Northern Optics 2006 – report from the organizing committee

Gunnar Arisholm

Forsvarets forskningsinstitutt/Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)

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Approved by

Knut Stenersen	Project manager
Stian Løvold	Director of Research
Johnny Bardal	Director

Sammendrag

Northern Optics 2006 (NO 2006) er en felles konferanse for de optiske selskapene i Finland, Sverige, Danmark og Litauen og de fysiske selskapene i Estland, Latvia og Norge. Konferansen fant sted i Bergen 14.-16. juni 2006, og den ble arrangert av FFI, UniK, NTNU og Universitetet i Bergen på vegne av Norsk fysisk selskap. Denne rapporten oppsummerer våre erfaringer, og vi håper den vil være til nytte for framtidige arrangører.

English summary

Northern Optics 2006 (NO 2006) is a joint conference of the optical societies of Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Lithuania and the physical societies of Estonia, Latvia and Norway. The conference took place in Bergen on June 14-16 2006, and it was organized by FFI, UniK, NTNU and the Univerisy of Bergen on behalf of the Norwegian physical society. This report summarizes the experience we gained, and we hope it will be useful to future organizers.

Contents

1 Introduction

Northern Optics 2006 (NO 2006) is a joint conference of the optical societies of Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Lithuania and the physical societies of Estonia, Latvia and Norway. The 2006 conference took place in Bergen on June 14-16, and it was organized by FFI, UniK, NTNU and the University of Bergen on behalf of the Norwegian physical society. This report describes the organization of the conference summarizes the experience we gained. We hope it will be useful to future organizers.

2 Summary of the meeting

The table below shows the number of attendees of the different types:

Type	Registered	Present
Ordinary	170	169
Exhibitors	18	17
Students	44	42
Plenary speakers	5	5
Conference staff	2	2
Sum	**239**	**235**

The table on page 196 in the technical digest lists the number of registered attendees by country, but because it was printed some time before the meeting, the numbers are not exact.

Five plenary talks, 10 invited talks, 35 contributed talks, and about 100 posters were presented at the meeting. One contributed talk was cancelled because of illness.

We had 17 registered exhibitors, one of whom did not show up. One exhibitor had reserved two tables. There were 9 exhibitors from Sweden, 3 from Finland, 1 from Germany and 4 from Norway.

In addition to the exhibitors, we had 10 other sponsors: 8 from Norway, one from Sweden, and one from Switzerland. The exhibitors and sponsors are listed in the technical digest.

We handed out evaluation forms to the attendees, and 52 forms were returned. The results are summarized in Appendix C.

An extended international committee (two people from each society) had a lunch meeting on the last day of the conference. The minutes are included as Appendix D.

3 Planning

We started planning the conference in May 2004, more than two years ahead. A timetable for the main activities is shown in Appendix A.

In addition to the Baltic countries, we tried to invite Iceland, but we did not find a contact person who responded.

3.1 Agreement between the participating societies

We did not establish a formal agreement between the collaborating societies, and as far as I understand, there was no such an agreement for the 2003 meeting either. To minimize the risk of misunderstandings or conflicts in the program committee, I suggested the following rules (email to the international committee, December 13, 2004), which nobody raised objections to:

- The local organizing committee takes the financial responsibility for the meeting. The intention is to run the meeting with financial balance, not a profit. If we end up with a net profit, it will be shared equally among the collaborating societies, to the extent that this is allowed by the sponsors.
- The program committee is responsible for the academic content of the program, but the local organizing committee has the right to decide program issues that have financial or practical implications for the meeting. These include, for example: (1) The number of invited speakers and the travel expenses allocated to them, (2) The timetable of the program, i.e. the number of sessions, and their time and durations, (3) The maximum number of posters to accept and their size.
- The host society names two members of the program committee and the other participating national societies name one member each.
- Decisions in the program committee are made by simple majority. In case of equal numbers of votes, the leader has a casting vote.
- In addition to scientific quality and breadth, the program committee should emphasize representation from all the participating countries.
- The program committee reports to the organizing committee about its decisions and activities.
- The program committee decides if it wants to handle all the submitted papers itself or establish local subcommittees for each country.

4 Program work

The time plan for the work in the program committee is shown in Appendix B.

