# From the EAS President

By the time you read this column, we are well into the New Year. Nevertheless, I'd like to use "my current" time window to wish you all the best for 2005. The year' start wasn't that glorious, with the dramatic pictures of the Asian Tsunami disaster in front of our eyes. Europe took its fair share in casualties and losses, bringing grief, pain and despair right in our immediate neighbourhood. Of course, the tragedy that hit the affected countries was beyond all human imagination. Millions of Euros were raised. In office cantines, coins were collected for the "tsunami"; hospitals went through their stores and donated truck loads of small dispenses, tape, medicines; my own next-door school kids collected sponsor money from door to door for a "public dance for tsunami-hit children in Sri Lanka". We from EAS should feel ourselves very committed, since the affected populations were largely the ones who lived from the sea and with the sea: fishermen, aqua culturists, fish traders and so on. The damage to the physical infrastructure and even to the resources themselves is immense. NACA, the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia, headquartered in Bangkok, made a rough first estimation of the damage, a few days after the disaster. Only for Indonesia alone, it estimated that the impact of the Tsunami on aquaculture livelihood is approximately 70 million US$!

Restoration will require many resources and a long time. A recent air based assessment revealed that in a strip of nearly 300km West of Bandah Aceh, literally everything that stood upright, has been destroyed. Water is still on the land up to the mountains, and all dykes from paddies and fish ponds are either destroyed or still under water. It has no meaning to simply send new boats and nets to this area. Restoration will call for a complete new structure of the land. I was told that the Indonesian government considers the repopulation of the area through the creation of 24 new villages, in areas that are less prone to tsunami waves. Such drastic measures create also possibilities for change. Mary Williams, former Director General of the World Fish Centre, suggested that we shouldn't only try and restore all the fishermen into their old jobs, but use the momentum to stimulate these people to farm rather than to hunt fish. She rightfully stated that, although the message may sound hard hearted at first sight, the focus should be to help fishers train for new livelihoods that may prove more lucrative than their old one. Unconventional thoughts such as these are very desirable and the aquaculture community throughout the world, including members of EAS, can certainly contribute their expertise and knowledge in this attempt. This brings me to *Aquacultures without Frontiers* (AwF), the newly created charity organisation, founded by our past-president, Michael New. Since its inception last year at the WAS annual meeting in Brazil, the organisation has been formally registered as a charity in the UK and in USA and thousands of dollars of sponsor money has been raised. Also EAS decided to contribute. In its meeting of January 2005, the Board decided to withdraw 3000 Euro from its reserves and donate this to AwF. However it felt that a more structural contribution should be established. At the same meeting, the Board decided to sponsor an "AwF volunteer" position for which an AwF fund would be created on its account. I call all members to donate the equivalent of their annual dues for this fund. You will receive more details by mail and…don't forget to check our EAS website!

In my acceptance speech during the General Assembly of EAS in Barcelona, I assured the audience that EAS would continue to strive for European leadership. Yet, when Pedro Bueno from NACA launched a *Consortium to Restore Shattered Livelihoods and Rehabilitate Communities in Tsunami-hit Nations* (abbreviated to CONSRN), he approached EAS besides other organizations such as FAO, WFC, WWF and WAS but I had difficulties in determining our position as a society. So, with your permission, I reacted from a mainly personal point of view, suggesting that we need to develop long term policies in this regard. The same counts for an invitation by the European Commission DG Fish to suggest ideas for subjects to be covered by the 7$^{th}$ framework RTD program of the EU, which we received last November. Since we had no general EAS position available at the time, we reacted more on a personal basis, but I have a strong conviction that we need to become more pro-active in developing the position of EAS regarding different relevant aspects of the societal debate in Europe. That is why the Board decided to launch this year a strategic discussion within EAS on the "knowledge agenda" and RTD needs for the coming 5 to 10years. A committee will be established which should coordinate this discussion with and among members. It is our intention to involve as many members as we can in this discussion. It should lead to the presentation of the formal position of our Society regarding this matter at the occasion of its 30$^{th}$ anniversary (celebrated at our annual meeting next year in Firenze, May 2006).

Last but not least, I owe you information about the task force which will look into the financial situation of our Society (as I announced in my previous column). Our treasurer produced an excellent report on the issue, showing that the immediate liquidity treats have dissipated thanks to new income from projects such as *Impact Fish*, *Consensus* and possibly more projects to come in the near future. Yet, to keep the Society financially healthy also in the long term, structural deficits in our core activities need to be addressed. The structure and Terms of Reference of the Society basically date from its inception about 30 years ago. In many aspects, it does not respond anymore to the present day situation where we have to generate project income, develop European leadership, collaborate with sister organisations such as WAS, EAFP, AES and others, and at the same time also with European partners in Aquaculture such as FEAP and AquaTT. That is why the Board decided to reorganise its Home Office. We aim for more efficient administration routines, and thereby offering better service and information to our members and more time for tasks directly related to aquaculture-related activities. At this moment we are exploring the feasibility of

outsourcing routine procedures so that we can concentrate our staff on policy support activities. The Board cannot guarantee that redundancies can be avoided, but all its measures are intended to improve our efficiency and performance. We hope you will notice a difference by the end of the year 2005.

Johan Verreth
EAS President (2004-2006)