

Review



The 20-Year Jubilee of the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science of the Italian Chemical Society

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Abstract: This paper illustrates the origin, mission, organization and main activities of the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science (Gruppo Interdivisionale di Scienza delle Separazioni, GISS) of the Italian Chemical Society in occasion of the twentieth anniversary of this organization, whose mission is to promote and disseminate knowledge on all aspects of separation science and to facilitate strong peer-to-peer relationships. GISS originates from a discussion group, also belonging to the Italian Chemical Society (SCI), having similar finality and the same promoter (the Italian pioneer of Chromatography Prof. Arnaldo Liberti), but less extended scientific interests than the GISS, since it was mainly focused on liquid and gas chromatography. The interests of the GISS span theoretical and practical aspects of separation science and cover all key topics requiring high-performance separation techniques to carry out advanced investigations and/or solve challenging analytical problems. The panoramic view of the GISS includes a synthetic review of the main activities carried out since its foundation, which comprises fast-track discussion meetings, participation, promotion and/or organization of national and international congresses, sponsorship of participation grants for young trainees and Ph.D. students, recognition of scientists who have made and continue to make an outstanding contribution to separation science, as well as young scientists who have evidenced their attitude to carry out significant studies in the field of separation science.

Keywords: organization of scientists involved in separation science; fast-track discussion meetings; awards in separation science; Italian Chemical Society; Interdivisional Group of Separation Science

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science (GISS) of the Italian Chemical Society (SCI). The group is composed of members of the SCI from academia, public and private research institutions and private enterprises who are active in all areas of separation science, including applications in chemistry, life sciences, forensics, environmental sciences and pharmaceutical research. The GISS can be considered the natural evolution of a previous discussion group of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry, the Group of Chromatography, which was co-founded by Prof. Arnaldo Liberti and was focused on liquid and gas chromatography. Arnaldo Liberti, who passed away on 21 August 2000, was a Full Professor of Analytical Chemistry at Sapienza University of Rome, Director of the CNR Institute on Atmospheric Pollution for twenty years, and the first President of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry. He was one of the pioneers in gas chromatography and among the first scientists to recognize the great potentiality of glass capillary columns in GC, which he deeply investigated for a variety of challenging applications, including the separation of isotopic molecules by either gas–solid or gas–liquid chromatography [1,2] (Figure 1).



Citation: Corradini, D.; Mondello, L. The 20-Year Jubilee of the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science of the Italian Chemical Society. *Separations* **2022**, *9*, 123. https://doi.org/10.3390/ separations9050123

Academic Editors: Erwin Rosenberg and Bogusław Buszewski

Received: 26 April 2022 Accepted: 9 May 2022 Published: 16 May 2022

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Figure 1. Prof. Arnaldo Liberti (1917–2000).

Hence, the Constituent Assembly of the GISS met during the congress "Actuality and Interdisciplinarity of Analytical Chemistry" held at the Department of Chemistry of the Sapienza University of Rome on 20–22 February 2002, which was organized in memoriam of Prof. Arnaldo Liberti by the Sapienza University of Rome, the Division of Analytical Chemistry of the Italian Chemical Society, and the Institute on Atmospheric Pollution of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) [3]. Promoters of the foundation of the GISS were members of the SCI belonging to four different thematic divisions whose scientific interests and application areas are common to separation science, namely the Division of Analytical Chemistry, the Division of Mass Spectrometry, the Division of Organic Chemistry, and the Division of Environmental Chemistry.

Most of the GISS members are from universities and research institutions distributed across all Italian regions, with a high concentration in Sicily (29%), Emilia-Romagna (21%) and Lazio (17%), according to the 2021 memberships, which reflects the geographical distribution of the larger and more active Italian research groups in separation science [4]. Their activities are focused on both theoretical and practical aspects of separation science and cover all key topics requiring high-performance separation techniques to carry out advanced investigations and/or solving challenging analytical problems.

