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Introduction

Celebrating Optics and Photonics and its outstanding positive impact in the world and in our everyday life (largely resulting from the current remarkable success and fast sustainable development in optics and photonics research, the Portuguese Society for Optics and Photonics (Portugal), SPOF - Sociedade Portuguesa para a Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Óptica e Fotónica (Portugal)) successfully organised its third triennial international conference on Applications of Optics and Photonics, 8 – 12 May, at the Universidade do Algarve in the lovely city of Faro, Portugal.

The conference was organized to foster the establishment of the widest range of cooperation projects and relationships with colleagues and institutions from all around the world, while increasing the external visibility of Portugal's optics and photonics research.

The success of the conference came from the enthusiastic commitment of the Portuguese optics and photonics community and of our friends from all over the world, and the endorsement and active support of the most important international scientific optics societies:

ICO, SPIE, EOS, RIAO; several national societies, committees, and boards: SEDOPTICA- Sociedad Española de Óptica (Spain), AMO (Mexico), STO (Tunisia), OPSS (Singapore), CVO (Venezuela), RCO (Colombia), SOFE (Ecuador), and SPF (Portugal);

other photonics and optics industries and companies, as well as the following projects and initiatives: Laserlab-Europe, iBROW, INNOVA, Laser World of Photonics, OPA, OQJ-Springer, adLASER, MTBrandão, Lda.;

and the contribution from the authors and presenters of the 191 effectively presented talks in all domains of optics and photonics.

Of the over two hundred works presented, the conference included 32 invited lectures from world leading scientists and 7 plenary lectures, which gave an excellent overview of the state of the art in optics and photonics research across the world pointing out perspectives of future developments.

Well over one third of all 149 effective participants of the conference were students. This percentage increased to nearly 50% among the Portuguese participants, illustrating the vitality and growth potential of research in optics and photonics in Portugal, and all over the world in general. The support of the International Commission for Optics helped the participation of seventeen students. EOS and SPIE awarded prizes, respectively, to the best student poster presentations and best student research works presented at the conference.

At the closing ceremony of the conference the 2014 and 2015 SPOF's Best PhD Thesis in Portugal in Optic and Photonics were awarded to Hugo Martins ("Distributed and Remote Fiber Sensing Assisted by Raman Effect") and to Marta Ferreira ("Fiber Sensing Based on New Structures and Post-Processing Enhancement"), both former students of the Universidade do Porto (Portugal).

Reflecting the development of the scientific and technological research in optics and photonics in Portugal over last decades and the success of the previous editions of SPOF's conference; it was decided to change the periodicity of our AOP conferences to biannual. Therefore our next conference will be held 3 – 7 June, 2019, in Lisbon, Portugal.

We are looking forward to another exciting and most enjoyable conference!

Manuel F. M. Costa

