FOREWORD

The workshop “Stars in Galaxies” was held in La Palma (Canary Islands, Spain) on March 7-11, 2003. It provided a unique opportunity to join together the wide Italian community of “stellar” astronomers, with an enlarged participation of many foreign colleagues from all the international institutions that operate astronomical facilities at the Canary Islands observatories.

Along the five days of the meeting, about 90 people reviewed fresh results on the leading topics of Stellar Astrophysics and Galactic Astronomy, debating the updated “status quo” of theory of stellar evolution and feeding new input from observations of the stellar populations in the Milky Way and external galaxies, most of them collected with the local telescopes at the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory in La Palma.

The original idea of this conference was to follow up the successful experience of the previous national workshops on Stars and Stellar Populations held in Teramo (1991 and 1993), and Carloforte (1998). A more “exotic” choice of La Palma as the congress venue, this time, was to some extent a natural election, in view of the important scientific perspectives opened by the Telescopio Nazionale Galileo (TNG), the main Italian facility for optical/infrared astronomy.

The leading role of the improved observational capabilities of the new-generation telescopes, like the TNG, directly introduced also the Joint International Meeting on the “New Perspectives of Observational Astronomy at the Canary Islands”. This flanked the “Stars in Galaxies” Workshop with a full day dedicated to review current and future instrumental projects of the European astronomical community, that see Canary Islands (and especially La Palma) as a reference site for the new Astronomy in the years to come.

As a stricking and extremely positive feature of this conference, we want to remark that about two-third of the whole contributions came from students and young researchers of virtually all the main astronomical centers in Italy. For its extension and preeminence, this process witnesses a healty and vigorous condition of Italian astronomy, in spite of the delicate situation that basic research is currently experiencing in our country.

Such a wide participation, of both young and experienced professionals has largely been made possible by the generous financial support of the Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica (INAF), through its main branch in Rome, and through the Observatory of Bologna and Teramo, and the TNG facility based at La Palma. We would like to warmly thank all our sponsors, and also acknowledge here the precious and untired effort of the local and scientific organizing committees, that so effectively helped in a fully successful and enjoyable meeting.

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