The GISS is governed by a chairman and a steering committee, both elected according to the general rules of the Italian Chemical Society. The first chairman of the GISS was the late lamented Prof. Francesco Dondi [5,6] (Figure 2), who was one of the promoters of the GISS, followed by D. Corradini (CNR, Rome, 2010–2015), L. Mondello (University of Messina, 2016–2018), A. Laganà (Sapienza University of Rome, 2019–2021), and T. Cataldi (University of Bari, 2022–2024).

The mission of the GISS is to promote and disseminate knowledge on all aspects of separation science, to facilitate strong peer-to-peer relationships and to share research findings for the benefit of GISS members, the scientific community and society at large. Membership is open to all affiliates of the Italian Chemical Society who are active in separation science and are willing to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of GISS, which are pursued by a variety of specific actions.



Figure 2. Prof. Francesco Dondi (1943-2015).

The Interdivisional Group of Separation Science awards two medals to scientists for their outstanding contribution to separation science and one medal to recognize young scientists for their attitude in carrying out significant studies in the field of separation science. The "Arnaldo Liberti Medal" was created in 2002 with the foundation of the GISS and is jointly awarded by the GISS, the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry and the SCI Division of Environmental Chemistry and Cultural Heritage. The medal is named after Arnaldo Liberti, the forerunner of the Italian separation scientists who inspired the foundation of the GISS. The medal is awarded to scientists who have made and continue to make outstanding contributions to the development of separation science (Figure 3A). The recipients of this award are listed in Table 1.



Figure 3. GISS Awards. The "Arnaldo Liberti Medal" (**A**), "Giovanni Dugo Medal" (**B**) and "GISS Young Scientist Medal" (**C**).

The "Giovanni Dugo Medal" was created by GISS in 2017 to recognize scientists who have made and continue to make significant contributions to separation science in the field of food chemistry (Figure 3B). The medal is named after Giovanni Dugo, currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Messina, where he has been a Full Professor of Food Chemistry, carrying out pioneering work and making significant contributions to the development of chromatographic instrumental techniques and analytical methods for the investigation of food and complex natural matrices. Table 2 lists the awardees of the "Giovanni Dugo Medal". The "GISS Young Researcher Medal" was created by the GISS in 2017 to recognize young scientists for their attitude in carrying out significant studies in the field of separation science, and the list of awardees is reported in Table 3 (Figure 3C).

Year	Awardee and Affiliation
2003	Guido Saini, University of Turin
2004	Paolo Ciccioli, CNR Rome
2007	Luigi Campanella, Sapienza University of Rome
2008	Maria Carla Gennaro, Amedeo Avogadro University of Eastern Piedmont
2009	Giovanni Dugo ¹ , Sergio Facchetti ² , Salvatore Fanali ³ (ex aequo)
2010	Corrado Sarzanini, University of Turin
2011	Alessandro Mangia, University of Parma
2012	Luigi Mondello, University of Messina
2013	Francesco Gasparrini, Sapienza University of Rome
2014	Danilo Corradini, CNR Rome
2015	Antonio Marcomini, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
2016	Aldo Roda, University of Bologna
2017	Aldo Laganà, Sapienza University of Rome
2018	Maria Careri, University of Parma
2019	Carlo Bicchi, University of Turin
2020	Not awarded
2021	Not awarded

Table 1. Arnaldo Liberti Medal awardees.

¹ University of Messina, ² CCR, Varese, ³ CNR Rome.

Table 2. Giovanni Dugo Medal awardees.

2017	Paola Dugo, University of Messina; Mariangela Marchelli, University of Parma
2018	Carlo Bicchi, University of Turin
2019	Aldo Laganà, Sapienza University of Rome
2020	Luigi Mondello, University of Messina
2021	Danilo Corradini, CNR Rome

Table 3. GISS Young Researcher Medal awardees.

