

The International Conference on Optics and Photonics AOP2011 run very successfully in an exciting friendly and rewarding way. 257 participants openly shared ideas and experiences discussing the remarkable and exciting recent developments in Optics and Photonics and preparing new development paths and cooperation projects.

The conference was organized May 3 to 7, 2011, at the University of Minho and at the Melia Braga Hotel & Spa in Braga, Portugal. It has been the first major international organization of the Portuguese Society for Research and Development of Optics and Photonics, *SPOF- Sociedade Portuguesa para a Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Óptica e Fotónica* (www.optica.pt, contact@spidof.pt). The Portuguese Optics and Photonics Society was established in November 2009 reflecting the development of the scientific and technological research in Optics and Photonics in Portugal over last decades, and our main goal of promoting the development of Optics and Photonics in general and particularly in Portugal. Coming from all Portuguese continental and atlantic autonomous regions, SPOF counts with an increasing membership of over fifty regular members and several dozen student members working in almost all fields of pure and applied research both at the university and research institutions but also in the industry services and education.

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' optics and photonics research.

The success of the conference was only possible with the commitment of the vast majority of Portuguese Optics and Photonics scientists and the endorsement support and active participation of the leadership of the most important international scientific Optics societies – ICO, SPIE, OSA, EOS, Photonics'21, RIAO and SECPhO –, several national societies committees and boards – SEDOPTICA, AMO, CTOM, STO, OPSS, CVO, APLO, SPF and FCT –, and contribution of all of the over 460 authors and co-authors, from 47 countries of the five continents.

38 invited lectures from world leading scientists, including 9 plenary lectures, gave an excellent overview of the state of the art in optics and photonics research across the world pointing out the future development perspectives.

From the 256 works accepted, in all fields of optics and photonics, 237 (103 posters and 134 oral) were effectively presented. Nearly two hundred full papers were uploaded into MySPIE system to be published, after peer- reviewing, by SPIE in an ISI/SCI indexed proceedings book.

Almost 40% of the works presented at the conference were originated in Portugal giving a good and the widest representation of the research being made these days in Portuguese research institutions. Remarkable was also Spain' representation with nearly 20% of the conference participants.

The conference counted with 257 effective participants (plus 85 undergraduate students in May 3 and May 5 sessions on vision sciences and optometry). Although $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants came from Europe, Asia and Latin America had also important representations. Scientists from nine Latin-American countries represented roughly 10% of the conference participants. The Ibero-American Optics Network (RIO) organized a special session on cooperation in Optics and Photonics in the Iberia/Latin America region calling for the commitment of all in the development of Optics in our region. SecPho, the Southern Europe Cluster on Photonics, presented the experience of Iberian optics companies and development perspectives. As well the European Commission through its unit G5 "Photonics" expressed its support to the conference and its commitment to the development of the research in photonics in Europe with a special presentation on 'EU funded photonics research'.

One third of all participants were students, a good percentage of which came from developing countries. Roughly 50% of the Portuguese participants were PhD and master students illustrating the vitality and growth potential of Portugal' research in Optics and Photonics. SPIE awarded five prizes to the best student works.

The participation of women optics scientists is also to note both in what concerns the quality of the works presented and the number of participants rising up to nearly one third of the total. Positive is also the fact that in what concerned students the percentage of female raised to 40%. The importance of women in optics has being long time recognized by the community. The conference' first plenary speakers were five of the most distinguished optics lady scientists including former and current ICO, SPIE and OSA presidents.

SPOF is member of the European Optics Society and founding member of RIO, the Ibero-American Optics Network and is establishing close relationships with other societies around the world. Next year we will organize an International Summer School and in September 2013 we will host the 8th Ibero-American Optics Meeting (RIO/OPTILAS).

In the spring of 2014 the next AOP conference will be organized and we are looking forward to welcome you all in Portugal!