

Young Fishermen at the ASC in Helsinki 2007 and Halifax 2008 and options for 2009**MIRAC meeting Jan '09****Young fishers at the ICES ASC 2007**

In 2007, ICES invited delegates and RACs to put forward young active fishermen to attend the ASC on the basis of a grant (DKK 5000,-, around €670,-). A total of 7 young fishermen * attended the ASC from the opening session on Monday until a rounding off session on Wednesday at lunch. They actively participated in theme sessions and social events in that period. On Tuesday, an excursion was arranged with help of the Finnish Fishermen Federation, showing the local problems between seal populations and fisheries opportunities in the Baltic.

Looking back at reports and the evaluation round over the last lunch shows that the fishermen had certainly had a very interesting time. The fact that ICES scientists were not the same as Greenpeace activists was one new insight. Other fishermen remarked on the amount of people that work on 'their fisheries' and were impressed by the dedication and openness to questions and ideas that scientists showed. Both sides considered the invitation as a positive step in 'opening doors' between science and fisheries. One fisherman intended to sign up for next years conference in Halifax, remarking that he will pay for that meeting himself, but he did not manage to get there.

Although fishermen remarked that the lectures were sometimes difficult to understand, they did pick up on the conclusions and ended up with a list of good points to take home. For most of the fishermen the working language posed difficulties. It helped to have a small group of fishermen of one language group together in that respect.

Officials from the RAC side remarked that getting together active fishermen from such different backgrounds helped in integrating international fisheries and wanted to think of more ways to make this happen in future. Scientists were also positive about the input and network that fishermen can bring to a scientific meeting. On the other hand, some scientists questioned the use of scientific funds to invite fishermen, where funds are also needed to invite young scientists.

From an organisational point of view the meeting went rather smoothly, except for the fact that three participants did not show up. For ICES, the meeting meant that one person spent around 1.5 week preparing and that person was busy with the young fishermen for 3 days during the conference.

Four of the seven attending fishermen handed in a report (one in Dutch and one in French). RACs can use these reports to inform their members (on paper or at a presentation at the Excom meeting). The results of these presentations would be interesting to take along in decisions on future conferences.

Young fishers at the ICES ASC 2008

In spite of a significant effort including a higher financial contribution from ICES (€1000,-) in attracting candidates, less than a handful of young fishers signed up for the ASC in Halifax. All except one from Norway apologised in the days up to the ASC. High flight ticket price from Europe to Halifax was one of the reasons mentioned to ICES for not participating.

Attempts were made to get fishers from USA and Canada, but all failed.

The program scheduled for the young fishers was revised due to the low participation, and the young fisher was merged with a group of Young Scientist. He luckily happened to fit very well into this group. The

young scientist took over the empty places of the young fishers on a one day excursion to a fishing harbour in Halifax.

Statements by Charles A. Aas, 28, from Norway, participating in the Young Fishermen programme at the ASC:

“He comes from a family of fishermen and worked as one himself before and during his studies in the College of Fisheries Science. After graduation he has been working with the Norwegian Fishermen's Union in Tromso. Charles would have wanted to see more young fishermen at the ASC, but nevertheless has found the conference to be a great opportunity to learn new things. The comparison between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Baltic cod fisheries was very interesting, as the situation is very different from the fisheries in northern Norway. Naturally, the excursion to fishing villages, guided by a local fisherman as well as an industry representative, was an interesting learning experience for the young fisherman. The boats and equipment are pretty much the same, but the fact that the vessels here are specialized in just one species is very different from Norway. “

Outlook for 2009

ASC 2009 is scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany.

Obviously, there are problems in running this project on Young Fishers at ICES ASC.

What is the way forward?

Basic criteria for candidates:

- 30 years of age or younger;
- Active sea fisheries experience in the last year;
- Some fluency in English.