4.1 Plenary speakers

In the context of Northern Optics, "plenary speaker" means a leading scientist from outside the organizing countries. We usually invite 4 or 5 of them to give 45-minute talks, and we cover their travelling and accommodation expenses.

We invited plenary speakers about 1 year in advance. One of the reasons for the early invitation was that we would like to have a few big names in the program before inviting exhibitors and sponsors. The invitation letter informed about the conference and explained that we would cover travel and accommodation expenses. A preliminary program (topics, outline of sessions) and information about the city were enclosed. It turned out to be easy to attract plenary speakers – all the four who we invited accepted (the fifth was invited later).

Improvements and ideas:
- We did not specifically ask the plenary speakers to stay for the whole conference - perhaps we should do so in the future. To encourage them to spend more time at the conference, we could make sure that each plenary speaker has a host who is responsible for organizing a more extensive program for his/her visit.
- We should specify an upper limit to the travelling expenses. We had no problems with excessive expenses, but I know other conference organizers who have received unexpectedly high reimbursement claims.
- We should ask plenary speakers to inform us about their approximate travel costs when they book their tickets. This will help us plan the expenses better.

4.2 Invited speakers

In the context of Northern Optics, "invited speaker" means a leading scientist from one of the organizing countries (with a few exceptions). We have usually invited about 10 of them. We have found it more important to support students, so we have not covered any expenses for invited speakers (at least not in 2003 and 2006).

The invited speakers were also invited about one year in advance. By an omission, the invitation did not make it clear that they had to pay for themselves. This lead to some misunderstandings, and one invited speaker withdrew. With hindsight, given the profit, we could have waived the conference fee for the invited speakers, but at the time we did not know that the meeting would make a profit.

In 2003, we invited a certain number of speakers from each of the organizing countries. With the greater number of countries in 2006, we found it impractical to adhere to rigid national quotas, but we tried to include invited speakers from most of the countries. We also tried to have a few women among the invited speakers.

Improvements and ideas:
- The invitations should make it clear in a polite way that we do not cover their expenses and explain why (we use our limited funds for supporting students).

4.3 Submitted contributions

The summaries were sorted into six topics corresponding to two parallel sessions each day, and

the program committee formed three subcommittees, one for each day. After the subcommittees had proposed a selection of talks for their days, the lists were review by the whole committee.

Talks were selected mainly for scientific quality, but we also tried to have at least one talk from each country. Summaries submitted as "oral only" had no precedence over "oral preferred". Two such submissions were not selected for talks, and we wrote to the authors and asked if they would consider poster presentation after all.

Improvements and ideas:
- Because the number of submissions for each topic differed greatly, it turned out to be much easier to get talks in some sessions than in others. Maybe we should have adjusted the session lengths depending on the number of submissions.
- We might consider reserving some time slots for talks by students. In that case, student talks should be in parallel with each other to avoid unfair competition form more famous presenters.

4.4   Poster sessions

We had about 100 posters, and because of the large number, we had to split them on two sessions. In each session, about 30 posters were displayed in the exhibition room and about 20 in one of the conference rooms. The poster sessions lasted one hour, but the posters could be left on the board all day so people could read them during coffee- and exhibition-breaks

Multiple posters to be presented by the same author were place next to each other in the same session, and posters related to exhibitors were displayed near the relevant exhibition table.

Improvements and ideas:
- Most of the committee members had the impression that the time for poster sessions should have been longer, but the feedback from the attendees was not clear on this point.
- The prestige of poster presentation could be increased by awarding a prize for the best poster.
- Having posters and exhibition in the same room worked well, and the exhibitors were happy about it, so if possible we should have space for all posters in the exhibition area.
- The poster sessions might start with each author giving a 1 minute presentation with one slide.

4.5   Program times

- We allowed 1.5 hours between the last talk and the excursion or the conference dinner. Based on former experience, this was the minimum.
- Lunch on the final day was deliberately late.
- Because of short sessions, we did not have major problems with delays. In long sessions, some time should be allowed for technical problems or other delays.

