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CAN IAHR BE HELPFUL TO YOUNG RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONALS?

BY SANDRA SOARES-FRAZÃO AND IOANA POPESCU

A first meeting of a new group within IAHR, the "Young Professionals" was held during the Brisbane IAHR Congress last summer. This meeting, organized by Ioana Popescu under the auspices of the Education and Professional Development Committee, was chaired by Mrs. Sharon Nunes (Vice President of Strategy & Integration Board IBM Corporation) with the aim of addressing specific issues, on how IAHR can help young scientists and professionals. To feed the discussions, presentations of their personal experience were made by young professionals, e.g. Sandra Soares Frazao (UCL, Belgium), Eva Fenrich (Univ. Stuttgart, Germany), George Constantinescu (Univ. of Iowa, USA), and Francesca de Serio (technical University of Bari, Italy)

The question that was identified was to first know if IAHR is attractive to young researchers and young professionals. If it is not, then why? Several reasons were pointed out to explain the low participation and apparent lack of interest of young researchers in IAHR. First of all the organization itself is not well-known. It appears that the structure including the Council, the technical divisions and the technical

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committees is not clear to all the researchers. Young researchers and professionals see this organization as a large body of often old experts, and do not see where they could play an active role.

Another reason that arose from the discussions is the rapid turnover of young researchers. Indeed, who can take time for IAHR when the pressure for scientific production and publications is so high? In a world of "publish or perish", where young scientists often do not have a clear vision of their future after the PhD or the PostDoc, giving their time to an association such as IAHR appears as something they cannot afford. What recognition can they obtain from such an involvement? Of course, all the active members certainly will claim that there is certainly a valuable recognition, but this is unfortunately not clear for most young researchers and even more for young professionals.

Finally, the sometimes unclear links with other associations involved in water-related fields was also pointed out as a reason for less involvement of young researchers and professional. What can IAHR bring that another association cannot?

However, despite this quite negative picture, the discussions showed that opportunities for young researchers and professionals do exist. Many ideas were proposed, showing the interest of the participants who, through their attachment to IAHR, would like the association to improve its image towards younger persons.

The Technical Committees, replacing the former Sections, are in the process of adopting a structure fostering a larger participation of the members. Through the new IAHR website, information will be available in an attractive way to promote the activities of these committees. Initiatives especially devoted to young researchers already exist, such as the Master



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Classes launched at the first River Flow conference, and now organized during other types of events. These mainly need better advertising to be known and to attract young people. Similarly, the existing media library is a fantastic tool for young researchers and professors in their teaching activities that deserves more visibility.

As was generally recognized by the participants, IAHR has a lot to offer, and really should be better known by the young generation. It is now our task within the division to make all the good ideas come true!