optimize irrigation, with an important saving in water resources.

9.2 Open Innovation

Open Innovation means creating a real ecosystem of innovation, made up of entities internal and external to the Group, to originate a "flow of knowledge" functional to innovation itself.

In order to enable the open innovation model and make it truly effective, the Group has chosen to equip itself with a shared platform through which employees, start-ups, companies and the world of research can contribute to creating value for the areas in which A2A operates. The platform allows

launching idea generation, campaigns or hackathons but also managing end to end the development of different activities concerning the innovation function.

For this reason, the Group has created a true virtuous process of innovation generation and management that has allowed building strong relationships with important entities of the ecosystem such as incubators/accelerators, innovation hubs, Universities, Research Centres and Venture Capitalists.

CORPORATE VENTURE CAPITAL

Corporate Venture Capital (CVC) initiative was created with the aim to encourage the Group's innovation through investments in start-ups with high potential. A2A aims, in fact, to identify innovative technologies and business models to strengthen its core business, support its evolution and generate value for the Group and for the areas in which it operates. The circular economy, energy transition, mobility and new technologies to build the cities of the future are some of the areas of investment in the CVC programme, which sees the participation in the project of 360 Capital, the leading Italian and European player in venture capital, and the Politecnico di Milano with the fund Poli360, which leverages on the Technology Transfer Office and the incubator Polihub. The first investments in 2020 were:

Greyparrot

Greyparrot, a UK start-up, has developed a computer vision-based solution that integrates artificial intelligence and data analytics: the software automatically identifies different types of waste and also provides information on composition. The start-up is already signing agreements with major international players in the sector and has also won "The Europas Awards 2020" for the category "Hottest Climate/GreenTech Start-up". Greyparrot, whose software is currently being tested at the A2A plastics sorting and treatment plant in Muggiano (MI), was chosen because it will offer the **possibility of implementing digitalization and automation of waste cycle processes**, further improving the efficiency of the collection and separation process.

Hades

Hades, a Swiss start-up linked to the University of Zurich, has developed a computer vision-based solution for the inspection of wastewater networks. Using an artificial intelligence model, it is able to identify and locate leaks, breaks and cracks along the network, **enabling predictive maintenance and savings of up to 40% on repairs and upgrades**. Contracts with major European municipalities and utilities are already in place for the start-up.

Circular Materials

Circular Materials, an Italian company based in Milan, has patented a **technology for the removal of heavy and precious metals from industrial wastewater with a view to the circular economy**. The plant developed by the start-up effectively recovers metals (arsenic, cadmium, nickel, zinc, copper, mercury, gold, silver, etc.) so that they are not dispersed into the environment and can once again generate value. The technology adopted also allows a drastic reduction in treatment costs compared to current technologies. The start-up is in the process of forging agreements with leading industry players in Italy and Germany.

Siteflow

Siteflow, based in France, has developed software for the digitalization of maintenance processes in large production facilities. The solution **improves shared operating standards for managing scheduled maintenance, producing audit documentation and enhancing a centralized digital database**, while also promoting collaboration between various professionals. To date, the start-up's customers include some of the leading players in the nuclear, oil & gas and construction sectors.

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Plug and Play – Sustainability batch

With a view to further strengthening and developing the Group's ability to intercept valuable solutions in the field of sustainability, A2A has joined the Plug&Play scouting programme as an anchor partner of the first Hub on "Sustainability". Plug & Play is one of the most relevant start-up accelerators in the world (4th in the *Forbes world ranking*), as well as being a Venture Capital operator in the seed field (over 730 investments in its portfolio, 60 exits and participations for 7 billion dollars). Since the start of the programme in February 2020, A2A has met with more than 180 start-ups from around the world and initiated several trials.

Innovation broker

To maximize the reach of the challenges, A2A leverages on innovation brokers, open innovation platforms, which enable the Group to connect with a pool of creative people from all over the world. One example is *Innocentive*, a platform with a community of about 400,000 solvers.

Two challenges were initiated during 2020:

- the **WtE Challenge**, aimed at finding a partner to develop a system to optimize the performance and efficiency of waste-to-energy plants by reducing the variation in the calorific value of waste fed into the incinerator. The objective is to allow optimized combustion of waste in the boiler, thus ensuring a higher production of electricity, a reduction in operating costs and lower CO emissions into the atmosphere;
- the **Networks & District Heating BUChallenge**, aimed at finding new projects for the development of compact underground electrical substations for urban areas.