2017	Anna Laura Capriotti, Sapienza University of Rome
2018	Mariosimone Zoccali, University of Messina
2019	Susy Piovesana, Sapienza University of Rome
2020	Martina Catani, University of Ferrara
2021	Carmela Montone, Sapienza University of Rome

One of the most effective and successful initiatives of the GISS is the organization of short scientific meetings, denominated as either "*Giornate di Scienza delle Separazioni*" (Separation Science Days) or "*Incontri di Scienza delle Separazioni*" (Separation Science Meetings), taking place within a short timescale (one or two days), with a scientific program consisting of short and flash communications from the podium, mainly presented by young scientists and Ph.D. students, and a few keynote lectures given by recognized professionals or scientists. These fast-track discussion meetings are aimed at providing a discussion forum where young scientists and practitioners of separation techniques can present and discuss their work with established experts in separation science, meanwhile enabling scientists to respond to the rapidly changing developments in their fields in a timely manner. The participation of young colleagues and Ph.D. students is facilitated by the low costs, due

to the very low or even absent registration fee, the short duration of the event, and selection of the meeting venue in well-connected cities during the off-season, when living costs are lower. In addition, the GISS traditionally offers conference participation grants, covering the travel and lodging expenses of graduate students and young scientists presenting their research at the meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in 2019 has practically imposed a three-year suspension of these meetings that in the last few years were organized annually. The last edition was organized by the GISS and the Department of Chemical Science of the University of Naples Federico II, under the auspices of the Division of Analytical Chemistry of the Italian Chemical Society, and was held in Naples at the Congress House of the Federico II University "Complesso dei SS. Marcellino e Festo" on 28–29 November 2019. The meeting was in memoriam of Giorgio Nota, Professor of Instrumental Analysis and Analytical Chemistry at University of Naples Federico II, who first recognized the potentiality of using an open-tubular capillary column in liquid chromatography [7].

The scientific program covered fundamental and practical aspects of the most popular separation techniques employed in analytical chemistry applied to food, environment, and medicine, as well as in human, animal and plant proteomics and metabolomics. During the meeting, two GISS awards were presented. The 2019 "Giovanni Dugo Medal" was awarded to Prof. Aldo Laganà, Full Professor of Analytical Chemistry at Sapienza University of Rome, for his outstanding contribution to the advancements of separation science and applications in food chemistry (Figure 4). The "GISS Young Researcher Medal" was presented to Dr. Susy Piovesana of Sapienza University of Rome, in recognition of her attitude to carry out significant studies in the field of separation science (Figure 5). She gave the opening keynote lecture "Challenges and New Developments in Shotgun Phosphoproteomics for Complex Real-World Samples", illustrating the main results of her research. A second keynote lecture was presented by Prof. Gennaro Marino of the Federico II University of Naples who reviewed the professional life and scientific obtainment of Prof. Giorgio Nota. All other presentations were either short (26) or flash communications (4). Some 100 participants attended the meeting and the GISS offered 10 travel grants to students and postdocs coming from regions outside Campania. No registration fee was requested from the participants.

The fast-track meeting held in 2018 was organized in Rome (8–9 November) with the contribution of the Institute of Chemical Methodologies (Institute for Biological Systems from 2019) belonging to the Italian National Research Council (CNR) and the Department of Chemistry of Sapienza University of Rome, under the auspices of the Division of Analytical Chemistry of the Italian Chemical Society. The meeting was held in the "Marconi Conference Hall" of the CNR headquarters in Rome and was attended by 92 participants, from 20 different institutions and 10 cities and 9 regions, who received a welcome address by the president of CNR, Prof. Massimo Inguscio (Figure 6). The scientific program comprised 27 short and 8 flash communications presented by Ph.D. students and postdocs. Ten of them received a travel grant offered by the GISS and no registration fee was requested from the participants [8].



Figure 4. Award ceremony of the 2019 "Giovanni Dugo Medal". Prof. Luigi Mondello awards the 2019 "Giovanni Dugo Medal" to Prof. Aldo Laganà. Naples: 28 November 2019.



Figure 5. Award ceremony of the 2019 "GISS Young Scientist Medal". The recipient of the 2019 "GISS Young Scientist Medal", Dr. Susy Piovesana, with Prof. Luigi Mondello (**left**), and the recipient of the 2019 "Giovanni Dugo Medal", Prof. Aldo Laganà (**right**). Naples: 28 November 2019.