5 Exhibition and sponsors

5.1 Invitation

The invitations to possible exhibitors and sponsors were sent after the plenary speakers and some of the invited speakers had accepted, so we could enclose a promising preliminary program. To show that we regarded the exhibition as an important contribution to the meeting, not only as a source of funding, we reserved some time slots in the program for the exhibition. The invitation letter stated the size of the exhibition tables (not booths) and the approximate opening hours of the exhibition room. We explained that income from the exhibition and sponsors would be used for supporting students and the social programme of the conference.

5.2 Exhibition fee

The exhibition fee included an advertising page in the technical digest, a link from the conference website, and conference fee for one person. Of course it does not really matter if we include the conference fee in the exhibition fee or not, but we included it to avoid disappointing exhibitors who might misunderstand. Additional attendees from the exhibitors could register at a discounted rate (same as early registration for society members).

The fee was initially NOK 12500 (about EUR 1500), but we later reduced it to NOK 11800 because the tables turned out to be slightly smaller then we had said. For comparison, the exhibition fee in Uppsala in 2000 was SEK 16000 + vat. We set the fee lower because most exhibitors would have high travelling expenses to go to Bergen. I do not know what the exhibition fee was in Espoo.

Sponsors could of course contribute the amount the chose - most contributed NOK 5000 or NOK 10000. They got the same advertising opportunities and registration discount as the exhibitors.

5.3 Exhibition space

The tables were 1.8 by 1 m, and I think this was about the minimum size. We had forgotten to bring enough tablecloths, but fortunately, the hotel had some.

5.4 Information to exhibitors and sponsors

My experience was that many exhibitors did not read the information I sent them and instead started asking question the week before the conference. The information that must be communicated very clearly includes:
- Size of tables
- If the exhibition is tabletop, make this perfectly clear. (One exhibitor brought a booth).
- In every message, remind them to book hotel before it's too late
- Remind them to register additional attendees before the deadline
- Remind them to send an advertising page and explain what format we need.
- Instructions for shipping equipment to the conference hotel

- The opening hours for the exhibition room, locking of the room during night, other places to store valuable equipment

5.5   Number of exhibitors and sponsors

We had planned with 10 exhibitors, which I thought was optimistic, but in the end we got 17, one of whom had two tables. Many exhibitors joined only a few weeks before the conference, so we did not know about all the income at the time when we had to decide conference fees and financial support for students.

We had 10 non-exhibiting sponsors. The major sponsor was the Norwegian research council. Most of the others were Norwegian companies and institutions who usually support the Norwegian electro-optics meeting.

Personal contacts were clearly important for getting sponsors and exhibitors, and it is important that the members of the international committee try to "sell" the conference through their national network of contacts.

6   Conference hotel and accommodation

One of our conditions in the negotiations with the hotel was that they should take room reservations directly from the attendees and that we should have no responsibility for the attendees' rooms. Hotels have systems to handle reservations and make sure they get paid, we do not.

The conference fee included lunch for all attendees, regardless of where they stayed. This was important because it would have been complicated to distribute and collect lunch tickets.

We tried to reserve some rooms in less expensive hotels, but because all hotels in Bergen are very busy in June, most of them were not interested in giving us block reservations, not to mention discounts. We did get a block of 20 rooms until February, but they were rapidly taken.

People who stayed in the conference hotel had wireless network access, but the fee for other guests was outrageous. We should have negotiated network access for all from the start to get a better price. At least, all exhibitors must have network access.

7   Registration and submission

7.1   On-line registration system

We used a web-based registration system made by UniK. The procedure was:
- Attendees registered on a web-form. Students could fill in an application for reduced rate and travel grant.

- The system sent a message to confirm that the registration had been received and was being processed, but this did not confirm a place. The message explained that they should get confirmation within 3 working days, if not they should contact us.
- The system generated a confirmation message and sent it *to the conference staff.* We wanted to have this form of human control in order to block junk registrations and in case of software problems.
- When the staff had checked the registration, they forwarded the confirmation message, which included instructions for payment, to the attendee.
- The system generated a database for use by the conference staff.

Payment was either by bank transfer or by credit card. The organizing institutions could not accept credit card payment, but the University of Oslo allowed us to use their on-line payment system. Because this was a separate system, the payments were not directly linked to the registrations, but by letting the users enter their e-mail address in both systems it was easy to match the transactions. The credit card systems rejected some cards from outside western Europe (even from the US), so these people had to pay by bank transfer.