Call for Ideas

The A2A *Call for Ideas* initiative has been created with the aim of accelerating the process of the emergence of ideas and valuable projects in support of the Group's strategic objectives by means of tools and methods that stimulate the inclusive involvement of all the Group's people from a Corporate Intrapreneurship perspective, so that each employee may feel that they are an active part of the change and have the means to undertake it, with a contribution developed and cultivated by individuals, to the benefit of all.

The emergence of talents and the contamination between the different souls of the Group will be objectives and direct consequences of the success of the initiative. In addition, the enhancement of virtuous behaviour by participants will be an indispensable element to effectively reward the efforts

of participants and spread the culture of innovation in a pervasive and continuous way.

The initiative is managed through the A2A innovation portal, to enable the community of employees to be reached quickly, and is structured in 3 phases:

- collection of ideas: concluded in December with the generation of more than 500 ideas that will continue in subsequent phases;
- development of ideas: enrichment of 320 ideas through a structured path in 7 steps, to elaborate the key information for the development of a concept;
- final selection.

The event will conclude in 2021 with a pitch session in which scores will be awarded by a jury of excellence consisting of CEO, Chairman, Top Management and external advisors in line with the finalist ideas. Winners will then be announced and final prizes awarded.

Finally, to realize the winning ideas, there will be a venture building process in which the teams will be followed and accompanied in a process of coaching, mentorship and support to incubate and implement the selected initiatives.



9.3 Knowledge spillover

The search for innovative and technologically advanced solutions affects all areas of the Group and is aimed at improving both the products/services offered to end customers and the working methods of all the resources employed by the various Business Units.



ONA2A

With a view to the continuous improvement of the Group's work in a multi-business entity such as that of the A2A Group, it becomes important to identify individual and specific development actions for each professional area. For this reason, the **ONA2A** project was carried out with the objective of defining a map of reports on the level of collaboration existing between different points of the organization, verifying the effectiveness of the inclusion of new roles and new organizational/re-organizational structures and analysing the impacts of remote work on collaboration, with a view to developing new normality. In October, a survey was carried out on the Group's entire email population (about 7,000 people) and more than 25 Focus Groups/meetings were held with the various stakeholders to interpret the maps and the evidence emerging from the analyses. Concluded in January 2021, final reports with evidence and analysis suggestions were shared with the various function managers. In addition, an internal Group competence centre on ONA methodologies has been set up and the definition of the action plan is underway.

IDENTITA2A

In 2020, the **IDENTITA2A** project was promoted, on the effective, innovative and agile management of the Group's roles and skills. In the first phase, the Group's new professional model was defined, divided into families, sub-families, roles, associated key technical skills and the related governance was defined. The model was then validated by the Corporate and BU structures and entered into the SmartPeople system. Change management activities involving cascading to managers and communication initiatives aimed at accompanying the open-

ing of the model to employees and managers for 2021 are underway.

People Analytics

The project aims, with an articulated roadmap, to develop a tool to support the decisions of the HR management and the business, through the definition of data analytics. This system will progressively integrate not only the personal, contractual and organizational data of employees but also all the data of the individual HR processes (selection, development, training, etc.), in order to produce advanced reporting with processing times that allow a data driven approach. October 2020 saw the completion of the first step in the integration of personal, contractual and organizational data, as well as data relating to remote working, with the release, as part of the HR pilot, of the supporting reports.

Dynamic Sizing

With the aim of objectively estimating the growth of the workforce, a sizing tool was designed within UNARETI. The tool is able to increase managers' awareness of the work allocation of their resources through simulations and "data driven" planning. Thanks to this model, it was possible to estimate the growth of the workforce to 2030 and efficiency levers were identified for the optimization of business processes. It is planned to disseminate the tool at corporate level to support the implementation of new organizational structures and the drafting of budgets.

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A2A and TEDx

In 2020, A2A was the main partner of "Countdown", the project promoted by TEDxMilano in collaboration with Future Stewards, an international coalition working on climate change issues.

The initiative has one strong goal: to accelerate the implementation of solutions to the climate crisis by turning ideas into concrete actions. The project aims to contribute to building a better future for society by promoting practices that focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030, an essential first step towards a safer and cleaner planet.

During the event there were important speakers from the Italian and international scene: scientists, entrepreneurs, innovators, activists, politicians, architects and artists gave their contribution for concrete solutions to protect the planet and its population, offering useful ideas to stimulate action by world leaders and all citizens.

