

Innovation and Participation // Europe

Recycled Paper West (RPW) is a cluster of eight mills, spread across five countries: France, Italy, Serbia, Spain and the UK.

The mills are quite isolated, so a potential wealth of innovative practices and innovation were not being shared. In fact, it was one of the key themes, which arose from the MyVoice staff engagement survey. Our employees asked to see increased participation and recognition of our innovation. Therefore, we decided to create the 2019 Innovation Awards.

The Awards culminated in a celebratory event, where representatives from all eight mills, came together to meet and celebrate their achievements. The event was a mix of presentations about the range of innovations developed across our five countries, dinner and, of course, the Innovation Awards presentations.

"The atmosphere was amazing," says Jelte, "29 high-level innovative projects were submitted, with 12 receiving prizes, across four categories:

- **Process Improvement:** This Award was won by the Avignon team, which had ingeniously extended their machine to a 2.8m paper width, meaning a greater range of products could be produced
- **Supply Chain Optimisation:** This Award was won by the Ania Proximity Warning System for forklifts

- **Product Development:** SSK won this Award for use of a drone to monitor the stockyard
- **Social Responsibility:** SK Belgrade took the Award for 'Cooperation and Support within their local community'

However, the overall prize was awarded to Avignon. Their prize was a visit to the Swedish Piteå mill. Unlike Avignon, this is a Kraft Paper Mill, so it will provide lots of opportunities to learn, and share innovations.

Jelte adds, "This has become more than just an innovation competition. It has started a torrent of ideas, which come to us on a quarterly basis and are shared by the central team in our newsletter, to inspire all of us with innovative ideas and good practices of our colleagues."

This initiative has also led to:

- an Innovation Co-ordinator in each mill;
- regular local recognition of good ideas, across all eight mills;
- local competitions, all feeding into the RPW Innovation Awards;
- continual flow of innovation projects – not just annually, but quarterly; and
- managers and workers being inspired by other teams.