We did not send out receipts because we thought the receipts from the banks or the on-line payment system would be sufficient. Many attendees asked for receipts at the conference, so in the future we should prepare receipts for all.

We accepted only advance payment, and we did not advertise the possibility of registering at the conference. In practice, we agreed with the hotel that we could accept a few registrations at the conference. These people had to pay cash.

7.2   Junk registrations

We had lots of extra work because of people who registered only in order to get pro forma invitation letters. We did not want to exclude anyone just because of suspicion, so we sent quite a few such letters before we finally enforced the policy of sending pro forma invitations only to people who had submitted serious abstracts. Future organizers should be prepared for this problem and send pro forma invitations only to serious attendees.

7.3   Visa support

Because we had not expected attendees from outside the organizing countries, we had not planned visa support, and apart from sending invitation letters, we were not active in this respect. Unfortunately, an attendee from Iran, who had submitted an interesting abstract, did not get a visa in time.

7.4   List of attendees

We had not planned to distribute a list of attendees, but many exhibitors asked for it, and we ended up distributing lists with names and addresses, but not the e-mail addresses. In the future, the registration system should have tick boxes to permit listing name, address and e-mail in a list of attendees, which will be distributed to sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees after the meeting.

7.5 Submission system

Submission was also handled by a web-based system made at UniK. The web page explained that accepted summaries would be published on the web prior to the conference, and that authors accepted this by submitting a summary. After submission, an automatically generated message confirmed receipt of the abstract and informed the authors about the time plan for review.

The submission system was separate from the registration system because of different deadlines and because of the many-to-many relation between attendees and submissions. The submission page should urge authors to use the correct and full address of their institution.

7.6 Conference company

We considered using a conference company, and we were in contact with two. They can take care of just about everything: Registration, submission, hotel reservation, questions from attendees, exhibition and sponsors, entertainment, excursions etc. We considered only registration and submission, but we found the services too expensive at about NOK 100 per submitted paper and NOK 250 per registered attendee.

If we had known how much work we would get we might have decided differently, but I am still not sure that it would have helped enough to justify the cost. Routine registrations went smoothly in our own system, and I suspect that a conference company would have passed the difficulties on to the committee simply because they could not have answered all the questions. A company would probably have been more strict with deadlines (or charged us for the extra work with being flexible), but that would have reduced the number of attendees and submissions.

Contact with exhibitors and sponsors benefit from personal acquaintance and knowledge of the companies, so I think the committee itself could handle this job better than a conference company could.

8   Conference fee and support for students

As a co-sponsor, the EOS required a discount of at least EUR 40 for its members. We rounded this up to NOK 400, and we offered the same discount to members of the organizing societies, other co-sponsor societies and employees of exhibitors and sponsors. In addition, we offered a discount of NOK 300 for early registration. We expected most attendees to take advantage of these discounts (we hoped that the discount would encourage people to join the societies), so we chose the fee with discounts approximately equal to our expenses per attendee, NOK 2400. The ordinary fee was thus NOK 3100. Plenary speakers and conference staff did not pay any conference fee.

The registration was all or nothing - we did not offer single-day registrations or registration for conference only (without dinner and excursion). The main reason is that we wanted people to attend the whole conference, including the social program. Moreover, keeping track of the

different registrations would have been an administrative burden, and we would not have been able to check that people who attended each day had actually registered for it.

8.1 Student discount

The conference fee for students was NOK 500. The reason for having a fee at all was to discourage people from registering and not coming. We had planned with low rate for 50 students, and in order to control the number they had to apply for low rate, not just register. In the application, they had to provide name and address of their advisor. Less than 50 students applied, so they were all granted low rate. If too many students had applied, our plan was to give priority to those who had submitted papers and to PhD students.

8.2 Travel grants

Students could apply for travel grant by ticking a box on the application form for reduced conference fee. We allocated NOK 2500 for each of three Baltic students and NOK 1200 for 19 other students. In order to obtain the grant they had to send us receipts for travel expenses after the conference. Some of them did not send receipts (presumably because the expenses were eventually covered by their universities), so the amount actually spent on travel grants is lower than expected.