Design To Value

In 2020, a working group with more than 50 colleagues from the Networks & District Heating BU and the Supply Chain function reviewed 3 specific projects relating to the integrated water cycle, electricity distribution and district heating, through the application of the Design to Value (DtV) methodology, with the aim of optimizing investments, reducing operating costs and increasing plant performance. Specifically, the selected projects were:

- revamping of the Verziano treatment plant;
- construction of the new "Comasina" primary station;
- district cooling plant as part of the "SEI Milano" project.

In addition to the important economic benefit that can be obtained by focusing the investment on the aspects with the greatest added value, in fact, colleagues have also worked to optimize other parameters, in particular those of environmental impact, such as energy efficiency, production from renewable sources, CO₂ emissions and the use of environmentally sustainable components.

Another fundamental characteristic of the project, which makes it particularly avant-garde, is its replicability. The expertise acquired and the solutions identified can be transferred and applied to other

projects with similar characteristics, enhancing the optimization of investments in the medium-long term. Some of the main benefits achieved in the projects are summarized below.

Verziano treatment plant

Optimization through 30 initiatives identified on the basis of the key dimensions of the DtV such as technological innovation (e.g. photovoltaic panels, MABR4 for oxygen diffusion, sludge hydrolysis), redesign of specifications (e.g. civil works, compartmentalization of tanks) and revision of supply mechanisms, with an overall impact estimated at 14,000 tons less of CO₂ equivalent per year and 8.6 million euro saved, to be re-invested in other projects of the water cycle or in potential further tariff reduction.

Primary stations

Identified and evaluated more than 40 optimization initiatives such as technology innovation, specification redesign and revision of delivery mechanisms. For the 9 stations in the perimeter, on the basis of the applicability of the individual initiatives, Opex savings of approximately 7 million euro over 30 years and a reduction of 270 tonnes per year of CO₂ equivalent are hypothesised (-22% compared to the initial scenario).

District cooling

Identified more than 20 capex optimization initiatives, which achieved the goal of reducing SEI Milano's investment by more than 25%, with the possibility of achieving a reduction of 3 thousand tons of CO₂ equivalent per year from an extension to scale of district cooling projects (equivalent to about 10 km² of forest to absorb CO₂).

At the end of the Design to Value process, which lasted about 5 months, some of the colleagues who actively participated in the process received a certificate of recognition of the objectives achieved: 10 colleagues were awarded the DtV Practitioner level and 8 were awarded the DtV Specialist level.

9.4 Research and Development Projects

The search for innovative and technologically advanced solutions involves all areas of the Group's activities and is aimed at improving both the health and wellbeing of its workers and the sustainability and efficiency of the various A2A Business Units.

Waste Analytics

This project involves the testing of a system for the automatic, real-time monitoring of waste flows within the plastic separation plants. Specifically, the proposed system consists of a set of cameras, a computer vision model based on artificial intelligence and a dashboard for managing and sharing the data acquired during monitoring. The objective is to create continuous and real-time analytics with respect to materials in transit on plant conveyor belts. This will allow increasing the level of knowledge of plant operation, improving its operation and sorting capacity, in order to intercept more plastic flows for selective recycling. This project reflects the Group's ongoing commitment to the valorization of waste from a circular economy perspective.

Exoskeletons

A2A has always paid particular attention to the health and wellbeing of the workers involved in its various business areas. With this in mind, the Group is constantly evaluating new technologies to reduce the physical impact and fatigue resulting from sustained and repeated efforts over time. Therefore, a trial was conducted to evaluate the benefits provided by an exoskeleton for upper body support. This was first employed in typical environmental sector operations, both in waste collection and street sweeping, and then to support operators working in vehicle workshops. The success of this test will lead in the coming months to the continuous use of exoskeletons for some tasks carried out within the AMSA departments, in accordance with a strategy to improve the ergonomic conditions of workers in the most critical operations.

Aquarius Project

In 2020, the project was launched for early detection of water leaks using a widespread network of non-invasive sensors and a dedicated processing platform. The noise signals picked up by the sensor network are analysed with specific correlation algo-

rithms, allowing a broken or deteriorated pipe to be located within a few days. This initiative brings a significant advantage in terms of readiness over traditional systematic search methods, which require extended time frames and guarantee only spot inspections. The project has already seen an important deployment phase in the water district of the historic city centre of Brescia (with 170 sensors installed) and will be extended in 2021 to other districts of the Municipality of Brescia and the municipalities of Botticino, Lonato and Montichiari.

