

Dear friends,

I have always dreamed to work in international environmental organization like UNEP or IUCN. When I received the letter from Youth and Environment Europe with invitation to apply for the board member I thought “this could be the first step to make my dream become true”. Actually my acquaintance with Youth and Environment Europe (YEE) started in 2018 with the greeting mail from previous member organization officer Kristine. From this point I paid more attention to the newsletters and all the information from YEE. I followed them on the website and participated in online meeting in February 2019 to get know YEE better. I was wondering why my organization is not active in this network. So I started to work on it.

The first board meeting just after the selection was very helpful to understand the responsibilities and duties of each other, to set up communication rules and understand future plans and just to know each other better. Unfortunately, we didn't have any personal meeting where all the board was present. I think it is crucial to have all the board members elected at least on the first personal meeting. It would help in future work for both office and board. We had virtual board meetings every 2 weeks, what helped to understand the office work of YEE and coordinate our actions. It seemed that the situation with COVID-19 didn't make a lot of changes in our work, but now we understand that third PBM was crucial because of the problems and misunderstandings we had in the end of the year.

The year in YEE started smoothly and easy for me. In autumn I had an experience of organizing **local action** that gave me opportunity to contact other international organizations and inspired me a lot for the work during this year. In November I also participated in **study session in Hungary**, what was helpful for my work throughout the year.

Regarding my Work Plan I reached 75-80% of it. I have done most of the goals I settled. These goals were natural for my position and I worked on them easily, without problems. I didn't manage to implement some ideas. The main reason was that they were additional goals, not really connected to my position. I also think these tasks were time consuming and I should ask for the help from Secretariat or Board to start to work on them together as I did for contacting potential MOs.

My main achievements in work in YEE are:

- I made **online meetings with MOs** where 30% of our MOs participated. I reached organizations that were not active during last years (Sweden, France) and we had a nice conversation with them about their involvement in YEE. After these meetings we received several proposals to be a partner of the projects of our MOs. I think these meetings are the best way to stay in touch and form experience exchange for YEE.
- Together with External Relations Officer we contacted more than 30 european youth organizations to present them YEE and offer to be a member organization. I think the global situation of COVID-19 even helped there because people were ready for online meetings and discussions. Finally we received **11 applications from new organizations to be a member organisation** in YEE. I think new MOs will bring new ideas, energy and motivation to work of YEE.

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To be a board member in YEE is sometimes challenging. The biggest challenge for me was **time management**. It was hard sometimes to contribute to YEE work because of overworking at job or come to VBMs late at night because of time difference. Additionally I have changed my work in June-July so it was difficult to maintain all the responsibilities. It is always difficult to be involved in volunteer work when you have to earn money, but **it is important to have a team** like we had, so everyone could rely on each other.

Through this year I developed my communication skills, because I had to keep in touch with MOs and their representatives. I realized that **the most essential is the contact with people**, not only with organizations by official emails. The point that I have participated in training and study session helped me a lot. I got know many activists from MOs and kept in contact with them in Facebook, Instagram, etc. It was crucial for me because developing a network was my internal goal to be Member organization officer.

To work online in international group is the experience I get from this position. Actually **to work and live online was an experience of this year**. Thanks to YEE I was ready to online work when the pandemic started and even introduced some processes to my organization that helped us to adopt. Finally I had a small part of HR experience, as we hired two new persons during this year. Once I even thought to apply for the position because my motivation to work for YEE was so high.

In general to be a board member in international organization like YEE is a great experience of international communication, networking and projects. The work in YEE inspired me to change my own work and go further for my dreams. I am grateful to know all people with whom I worked or get know during this year and I will always feel that **YEE board 2019-2020 is my second family ♥!**

I would recommend next Member organizations officer to be in contact with previous and actual board members and the representatives of MOs not only for work. People are crucial in our lives and only together we can make changes for better future!

Looking forward to hear from the next Board, Office and EVS good work,

With kind regards from Russia,

Victoria Kosmatova
Member Organisations officer 2019/2020