9 Practical tasks at the conference

9.1 Registration

The attendee folders contained technical digest, programme, name badge, dinner and boat tickets, city guide, evaluation form, pen and paper. The folders for students and plenary speakers also contained forms for reimbursement of travel expenses.

The authors of oral presentations were encouraged to send us their presentations in powerpoint or PDF format before the conference, but only a few did.

People who arrived on Tuesday were encouraged to register that night to reduce the workload on Wednesday morning. Two persons handled the registrations, and one collected presentation files from people who had not sent them in advance and copied the files to the conference PCs.

9.2 Help with computers and microphones

We brought three laptop PCs, one for each conference room and one spare. People who used other file formats than PDF or powerpoint had to use their own PCs.

We did not have specific persons responsible for assistance with computers and audio equipment, but I sent instructions to all chairpersons and committee members and asked them to help if necessary. My impression is that people had little problems with the computers, but some had

difficulties with the microphones.

9.3   Posters and exhibition

The poster walls had to be labelled with numbers and the exhibition tables with the names of the companies. One person had to be available to help exhibitors Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

9.4   Possible improvements

- Demonstrate the audio system to some committee members so they can help if necessary.
- Signs to help the attendees finding the registration desk and the conference rooms.
- Many attendees needed to borrow knives to open their poster tubes.
- Have a printer at the registration desk.
- The registration desk should have a PC that attendees could use briefly for checking their email.

10   Publications

10.1   Technical digest

The Finnish organizers from 2003 allowed us to reuse their word and Latex templates for the single-page summaries. The Latex template appeared to work well, but some users complained that the word-template was not well behaved, so it should be revised before being used again. We asked the authors to send word or PDF-files. We hoped that PDF files would be more convenient to work with than word-processor files, but instead they turned out to create lots of problems and extra work:

- Many authors did not adhere to the format guidelines, and the templates were not strict enough to enforce them. PDF files cannot be edited, and asking authors for revised files and explaining what they had to do was in many cases more time consuming for us than it would have been to revise the word or Latex files ourselves.
- We asked the sponsors to send their advertising pages as PDF files with A4 format, but about half of them sent other formats.
- When the PDF files were merged to form the technical digest, the resulting file turned out to be impossible to print in one job, even though each individual PDF file could be printed. Even the IT specialist could not solve the problem, so we had to photocopy the books instead of printing them directly.

I am not sure how this should be solved in the future. Here are some thoughts:

- If we simply rejected contributions with incorrect format, we would have lost many good papers.
- Being very rigid towards sponsors would have been impolite and might put them off future meetings

- We cannot expect all authors to use Latex, and I would certainly not force them to use Word. Since Open Office can process word files, we might require word *file format*, provided we can make a template that works well with both software packages. However, combining >100 word files, most of them with graphics, would probably also create some problems.
- We should define strict requirements for the PDF files, similar to what the IEEE does for their proceedings, and provide instructions and job-option files to create correct PDF files.
- We could ask authors and sponsors to send both PDF-files and the original files. This would give us the chance of fixing troublesome files while still working mostly with PDF.

10.2 Presentations

We asked authors for permission to place their presentations on the web site after the meeting, but only two replied. I suspect that most of the others simply forgot, but we just gave up. The next time we should perhaps ask for such permissions (have them sign a list) when we receive the presentations during registration. Access to the presentations was meant to be password protected and restricted to attendees.

10.3 Proceedings

This is the first time that we published proceedings from an NO-meeting. The submission system asked the authors to indicate (without obligation) if they would be interested in submitting an extended paper for the proceedings, and about 60 authors replied positively, but in the end we received only 22 submissions. Each paper was reviewed by at least two members of the program committee, and 18 papers were accepted for publication.

We first though about publishing the proceedings in collaboration with the EOS, but because they did not have their own publishing branch we turned to the IEEE-LEOS. Using their templates and PDF-express for checking the files was convenient, but because of the large workload at IEEE it could take long time to get answers to questions.

The committee meeting in Bergen left me with the impression that most of the committee members were not enthusiastic about proceedings, and most authors seem to share this view.

11 Accounts

The accounts will be sent to the organizing societies and the committee members. The meeting was planned to balance, but it ended with a profit. The main reasons for the profit are:
- More exhibitors than we had dared to hope. Many of them joined after the conference fees and support for students had been decided, so we could not use this income to cut the expenses for the attendees.

