

Position: External Relations Officer 2016-2017

Name: Stefan Rudel

I began being in the ERO position in late summer last year after the Annual Meeting in 2016.

Before that I was in contact with Anja and Christiane (former board members) who I also know from my German member organisation. I knew that they wouldn't apply again for a board position and I was partly interested and curious, but also not sure if this would be a good thing to do and get involved in for me, if it could bring me further, if I could give something to the organisation, if it would help both sides, if if if...

I decided to participate in the training course Be(e) the change which took place right before the Annual Meeting and was also a delegate for my German organisation at the Annual Meeting.

The feeling and motivation I caught at the Training Course showed me - and I remember my own words here at the election in 2016 - that this was the place I wanted to be at. These are the people I like to work with and I like to share my humour with.

Did we manage to do that together? Yes, I think so. With a lot of different backgrounds, personalities, culture, socialisation, ... and, everytime, there's this one place where we come and find together: the one made up by youth and the interest in environment(al protection).

I was also not sure if I (personally as same as "professionally") will make progress. There are many networks you can get involved in, that have a good image to the outside, but inside... mmh.

After this time I'm still surprised, and highly convinced - really! - that YEE is doing what is needed: social education. Bringing different people together and letting them learn by each other just by giving them open space and a safe environment. Letting the participants in courses creating their own safe environment and working on and for one that will stay safe. This is not normal, but more (and more important): it is natural.

As said before, I didn't expect this quality, and I'm very thankful for this experience I made and the experiences we made together. The shared criticism, the constructive work, still and always with the respect to personal needs (and open ears and eyes for personal needs by other office and board members), not only finding and getting to know people with similar interests, but enjoying coming together, meeting friends again, knowing what we are there for and what I'm there for when representing YEE at other events and in other networks.

I was given a lot of trust and support when representing YEE at EEB events and in their network and also going to the big European Youth Forum (YFJ) event (COMEM).

My first participation in an external network event happened pretty soon after I had gotten elected. I got a first feeling for the work there and also the feeling that - again - it was the right place to be; this time to represent us as a youth network and a network for youths there.

So far I have been to different external events (EEB, YFJ, International Youth Conference in Vienna, NOISE conference in Brussels) and it is a very interesting experience for me which I'm thinking and reflecting about a lot.

I'm struggling a little bit to get a feeling for our possibilities and opportunities in UNEP and haven't been active in there. I needed time and energy for our other networks and think that I feel comfortable now to contribute to them, and - following after that - to get into more connection with the other networks we're also part of.

I also meant to find another new network we might get involved in or become a partner with, but it felt too much for me and I raised talks about this and if more involvement is possible (and needed?) in more networks. This is another point I'm thankful with and where I got trust and honest feedback: to go with what I'm able to do and to stay at a personally comfortable level. This is still volunteering, and the level is hard to find for me: what is good enough, when is it too much for myself, what might slow down the work of the whole organisation and other board or office members, ...?

So many questions, yes.

Did I find answers during this year? Yes. Maybe not 100% the ones I had questions for, and that's the most interesting part in being part of the YEE board and being the external relations officer in that time: experiencing the new, the unknown, growing into it, and starting to go with the flow.

This - to sum it up - might be very personal and ego-focused.

I hope, and I honestly try to, that I contributed to YEE as best as possible in my time and that I did something for the network and YEE's progress - not only against it.

Thank you for giving me that opportunity and the trust, and thank you for being very friends in that matter. All different, all equal. :-)

Looking forward to what happens next,

Stefan Rudel