

Position: External Relations Officer 2017-2018

Name: Niall Barrett

My first contact with YEE began when I started working in my current organisation in September 2016. I began to receive emails and newsletters from the YEE office and from that point I knew I wanted to be involved. I attended the training course 'exploring youth participation', and the annual meeting afterwards in Helsinki, Finland. I found this experience to be most enjoyable and I was encouraged by past board members to run for the position of External Relations Officer. I was delighted to be voted into the position by the council of members.

In my experience, the board meetings, both virtual and physical, were of great benefit to me in my role. They were a fantastic opportunity to meet with the other board members and members of the secretariat. They aided me to stay on track with my workload and to help me overcome any barriers that I may have faced throughout the year.

It has always been the role of the External Relations officer to maintain contact and represent YEE at the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). At the first virtual board meeting of the new mandate, the office suggested that Stefan should continue to represent YEE at the EEB, as he had worked very hard with them in the previous year and made a number of very beneficial relationships. Throughout the year I liaised with Stefan about his work in the EEB and provided him assistance with this work when necessary. I also maintained contact with the United Nations Environmental Programme throughout the year and fed back any relevant information to the rest of the board and the office. I kept a close eye on any opportunities for feeding into policy and to travel for either training or to attend work groups. Although there were a number of invitations and opportunities to attend events, it appeared that travel costs were not covered by UNEP and therefore it would not be value for money for YEE to send a representative.

In my initial work plan I had proposed to establish a pool of representatives for external relations purposes. This pool of people would be made up of past board members and project participants who could represent YEE in the case that the ERO could not attend an external event. Unfortunately due to time restrictions from my own job, I did not have the capacity to allocate the time necessary to create a quality pool of individuals. The pool of representatives would have been a valuable asset had it been established as I was unable to attend the European Youth Forum Council of Members (COMEM) in Brussels in March due to work commitments. Due to this, Natasha from the office had to attend in my place.

I was privileged to attend the European Youth Forum's Council of Members (COMEM) in Cascais, Portugal in November 2017. At this meeting, the 100+ delegation of youth representatives discussed and approved the Erasmus+ X10 policy paper, where they will now advocate for a 10 fold increase funding into the Erasmus+ programme. I also took part in a work group for the Sustainability Policy Paper which has since been drafted and published at the COMEM in Brussels in March 2018.

In May 2018 I attended the European Youth Event (EYE) in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. I joined a Climate Ambition delegation, organised by Climate Action Network (CAN Europe) and I represented YEE along with Natasha and Coline from the office. This was a fantastic event and a great opportunity to feed into a number of debates on a broad range of issues, while always

referring to climate change and the impact it will have on our generation and future generations to come.

Overall I feel that my year as external relations officer was a success. I definitely believe that that I could have invested more time in the position if my work schedule had allowed it, but unfortunately it was a particularly busy year for me and my job description has changed a lot since July 2017. I would strongly encourage anyone interested in this position to put their name forward in the annual meeting. It has been extremely beneficial for me professionally, but I have also made a number of lifelong friends along the way.

Sincerely,

Niall Barrett

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Youth and Environment Europe