- The income from conference fees was higher than planned because many attendees did not take advantage of the early registration discount or the membership discount. Most of this unplanned income also came at a late stage.
- Travel expenses for plenary speakers were lower than expected.
- Copying and other material for attendee folders were paid for by FFI.
- Some of the students who were entitled to travel grants, did not claim the money, presumably because all their expenses were eventually covered by their universities.

The international committee suggested to transfer the profit to the next NO meeting instead of distributing it among the organizing societies. We were not sure that our major sponsor, the Norwegian research council, would pay their whole contribution when the meeting made a profit, but they have now accepted the profit on the conditions that we use it for *support for students in the next meeting*. I promised that they will be listed as sponsor of the next meeting because of this large indirect contribution.

If a profit is distributed among the organizing societies after the next meeting, I think it is fair to ask that the transferred profit and the number of attendees at NO 2006 is taken into account when the distribution is calculated.

12   Improvements and ideas for the next meeting

Here is a summary of things to do better next time.

12.1   Planning and registration

- Reserve inexpensive accommodation, alternative to conference hotel
- Be prepared for junk registrations
- Better visa support for serious attendees who really need it
- Distribute list of attendees – get permission on registration form
- The registration form should have a separate field for country (not only as part of the address)

12.2   Program

- Unambiguous invitations to plenary speakers
- More talks by students - student session?
- Encourage plenary speakers to stay for the whole meeting
- More time for posters?
- 1 minute presentation of each poster?
- Poster prize
- Longer breaks – time for networking

12.3   Publications

- Better templates and guidelines for summaries. Ask for PDF and source files

- Get permission to publish presentations on the web-site

12.4   At the conference

- Signs for registration and conference rooms
- Help the speakers to use the microphones optimally
- Space for all posters in the same room, preferably the same room as the exhibition
- Internet access for all attendees, or at the very least for all exhibitors
- Common PC that attendees can use briefly (at the registration desk)
- Prepare receipts. Put them in the attendee folders?

Appendix A Time Plan

Time	Activity
2004-6	Decide dates. Avoid collisions with other conferences and coordinate with activities in the organizing countries
2004-11	Sign contract with conference hotel
2004-11	Co-sponsoring agreement with EOS
2004-11	Open web-site. Announce the meeting through the societies
2004-11	Establish program committee
2004-12	Apply for conference dinner in Håkonshallen
2005-1	Plan boat trip
2005-1	Agree on plans for the program committee. Deadlines for submission and review. Start thinking about invited and plenary speakers.
2005-1	Send email to potential attendees (members of the societies, attendees from last conference). (Each society mailed its members)
2005-1	Overview of possible non-commercial sponsors (research council etc.)
2005-3	Call for suggestions for plenary speakers
2005-5	Invite plenary and invited speakers
2005-6	Apply for financial support from the Norwegian research council
2005-6	Plan registration and payment
2005-6	Agreement with IEEE-LEOS regarding publication of proceedings
2005-6	Send invitations to potential exhibitors and sponsors. Include a nice preliminary program with names of plenary and invited speakers
2005-8	Test web-based system for registration and submission
2005-9	Agreement with alternative, less expensive hotels
2005-9	Find entertainment for conference dinner
2006-1	Open registration and submission. Send e-mail invitation to potential attendees Advertise on societies' web-sites and newsletters, optics.org
2006-1	Reserve hotel rooms for plenary speakers and conference staff
2006-2	Send invoices to exhibitors and sponsors. Information on exhibition space and advertising page. Remind them to book hotel
2006-02	Framework for programme. Sessions, poster sessions, breaks etc.
2006-02	Rent poster walls
2006-02-03	Submission deadline
2006-02-17	Extended submission deadline Deadline to apply for student rate
2006-02-20	Send all submissions to the program committee
2006-02-21	Inform students about student rate and allocation of travel grants
2006-03	Planning of programme booklet and technical digest
2006-03-03	Deadline for early registration. Change to full price in web-based registration system

