



Felicidades al nuevo graduado de doctorado del ICFO

El Dr. Michael Enders se ha doctorado con una tesis titulada "Tailoring the Direction and Polarization of Mid-Infrared Thermal Emission with van der Waals Materials" ¹/₂

September 29, 2025

Felicidades al Dr. Michael Enders que ha defendido su tesis esta mañana en el Auditorio del ICFO.

El Dr. Enders obtuvo su Master en Física por la Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg en Alemania, antes de unirse al grupo de investigación de Thermal Photonics dirigido por la profesora Dra. Georgia Papadakis. Su tesis titulada "Tailoring the Direction and Polarization of Mid-Infrared Thermal Emission with van der Waals Materials" ha sido supervisada por la Prof. Dra. Georgia Papadakis.

RESUMEN:

The mid-infrared spectral region holds significant potential for applications in energy harvesting and waste-heat recovery, radiative cooling, spectroscopy, sensing, thermal

camouflage and night vision, among others. Conventional approaches to controlling mid-infrared (mid-IR) radiation with metamaterials and metasurfaces often rely on intricate fabrication methods. Commercial components for mid-IR photonics rely on materials that limit their scalability and accessibility. In this thesis, we explore how van der Waals (vdW) heterostructures, with their intrinsically anisotropic optical properties and deeply subwavelength thicknesses, enable unprecedented manipulation of thermal emission in terms of directionality, polarization, and chirality.

We first introduce a straightforward far-field method to extract the complex dielectric function of microscopic exfoliated flakes, facilitating accurate characterization of highly dispersive polar materials without sophisticated near-field instrumentation. We demonstrate how ultrathin flakes of α -molybdenum trioxide (α -MoO₃) can serve as deeply subwavelength phase retarders in the mid-IR, enabling efficient polarization control at spectral regions inaccessible to conventional bulk optical components. Moreover, we show that by simply twisting two anisotropic flakes, intrinsic mid-IR chirality can be engineered, resulting in circular dichroism in both absorption and thermal emission, effectively transforming inherently incoherent blackbody radiation into circularly polarized emission.

Finally, we develop structures based on anisotropic dielectric spacers within Salisbury screen configurations, enabling simultaneous control over the azimuthal and zenithal angles of emitted thermal radiation. Through analytical and numerical analysis, clear design principles are derived and validated using realistic materials. The results presented here establish vdW materials and their heterostructures as versatile platforms for advanced mid-infrared photonic applications, significantly enhancing our capability to precisely tailor thermal radiation across a broad range of practical applications.

Tribunal de Tesis:

Prof. Dr. Pablo Alonso Gonzalez, Universidad de Oviedo

Prof. Dr. Valerio Pruneri, ICFO

Prof. Dr. Joshua Caldwell, Vanderbilt University