Optimal Dispatcher

The forecast of thermal demand on the district heating network and advanced dispatching processes are fundamental to privilege production from renewable sources (or with lower environmental impact), contain CO₂ emissions and maximize plant marginality. Through the development of dedicated tools based on machine learning tools and mixed non-linear programming techniques, an important optimization margin has been found in the dispatching of production machines on the Milan-East and Brescia networks. By 2021, the Canavese and Lamarmora plants will be equipped with an innovative dispatching system that will guarantee savings of up to 10,000 tons of CO₂ and an increase in plant margins of more than 200,000 euro a year.

MINERVA PROJECT

Launched in early 2020, the Minerva project, led by LGH, aims to develop innovative services to support community and territorial resilience strategies. The idea is to use urban hygiene collection vehicles as real digital sentinels, thanks to the use of technologies linked to the world of IoT (Internet of Things) and artificial intelligence, in order to preventively monitor the levels of pollutants in the atmosphere with on-board sensors, increase the levels of separate waste collection by introducing new models in the circular economy, and finally reduce incorrect behaviour by "observing" the presence of waste on the roadside.

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9.5 Hydrogen

The Group's role as Italy's second largest electricity producer in terms of installed capacity and its established experience in the circular economy allow it to offer various solutions for the production of green hydrogen. For this reason, in 2020, the Group formalized its intention to develop the potential of this resource by entering into agreements with **SNAM**, **ARDIAN** and **FNM**.

In September 2020, Snam and A2A signed a Memorandum of Understanding for technological cooperation to study projects aimed at developing the use of hydrogen. The cooperation, to be carried out in compliance with the relevant legislative and regulatory framework, will focus first of all on the study, analysis and feasibility assessment of projects for the conversion of A2A thermoelectric power plants from coal to natural gas, hydrogen or natural gas/hydrogen mixtures. The two companies will also study solutions aimed at retrofitting A2A existing combined cycle gas turbines for hydrogen or natural gas/hydrogen mixtures and initiatives aimed at producing, storing and transporting hydrogen from renewable sources and modifying A2A gas distribution infrastructure to make it "hydrogen ready".

The Group has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the private investment company **ARDIAN**, with the aim of selecting the most suitable sites for an integration between existing renewable energy plants and hydrogen production units. Different plant configurations for a significant use of green hydrogen will be evaluated in order to identify a real pilot plant that both parties may decide to develop in the next phase of the partnership.

Finally, **FNM**, **A2A** and **Snam** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to give further impetus to the development of green hydrogen mobility in Lombardy. The plan, called **H2iseO**, will allow creating in the Sebino area and in Valcamonica the first Italian "*Hydrogen Valley*", providing it, starting from 2023, with a fleet of hydrogen trains and related infrastructure. In particular, **FNM**, **A2A** and **Snam**, each for their own areas of expertise, will collaborate in the creation of a production and refuelling system for the new clean energy trains, which will be purchased by **FNM**. By 2025, the hydrogen solution will also be extended to local public transport, with about 40 vehicles managed in Valcamonica by **FNMAutoservizi** (a company 100% owned by **FNM**), with the possibility of opening up to freight logistics as well.



9.6 Digitalization

A2A has not been found unprepared to face the current crisis thanks to the digitalization process already established and begun several years ago, which has not only enabled new opportunities for sustainability but also a diversification of the offer and services proposed by the Group.

Webform digital quotes

For some time now, A2A has been engaged in a process of digitalization of all the Group's assets, which from an operational point of view has also involved operations and communication channels with customers.

Thanks to a new platform, active since December 2020, many services (e.g. contract management, quote requests, information requests) are available online.

The channel also allows online payment by credit card, but also the inclusion of requests for quotes: at 12/31/2020, about 40% of quotes were requested via webform.

Workers management portal

Digitalization for the Group is an urgent need for change at all levels and business processes. Thanks to this drive, in 2020, Unareti received the SMAU Innovation Award, awarded to companies for the implementation of innovation projects that trigger a virtuous process of comparison and contamination of good practices.

The Group company was awarded for *DigiWorks*, a project aimed at simplifying business processes through the digitalization of all phases of sites, from design to construction, up to accounting and final testing. The project is part of a wider process of dematerialization, with the aim of using less material and energy, as well as speeding up procedures, thanks to the rapid sharing of documents and reports. A saving of 13,000 kg of paper is expected, corresponding to 12,350 kg of CO₂.



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