Time	Activity
2006-03-13	Lists of accepted contributions from each program subcommittee Send to whole committee for review
2006-03-20	Decision by program committee. List of accepted contributions and type of presentation
2006-03-23	Acceptance or rejection messages to authors
2006-03-24	Publish program on website
2006-03-24	Decide number of poster walls. Discuss placement with hotel
2006-03-31	Plenary speakers should inform us how many nights they are staying
2006-03-31	Advertising pages from sponsors and exhibitors Ask exhibitors who is going to take the place that is included in the exhibition fee
2006-03-31	Reminder to registered attendees who have not paid. Also remind them to book hotel Reminder to authors who have not registered.
2006-04-06	Registration deadline
2006-04-07	Delete registered attendees who have not paid. Inform them
2006-04-10	Inform hotel about number of attendees Inform boat company about number of attendees
2006-04-10	Email all attendees about practical details Ask who need special menu
2006-04-28	Inform hotel about exact times, menu and wine for conference dinner.
2006-05	Complete programme booklet and technical digest
2006-05-02	Discuss practical details with hotel. Exhibition, posters Give them programme with times for lunch and other breaks
2006-06-01	Inform session chairs and committee members on electronic presentations so they can help authors with possible problems
2006-06-01	Inform authors about electronic presentations. Powerpoint or PDF. Ask them to send files in advance if possible, otherwise bring memory stick Remind about extended papers for proceedings
2006-06-10	Inform hotel and boat company about the number of people who need special menu
2006-06-12	Assemble attendee folders
2006-06-14	Conference starts
2006-06-16	Conference ends
2006-06-30	Deadline to submit extended papers
2006-09	Review of extended papers
2006-11	Publish proceedings Complete accounts Report to sponsors Report to organizing societies

Appendix B   Time plan for program committee

Time	Activity
2004-11	Establish program committee
2005-1	Agree on plans for the program committee and rules for the work Deadlines for submission and review. Start thinking about invited and plenary speakers.
2005-5	Invite plenary and invited speakers
2006-02	Framework for programme. Sessions, poster sessions, breaks etc.
2006-02-17	Extended submission deadline
2006-02-20	Send all submissions to the program committee
2006-03-13	Lists of accepted contributions from each program subcommittee Send to whole committee for review
2006-03-20	Decision by program committee. List of accepted contributions and type of presentation
2006-03-23	Acceptance or rejection messages to authors
2006-06-30	Deadline to submit extended papers
2006-09	Review of extended papers

Appendix C Response to evaluation forms

The form is reproduced here with the mean values of the replies in italics:

Have you attended Northern Optics before? 2000 2003
16 had attended at least one NO before

If a Northern Optics meeting is organized in 2009, do you think you will attend? *90% yes*

How often do you think Northern Optics should be organized? Every _____ years. *2.7*

The table below shows how the available programme time was allocated this year. Please fill in if you would prefer a different balance.

	This year (%)	*Suggested (%)*
Contributed talks	41	*39*
Nordic / Baltic invited talks	28	*28*
Plenary talks	20	*21*
Poster sessions	11	*12*

Many people did not fill in this table, and empty tables were taken to indicate that this year's distribution of time was right.

How do you rate the importance of the different parts of the program (5 means more important)?

Plenary talks	1 2 3 4 5	*4.4*
Nordic / Baltic invited talks	1 2 3 4 5	*4.4*
Contributed talks	1 2 3 4 5	*4*
Posters	1 2 3 4 5	*3.9*
Exhibition	1 2 3 4 5	*3.4*
Time for networking	1 2 3 4 5	*4.2*
Social programme	1 2 3 4 5	*4.3*

What do you think about the quality of this year's meeting (5 means good)?

Technical programme	1 2 3 4 5	*4.5*
Exhibition	1 2 3 4 5	*4*
Social programme	1 2 3 4 5	*4.6*

What do you think should be important when a location for the meeting is selected?

Interesting place	1 2 3 4 5	*4.2*
Convenient travel	1 2 3 4 5	*4*
Inexpensive accommodation	1 2 3 4 5	*3.6*

Other comments:
- Shorter talks to make room for more

- Student session
- Avoid posters in conference room
- Longer breaks, more time for networking
- Distribute list of attendees
- More time for talks by young people. Student sessions?

We should have informed about need for warm cloths on boat trip.

