



Figure 4.3. – SEM micrographs of *D. labrax* larvae, showing in detail the anterior rostral region of the sampled specimen.

Phase II (from mouth opening until DAH11 – larva pre-flexion stage)

The opening of the mouth began between the fourth and fifth DAH, in larvae with 2.65 to 3.52 mm SL. When the oral cavity opened, the mouth size ranged between 170 and 320 μm , and gradually increased as larvae grew (Figures 4.3 F-G).

By this period, olfactory nostrils were already well defined (Figure 4.3 F-G), the head profile became rounded and the body depth decreased (Figures 4.4 C-E). The head length increased throughout larval development, from about 300 μm to more than 550 μm . Simultaneous, between the 6th and 11th DAH, the round eye diameter ranged in size from 246-279 μm (Figures 4.3 G-H).

During phase II, it was observed that the small yolk sac, progressively decreased in volume and disappeared (9-10 DAH), as the larvae length increased (Figures 4.4 C-E). Dorsal, anal and caudal fin buds became visible in 3.20 to 3.68 mm standard length, on 5-6 DAH larvae, and were gradually lost as the respective fins started developing (Figures 4.4 C-E).