

European Physical Society announces a global project aiming for the declaration of an International Year of Light

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The European Physical Society (EPS) is delighted to announce the official start of a global project aiming at a United Nations proclamation of an International Year of Light in 2015. The project prospectus can now be downloaded from the Society website at www.eps.org.

Light plays a central role in human activities in science, technology and culture. Light itself underpins the existence of life, and light-based technologies will guide and drive the future development of human society. Light and optics have revolutionized medicine, have opened up international communication via the Internet, and continue to be central to linking cultural, economic and political aspects of the global society. Advances in lighting and solar energy are considered crucial for future sustainable development.

Scientists and educators, in a large variety of scientific disciplines ranging from physics, to astronomy, to chemistry and material science, to biology, etc., are very well aware of the tremendous importance of optical science and technology for future international development. But as the application of light through the field of photonics becomes the key cross-cutting discipline of science in the 21st century, it is critical that the brightest young minds continue to be attracted into science and engineering careers in this field.

It is the need to promote improved public and political understanding of the central role of light in the modern world which has motivated EPS to coordinate a proposal for the proclamation of an International Year of Light in 2015 under the auspices of the United Nations. As well as celebrating the anniversaries of important milestones in the history of science that fall in 2015, the International Year of Light project will include important aspects of education and development, focusing specifically on how the science of light can improve the quality of life in the developing world and in emerging economies.

“Light is an immediate and fascinating topic, but also inter- and multidisciplinary in all its numerous forms,” says EPS President Professor Luisa Cifarelli. “It is ideal to be chosen for the declaration of an 'International Year'.”

The project involves many international partners, representing major international scientific societies from all branches of physics. The release of the prospectus will be followed by a formal request for endorsement at the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) General Assembly in November 2011. This is the important first step in the process to approach the United Nations.

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Background Information on EPS

The European Physical Society provides an international forum for physicists and acts as a federation of national physical societies. Founded in 1968, the EPS now has over 3200 individual members, and brings together 41 national physical societies which themselves represent together over 100,000 physicists from the countries of Europe.

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