Appendix D   Minutes from the international committee meeting at Northern Optics 2006 in Bergen, Friday June 16th

Committee members present:
>   Aleksandr Dementjev, Lithuania
>   Steen G. Hanson, Denmark
>   Martti Kauranen, Finland
>   Ulf Olin, Sweden
>   Peeter Saari, Estonia
>   Janis Spigulis, Latvia
>   Mikael Lindgren, Norway (part of the meeting)
>   Aasmund Sudbø, Norway
>   Gerd Pettersen, Norway
>   Gunnar Arisholm, Norway

In addition, the committee members had invited one additional person from each country:
>   Kaido Reivelt, Estonia
>   Audrius Dubietis, Lithuania
>   Janis Teteris, Latvia
>   Peter Andersen, Denmark
>   Erik Vartiainen, Finland
>   Fredrik Laurell, Sweden

Agenda

Shall the Northern Optics meeting series continue?

If so, where shall next meeting take place?

Ideas for the next committee.

Proceedings.

Distribution of profit.

Location of next meeting

The general opinion was that the meeting series should continue in 2009.

Steen Hanson offered, on behalf of the Danish Optical Society, to organize the next meeting. Aleksandr Dementjev indicated that Lithuania might also be willing to organize the next meeting, but he has to discuss it in the Lithuanian Optical Society before making a commitment. Although the meeting appreciated the Danish offer, there was a preference for Lithuania. My impression is that many Nordic attendees would like to go to one of the Baltic countries because they have never been there. Furthermore, Vilnius is particularly attractive because it will be the European capital of culture in 2009. We have Denmark as a fallback in case the Lithuanian Optical Society decides that they cannot organize the meeting after all.

As an afterthought, which was not discussed in the meeting, I would like to add that if we want to use the Northern Optics meeting to strengthen the link between the Baltic and Nordic optics communities, it is probably an advantage to have a meeting in one of the Baltic countries sooner

rather than later. There were few Baltic attendees in Bergen, but many more Nordic attendees will probably go to Vilnius, and this will create opportunities for new connections between the two regions.

Ideas for the next committee

Plenary speakers. A problem this year was that four of the plenary speakers attended the meeting only on the day of their talks. This is a disadvantage with inviting famous and very busy scientists. The next time, we should encourage the plenary speakers to stay for the full three days. Some people may then decline, but our experience from this meeting is that it was easy to get plenary speakers (no one declined), so it should be possible to find some who are willing to spend more time. If we choose plenary speakers from fields where at least one of the organizing countries is strong, it will be more interesting for the plenary speakers to attend the full conference and meet their Baltic and Nordic colleagues.

Invited speakers. The committee agreed that it is more important to support students than invited speakers, so the policy that invited speakers have to pay the conference fee should continue. However, this must be clear from the invitation letter! The invitation letter should also explain this policy, which will hopefully make it acceptable to the people we invite.

Poster sessions. More time should be allocated to the poster sessions. A prize for the best poster could make poster presentation more attractive. We should ask the plenary speakers to form the poster evaluation committee.

Support for students. Some people had not been aware of the financial support for students, so this should apparently be advertised better.

Proceedings

There was some discussion about the importance of publishing proceedings. Many committee members regard the proceedings as pointless, but the opportunity to publish in an internationally recognized proceedings series does seem to be important to some attendees.

Aasmund and Gunnar pointed out our policy of making publication in the proceedings voluntary in order to avoid people submitting poor papers because they have to. The proceedings papers must be reviewed to ensure a certain quality and originality. The program committee was asked to contribute to the review task.

A decision regarding future proceedings should await our experience this year with the number and quality of papers and the amount of work.

The committee suggested to publish future proceedings as a special issue of a European journal rather that through the IEEE.

Distribution of profit from the meeting

The accounts are not ready yet, but we expect the meeting to make a small profit. According to previous organizers from Sweden and Finland, the tradition has been to distribute the profit among the organizing societies in proportion to the number of attendees from each country.

Steen suggested to set the profit aside as a financial buffer for the next meeting. The meeting agreed that this was a good idea, but we have to check if the Norwegian research council (the major sponsor) allows us to keep the profit and also discuss this issue in the full local organizing committee.

Gunnar Arisholm