Figure 6. "Incontri di Scienza delle Separazioni-Rome 2018". Welcome address by the President of CNR, Prof. Massimo Inguscio (**right**). Chairpersons, Dr. Danilo Corradini (**center**) and Prof. Aldo Laganà (**left**).

The 2017 edition was a free registration meeting that was held in Ferrara on 10–11 July to honor the memory of Prof. Francesco Dondi, who was Full Professor of Analytical Chemistry at University of Ferrara and passed away on 30 October 2015 at the age of 72 [5]. The meeting was jointly organized by the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science, the Divisional Group of Bio-analytical of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry, and the Department of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Science of the University of Ferrara. During the meeting, Prof. Paola Dugo (University of Messina) and Prof. Rosangela Marchelli (University of Parma) were awarded with the "Giovanni Dugo Medal" for their significant contributions to research in separation science and applications in food chemistry, whereas the "Alessandro Mangia Medal", assigned by the Divisional Group of Bio-analytical of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry, was presented to Prof. Aldo Roda (University of Bologna) for his innovative research activity conducted in the field of bioanalysis (Figure 7), and the president of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry Prof. Aldo Laganà (Sapienza University of Rome) was nominated as member of the "Scientiarum Instituti Bononiensis Academy" (Figure 8).

Tribute speeches in memory of Prof. Dondi were given by the Rector of the University of Ferrara, Prof. Giorgio Zauli and by the Rector of University of Florence, Prof. Luigi Dei, who opened the meeting. The role of ethics in chemistry, a topic of great interest to Prof. Dondi in the last ten years before his retirement (2014), was the subject of the plenary lecture by Prof. Ferruccio Trifirò from the University of Bologna. The scientific program included three other plenary lectures from eminent scientists, Prof. Francesco Gasparrini (Sapienza University of Rome), Prof. Giovanni Dugo (University of Messina), and Prof. Alessandro Mangia (University of Parma), in addition to 4 keynote lectures and 51 podium communications, most of which were presented by students and postdocs. The scientific program was completed by 25 poster communications. Over 130 participants attended the meeting, which included a gala dinner based on food typical of the Emilia-Romagna region, also offered by the organizers. Twelve conference participation grants were offered by the Division of Analytical Chemistry of SCI.



Figure 7. Award ceremony of the "Alssandro Mangia Medal". Prof. Aldo Roda (**right**) awarded with the "Alssandro Mangia Medal" by Prof. Mangia (**left**) during the Ferrara meeting (10–11 July 2017).



Figure 8. Prof. Aldo Laganà (**left**) nominated member of the "Scientiarum Instituti Bononiensis Academy" during the Ferrara meeting (10–11 July 2017).

In 2014, the GISS organized a one-day free registration meeting in Rome at the CNR Headquarters (Marconi Lecture Hall). It was attended by about 100 participants and the scientific program comprised the keynote lecture "Flow-modulation comprehensive multidimensional gas chromatography: is this the future of separations by high resolution GC?" presented by Prof. Peter Q. Tranchida (University of Messina), followed by 28 short and 7 flash communications given by Ph.D. students and postdocs, covering any aspect of separation science in a variety of application fields [9].

The 2013 meeting, organized by the University of Messina under the auspices of GISS, the Division of Analytical Chemistry and the Division of Environmental Chemistry and Cultural Heritage of the Italian Chemical Society was more focused on specific topics. The meeting was held at the University of Messina on 28–29 November 2013. The scientific program was focused on the contribution of separation science to food and environmental analysis and included a plenary lecture, entitled "Bidimensional comprehensive chromatography for the analysis of lipids", presented by Prof. Giovanni Dugo of the University of Messina, 28 oral and 23 poster communications, in addition to an exhibition of instrumentation and consumables used for food and environmental analysis. Other fast-track discussion meetings were held in Torino (4–5 May 2011), Rome (22–23 November 2011) and CNR Research Area of Rome in Montelibretti (15–16 December 2003).

