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The “Congrès des deux infinis”: an educational and outreach event in Réunion island, Fall 2022

Monday 21 August 2023 18:00 (15 minutes)

The “Congrès des deux infinis” (“Congress of the two infinities”) was a huge education and outreach festival, organized last Fall in Réunion island, parallel to the international conference EDSU2022 – “Fourth World Summit on Exploring the Dark Side of the Universe”. During two weeks, tens of events –public lectures, conferences in schools, university seminars, school contests, teacher training sessions, topical round tables, etc. –have allowed more than 6,500 spectators (teachers, students, general audience) from all over the island to benefit from this uncommon concentration of French-speaking researchers in physics.

This Congress, unique in many ways, did not come by chance. It is a climax of many activities organized in the past decade around the “infinitely small” and the “infinitely large” basic science topics, by a group of extremely motivated local teachers, far from mainland France –and thus with a limited access to research institutes, scientists or even educational resources. This endeavor started with the participation of some of these teachers to the French Teacher Program, organized yearly at CERN for 15 years, and then expanded with the help of CNRS/IN2P3 (the leading public research institute for these fields in France) and the Ministry of National Education.

After presenting the main realizations of these teachers over the years –characterized by the recurring use of the unique Réunion environment as a playground for educational activities –, this parallel talk will describe in details the contents of the “Congrès des deux infinis”, with a focus of the organizational difficulties that had to be overcome during the preparation phase and later on, during the Congress itself to give all participants a high-quality experience. To conclude, the experience gained along the way will be shared, for colleagues (researchers or teachers) who could be interested in organizing a similar event.

Collaboration / Activity

Ministry of National Education

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