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The International Day of Light in Spain: a three years perspective



In 2017 the UNESCO declared the 16th May as the International Day of Light (IDL). This celebration is focused in making the society aware of the importance of the light and light-based technologies for the well-being of the humankind. Since 2018 many activities have been organized worldwide to show the crucial role of light in our lives and to attract young talent to the degrees of science and engineering. In this paper some members of the Spanish Committee for the IDL make a summarized description of the celebration of IDL in the previous years, 2018, 2019, 2020, and they introduce the flagship event that will be hold in Terrassa from the 12th to the 15th of May, 2021.

On the 16 May 2021 will be celebrate the fourth edition of the International Day of Light in Spain.

**This article is a summary of our original paper [1]*

In 2017 the UNESCO declared the 16th May every year as the International Day of Light [2]. It is a call for promoting activities that enable global appreciation of the central role that light and light-based technologies play in the lives of the citizens of the world in areas of science, medicine, communications, technology, culture, education, sustainable development and embedded technologies, [see the international web page](#).

The Spanish Committee for the IDL was constituted in 2017, as a continuation of the previous Committee for the International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies (2015). In this Committee participates various academic, scientific and industrial partners in Spain related to light science and light technologies. It develops actions to promote and disseminate the IDL activities, [see the web page of the Spanish Committee](#).

After three consecutive years of celebration some of these activities are now becoming well-established in Spain. In particular, the celebration of an IDL flagship event. After the successful events held at Universidad Complutense de Madrid in 2018, and at Universidade de Santiago de Compostela in 2019, the 2020 edition was programmed to be organized at the Faculty of Optics and Optometry of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), in Terrassa. However, this and other programmed events were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The organizers of this event, chaired by Dr. Elisabet Pérez, wanted to give special emphasis to Light, Vision and Visual Health, taking advantage of the fact that the year 2020 coincides with the nomenclature 20/20, which is commonly used to designate normal visual acuity in common eye examinations. The organizers' commitment continued, and the event was postponed one year and adapted to the current pandemic situation. The image in this summary shows the announcement of the event that will take place this year 2021 from 12th to 15th May.

When the flagship event was cancelled in 2020 due to the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, the local organization organized a photo contest between May 10th and 20th through Instagram. Various entities, companies and researchers (SEDOPTICA and its youth area, COOOC, IOT, María L. Calvo, FOOT, Secpho, Ajuntament de Terrassa, Fotónica21 and other collaborators of the IYL) greatly contributed to spreading the event through their social networks. The response was very positive, receiving almost 300 photos tagged with [#dil2020terrassa](#) during the days of participation and gathering almost 200 new followers on the Instagram account ([@DIL20_21Terrassa](#)). Very diverse photographs participated light being as a common motif in all of them. The winner was Ginger Candelario ([@gingercabu](#)) with the picture shown in [1]. Other related initiatives took place in 2020 despite of the pandemic restrictions, like that of the ALBA Synchrotron, publishing images related to "the lights of the Synchrotron" ([@alba_synchrotron](#)) during the days of the competition. Moreover, the OSA student chapter of the Institute of Optics of Madrid ([@iosa_chapter](#)) who shared images related to light throughout the day May 16th.

Many other activities took place in 2018 and 2019 [1,3]. These activities are now consolidated and continue in 2021, namely:

- The PHOTON Awards, an initiative of the Institute of Optics - CSIC which, in collaboration with SEDOPTICA and secpho (Southern European Cluster in Optics and Photonics), aims to recognize the work of communication, dissemination and approach to public opinion of the scientific, technological and social impact of research in optics and photonics and to promote and encourage the teaching of science and research and, in particular, optics and photonics to elementary and high school students. There have been three editions of these awards, 2018, 2019, 2020, and the forthcoming 2021 edition is already announced [3].
- The 'Misión ALBA' project for primary school students, an educational project by the ALBA Synchrotron, launched for the first time during the academic year 2018-2019, which this year will continue with virtual visits.
- The celebration of the IDL at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), organized by the Faculties of Sciences and Biosciences alternatively.

We continue to promote the IDL activities as a very important project related with education and outreach of Optics and Photonics. Many activities are oriented to make the society aware of the importance of light-based technologies for the well-being of the humankind. Other activities are oriented to students in primary and secondary schools in order to attract young talent to the degrees in science and engineering.

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Note about the authors

María J. Yzuel is President of the Spanish Committee of the IDL, and Ignacio Moreno and María L. Calvo are Vice-presidents of the Committee [3].

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- [2] Official international website for the IDL: <http://www.lightday.org>
- [3] Official website in Spain for the IDL: <https://www.diadelaluz.es/>

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