Further initiatives, aimed at helping qualified students and young trainees to achieve their research and academic goals, include the offer of travel grants to encourage and facilitate the presentation of their work to the most important international conferences in the field of separation science. The criteria for selection are based on scientific merit evaluated on the basis of a submitted abstract and CV by the Steering Committee of the GISS. Moreover, the GISS has been and is a cooperating organization of important international symposia, such as all editions held in Riva del Garda of the International Symposium on Capillary Chromatography and GCxGC Symposium, which are the premier forums for microcolumn and multidimensional separation techniques.

Sponsorship of travel grants have been made for the "49th International Symposium on High Performance Liquid Phase Separations and Related techniques (HPLC 2019)", held for the first time in Italy (Milan) in 2019 (16–20 June), as well as for "HPLC 2022" to be held in San Diego, USA (18–23 June 2022), and many previous editions of this symposium series, such as "HPLC 2011" held in Budapest (Hungary) on 19–23 June 2011.

Other international congresses held in Italy of which the GISS has been a cooperating organization include, in descending chronological order, the "16th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry (EMEC16)", the "15th International Symposium on Extraction Technologies (ExTech 2012)", the "16th International Symposium on Separation Sciences, New Advancements in Chromatography and Capillary Electromigration", and the "Opening of The Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Research and Training Center".

The "16th European Meeting on Environmental Chemistry" was organized by the Department of Chemistry of the University of Turin, on behalf of the European Association of Chemistry and Environment, and it was held in Turin on 30 November–3 December 2015. The congress was attended by more than 160 scientists from 25 countries. The scientific program comprised 3 invited plenary lectures, 75 oral and 69 poster communications, all focused on challenging aspects and advancements in environmental analysis, characterization of natural and polluted environment, remediation technologies, green chemistry, food analysis and environmental photochemistry. The social program included a sumptuous gala dinner and a guided visit to the "Museo Egizio of Torino", which is the oldest museum devoted entirely to ancient Egyptian culture.

The 2012 edition of the ExTech Symposium series, representing the premier event for sample preparation, was held in Italy for the first time, hosted jointly by the University of Messina and Chromaleont, a spin-off of the University of Messina. The congress was held at the School of Science of the University of Messina on 24–26 September 2012. Following the tradition of ExTech symposium series, this edition was also focused on the theoretical and practical aspects of novel approaches and new technology for extraction and sample preparation. The scientific program included 9 plenary lectures, presented by recognized leading scientists in the field, 21 oral communications, 11 keynote lectures by young scientists and 128 poster communications, in addition to an instrument exhibition displaying the latest instrumental innovations and vendor seminars, presenting the latest technical and scientific developments in commercial instrumentation (Figure 9). The Congress was attended by 250 participants and a short course on "Solid Phase Microextraction" given by Prof. Janusz Pawliszyn and Dr. Barbara Bojko, which was attended by 50 researchers and

practitioners from academia and analytical laboratories, completed the scientific program. Dr. Sebastiano Pantò from University of Messina, Dr. Marina Capone from University of Turin, and Dr. Daniela Martini from CRA—Research Unit for Cereal Quality (Rome) were awarded with the "ExTech 2012 GISS Award", sponsored by the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science of the Italian Chemical Society (Figure 10). Fourteen works presented at ExTech 2012 were published in a virtual special issue and in individual printed issues of Analytica Chimica Acta [10]. The social program included an unforgettable gala dinner based on Sicilian dishes that was served at a local restaurant on a picturesque terrace overlooking the unique panorama of the Strait of Messina (Figure 11).



Figure 9. Exhibition Hall ExTech 2012.



Figure 10. Recipients of the "ExTech 2012 GISS Award", from **left**: Dr. Marina Capone (University of Turin), Dr. Sebastiano Pantò (University of Messina), and Dr. Daniela Martini (CRA–Research Unit for Cereal Quality, Rome).





Figure 11. ExTech 2012 gala dinner.

