PRESS RELEASE

"Photonics Days Jena": High international interest at career and networking event for students in the field of optics and photonics

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One Nobel Prize winner, two funding awards, 45 program points, almost 50 speakers and nearly 600 participants from all over the world: These were this year's "Photonics Days Jena". The career and networking event for students and doctoral candidates in the field of optics and photonics, organized by the Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Optics and Precision Engineering IOF and the Max Planck School of Photonics, met a high international interest in its third year with a hybrid format.

"In German we say: 'Von nix, kommt nix.' (engl.: Nothing comes from nothing)," says Reinhard Genzel with a grin. He should know: In 2020, the astrophysicist was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics together with his U.S. colleague Andrea Ghez. Together, they were able to detect a black hole at the center of our galaxy over decades of research. So Genzel knows what it means to say that in science, sometimes you have to prove quite some staying power. But that with a spark of passion and a pinch of perseverance, all that work pays off in the end. For this Genzel is the best proof. "Invest yourself, work hard!" the scientist therefore calls out to the participants of this year's "Photonics Days Jena" during his virtual keynote.

For the third time, Fraunhofer IOF and the Max Planck School of Photonics invited students and doctoral candidates in the field of optics and photonics to their career and networking event. This year, the hybrid format also invited an international community to a virtual visit to the light city of Jena from September 29 to 30: Participants were connected not only from Germany but mainly from India and the USA.

The aim of the "Photonics Days Jena" is to network young talents in order to promote innovations and career paths in the fields of optics and photonics. There are plenty of topics and fields of work with bright future prospects in which young photonics fans can "invest" their talent, as Genzel puts it - and there are more and more. Quantum technologies are currently a particularly fast-growing market, Heike Riel knows. At international IT giant IBM, Riel heads the "Science & Technology" department as well as IBM's research group on "Quantum Europe & Africa" and is thus a proven expert on current developments in the market: "Quantum technologies are a hot topic," she says during the event. "But there is still a lot of research to be done!" Research for which creative minds and fresh ideas are needed.

Editorial Notes
Desiree Haak | Fraunhofer-Institute for Applied Optics and Precision Engineering IOF | Phone +49 3641 807-803 |
Albert-Einstein-Straße 7 | 07745 Jena | Germany | www.iof.fraunhofer.de | desiree.haak@iof.fraunhofer.de

Focus on networking and creativity

In order to develop precisely such ideas, the "Photonics Days Jena" offered an interactive platform with a colorful program of workshops, lectures and a makeathon. Creativity was also the focus of the two funding awards presented during the event:

In the pitch for the "Hot Stuff Award", presented by the Center of Excellence in Photonics in Jena, four young researchers with different project ideas applied for financial support from the center. The audience decided on the allocation of the funding via online voting: First place went to Johannes Kretzschmar from the "Lichtwerkstatt Jena". As an open laboratory, the Lichtwerkstatt offers a platform for tinkering, working and fiddling for all fans of optics and photonics. Work with the increasingly important quantum technologies is also to be made more accessible here. Kretzschmar and his team therefore want to provide an open source single photon detector. Kretzschmar now has 10,000 euros in funding from the Center of Excellence in Photonics to support this project. But the other pitchers did not go away empty-handed: Canan Gallitschke (Open Source Smart Glasses), Anton Averin (Non-invasive Glucose Detector) and Denny Häßner (Radiation Balanced Fiber Laser) each received 5,000 euros.

In addition, the "Applied Photonics Award", the Fraunhofer IOF's young researcher award, was presented. It is awarded for innovative theses that are particularly related to applied photonics. This year, the award went to theses that dealt with clean water, the removal of space debris, as well as new methods for medical endoscopy and more powerful lasers. A jury of experts, consisting of representatives from science and industry, had previously selected the winning papers. More about this year's presentation of the "Applied Photonics Award" at: https://s.fhg.de/applied-photonics-award-21

About the "Photonics Days Jena"

In order to promote young talents and thus innovations in the fields of optics and photonics, Fraunhofer IOF together with the Graduate School Max Planck School of Photonics has been hosting the "Photonics Days Jena" as a networking and career event for students and PhD students since 2019. From September 29 to 30, the organizers invited to network with an international community as well as representatives of renowned companies at a hybrid event. In addition to the professional exchange, the focus was on orientation in career issues and the provision of valuable contacts for one's own professional career.

Press photos

Printable press photos of the event are available online in the press area of the Fraunhofer IOF press area:
https://www.iof.fraunhofer.de/en/pressrelease.html

Contact

Katja Szafranski
Fraunhofer IOF
Coordination "Photonics Days Jena"

Phone: +49 (0) 3641 807-806
Mail: katja.Szafranski@iof.fraunhofer.de

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