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Renowned Rome physicist recognised at palace for lifetime inspiring students

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A LEADING Italian scientist known globally for his contributions to theoretical physics has been recognised for inspiring a generation of young scientists, receiving the 2013 *Nature* Award for Mentoring in Science.

Giorgio Parisi (University of Rome I, La Sapienza) was presented today with the lifetime achievement award and €5,000 prize at the Quirinal Palace by the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano; Editor-in-Chief of *Nature* Philip Campbell; and chair of the judges Luciano Maiani. He was awarded the prize jointly with chemist Vincenzo Balzani, who also received €5,000. Biologist Michela Matteoli received the mid-career award and the €10,000 prize.

Parisi is best known for his research on disordered systems, including the development of a systematic theory for spin glasses and glass transition. Currently professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Rome I, La Sapienza, Parisi has inspired up-and-coming physicists for more than 40 years.

One of his most notable alumni and first students, Roberto Benzi, who is a Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Rome, Tor Vergata describes Parisi as "a wonderful teacher and a source of continuous inspiration." As Benzi's thesis supervisor in the mid-1970s, he strongly encouraged him to work in dynamical system theory at a time when there was no real major interest from physicists in the area.

Benzi said: "Giorgio's ground-breaking work on spin glasses has inspired the last 30 years of scientific efforts in the field and opened the way to apply quantitative tools in analysing complex systems in biology."

"His way of working was the major inspiration for my own scientific work and continues to be so for many others today."

Former student Guido Martinelli, who is the Director for the International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA) of Trieste, has called Giorgio "one of the finest physicists I have ever met."

Martinelli said: "Many students wish to work with Giorgio not only because of the extraordinary quality of his research, but also because he is a very nice, approachable person. As a result, he has produced generations of exceptional physicists in different fields, who now have positions in important research institutes and universities all around the world."

Launched in 2005, the annual *Nature* Awards for Mentoring in Science recognize outstanding scientific mentorship and focus on a specific country or countries each year, and 2013 focused on Italy. *Nature* is the leading weekly, international scientific journal.

Editor-in-Chief of *Nature*, Philip Campbell, said: "In an era when laboratories are under great pressure to be competitive, it is essential that they maintain the technical robustness and ethical integrity of their science, while also empowering creativity. Thus the mentoring of young researchers has never been more important. And good mentoring by laboratory heads is not a skill that can be taken for granted. That's why I am so delighted this year to celebrate outstanding mentoring within an illustrious scientific culture: that of Italy."

More information about the *Nature* Awards for Mentoring in Science is available at www.nature.com/nature/awards/mentorship/.

Photos of the award ceremony will be available from 25 November
All requests to Alex Jackson (Alex.Jackson@nature.com)

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