

YEE ANNUAL MEETING 2019

The first time I heard about Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) was three weeks before the 2018 Annual Meeting (AM) and the seminar “Youth for Environment Future”. At the time I was interning for the organisation Eco-ENESCO which allowed me to travel to the seminar and the AM in Slunakov, Czech Republic as a delegate. During this week I became familiar with YEE and knew that I wanted to be more involved within its network. During the AM I decided to run for the board position of External Relations Officer. I was voted in by the council of members and for the past year I have been an active board member representing YEE at external events.

The period of time that has passed since the last AM has been a significant one for me in terms of personal development, the experience I have acquired and the people I've met. Being part of the board made me feel like I belonged to something special and I appreciate all of the opportunities to take part in the Virtual Board Meetings (VBM's) and the Physical Board Meetings (PBM's) to collaborate with them. I learnt a lot from the secretariat during the past year, in terms of the detail they put into their work, the effort required to meet targets and the stress involved in making deadlines. It was great to also work alongside the European Solidarity Corps Volunteers too, they came into the organisation and contributed to YEE and my experience in many positive ways.

As External Relations officer, it's my role to represent YEE at external events and be the main point of contact to outside organisations. My first engagement as such was attending “Gender Equality and You” as part of the Presidency of Austria in Vienna. This was a two day seminar which brought together a diverse range of NGO's, public administration and EU bodies to discuss the future of gender equality in Europe. It was an interesting event in which I grew a deeper understanding of the workings of EU seminars and study sessions. I learnt a lot from these two days and hopefully applied some of that knowledge to some degree in various aspects of my life.

The next engagement I was involved in was for the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) in which I took over as a board member from Stefan who was a board member for the previous years completing his board mandate. I was officially elected in Brussels for a two year term during the EEB annual meeting. Furthermore I attended two more board meetings, one again in Brussels and the last being in Helsinki. During the AM we elected 5 vice presidents and the president of the board. We had many sessions on working groups, planning of future strategy and membership issues. During this time I grew beneficial working relationships within the board and gave a youthful input into our discussions.

I had little engagement with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) the rare opportunities that were sent as invitations to me were of little concern or benefits to the YEE network and centered around two events in Namibia and New York. These costs would not be reimbursed and would be very costly to YEE and therefore would not be much value to us.

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I attended the European Youth Forums general assembly in Novi Sad, Serbia where I made contact with several other environmental NGOs. During this period I engaged with several hopeful candidates who were going up board election. We sent them a questionnaire regarding their stance on the future of Europe and key environmental policies. We collectively gathered and asked candidates further questions and voted on those we believed would have a green stance in the future.

I was approached through email from several networks for us to join or become partners with. These were not suitable as they were not covering environmental topics in which we were concerned about, youth led organisations or based within the continent of Europe. I was sent and came across many interesting seminars during the year and I sent this on to other members of YEE when appropriate.

I would strongly encourage anybody that is passionate about youth work, policy, environment and engaging with other people from various backgrounds to go forward for External Relations Officer in the future. I think throughout the year my motivation for the position dipped at moments as it was a very demanding role in terms of time and travel, this means you have to be quite flexible with your professional and personal life. I have learned a lot of new skills from amazing people, created many experiences along the way and made beautiful friends too.

Sincerely

Tiarnan O'Doherty

External Relations Officer 2018-2019