The "16th International Symposium on Separation Sciences, New Advancements in Chromatography and Capillary Electromigration Techniques" was jointly organized by the Interdivisional Group of Separation Science of the Italian Chemical Society and the Central European Group for Separation Science (CEGSS), under the auspices of the SCI Division of Analytical Chemistry and the SCI Division of Chemistry for Environment and Cultural Heritage, the European Society for Separation Sciences (EuSSS), and the Italian Research Council (CNR). More than 240 delegates from 34 countries, worldwide and from all continents, attended the congress that was held in the conference halls of the National Research Council (CNR) headquarters in Rome on 6–10 September 2010. The scientific program included 56 oral communications in plenary and parallel sections, 8 short poster communications from the podium presented by young scientists and 126 poster presentations, covering both practical and fundamental aspects of high-performance separation techniques on both analytical and preparative scales, multidimensional and hyphenated techniques, and the latest advances in the development of new stationary phases, capillary electromigration techniques, and sample preparation. A special plenary session, chaired by Prof. Heinz Engelhardt and Prof. Wolfgang Lindner, was in memoriam of Prof. Csaba Horváth, the pioneer of HPLC. All lectures of this session were presented by separation scientists who worked with him at Yale University (Figure 12). The sister of Csaba, Dr. Tunde Horváth, who attended the meeting, received a commemorative plaque celebrating the event (Figure 13). The winners of the Best Poster Award, sponsored by Chromatographia, Dionex and the organizers of the 17th ISSS (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) were I. Spánik (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia), T. N. Nguyen Kieu (University of Genoa, Italy), P. Olszowy (Nicolaus Copernicus University of Torun, Poland), Y. We. Yat (Health Sciences Authority, Singapore), and T. Hájek (University of Pardubice, Czech Republic). Five registration fee waivers, granted by the GISS, were awarded to participants from financially disadvantaged countries. A special issue of Chromatographia (volume 73, June 2011) published 21 papers presented at this congress [11]. The social program included a visit to the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel and a traditional Italian gala dinner (Figure 14).



Figure 12. Sixteenth ISSS session in memoriam of Prof. Csaba Horváth. Speakers of the session who worked with Csaba at Yale University (Ed Bouvier, Imre Molnar, Danilo Corradini, Guenther Bonn, Dell Farnan) with the chairpersons of the session (Heinz Engelhardt and Wolfgang Lindner), the sister of Csaba (Tunde Horváth), and a few attendees of the symposium.



Figure 13. Dr. Tunde Horváth showing the commemorative plaque celebrating the scientific session held in honor of her brother, with the chairman of the 16th ISSS, Dr. Danilo Corradini.

The "Opening of The Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Research and Training Center" meeting was held at the University of Messina on 22–24 June 2005 in occasion of the opening of The Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Research and Training Center, a permanent center for research and training in the field of separation science co-founded by Prof. Giovanni Dugo, Full Professor of Food Chemistry at University of Messina, appointed Professor Emeritus in 2015. The program of the meeting covered the main emerging aspects of separation science and related technologies, which were the object of 17 scientific communications presented by members of the International Advisory Board (I.A.B.) of this new center of excellence. The members of I.A.B. participated to the ceremony for the signature by the Rector of the University of Messina of the protocol of the



Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Center [12] (Figure 15), held at the end of the meeting (Figures 16 and 17).

Figure 14. Gala dinner 16th ISSS (Rome, 6-10 September 2010).



Figure 15. Ceremony for the signature by the Rector of the University of Messina (Prof. Francesco Tomasello) of the protocol of the Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Center.



Figure 16. Closing ceremony of the "Opening of The Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Research and Training Center" meeting (Messina 22–24 June 2005).



Figure 17. The co-founders (Prof. Giovanni Dugo and Prof. Luigi Mondello) of the Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Center with the Rector of the University of Messina (Prof. Francesco Tomasello) and the members of the International Advisory Board who attended the "Opening of The Mediterranean Separation Science Foundation Research and Training Center" meeting, (Messina 22–24 June 2005).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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