

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS EXPERIENCES

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE 2018

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS SUPPORTED BY FUNDING
PROVIDED BY MICHAEL AND MARY HERMIDA



KALOYAN STOYANOV – VARNA ; BULGARIA

The European Conference in 2018 was set to be yet another amazing PTPI adventure with lots of great and inspiring people to be met and new places to be visited. Indeed, this year the conference was held in Katowice, Poland, which is a city I was admiring not only because of its historical, economic and cultural development throughout the years, but also because it is the home of one of the most active student chapters in Europe. The chief organizer was the amazing

Yanouch, which meant that participants were up for a treat. So I had decided to do everything in my power to make it to the European conference this time. Michael and Mary Hermida from the USA made it possible for me and three other youngsters through a special scholarship they had sponsored. Thanks to the Hermidas and the European board, we had our conference fee covered and we had some help with the travel costs as well.

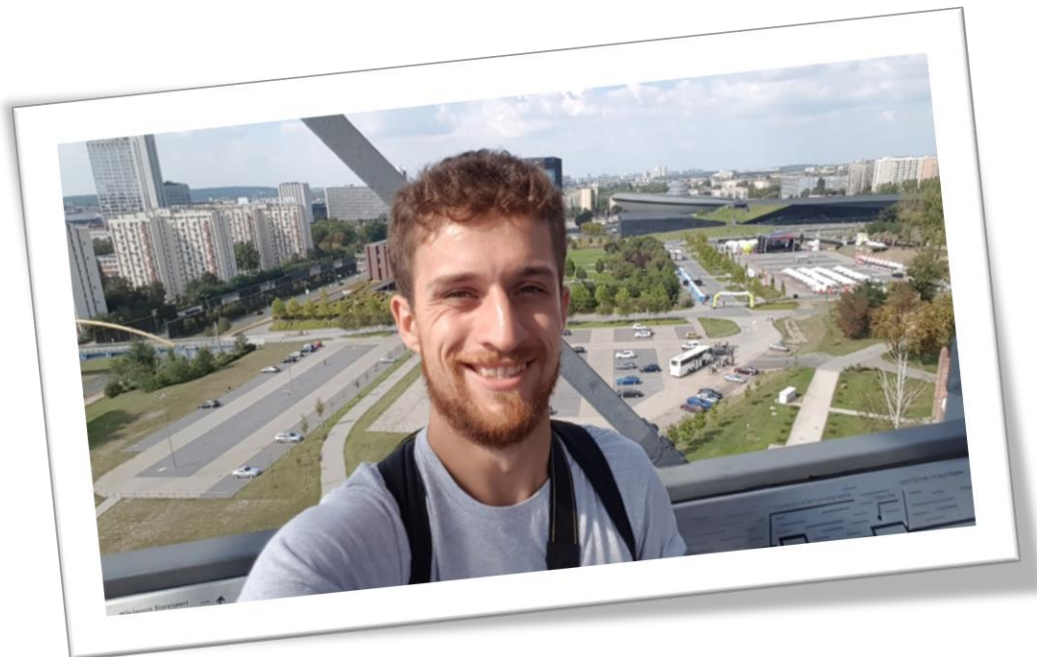


One of the pearls of our trip and the organization altogether is the PTPI homestay program, which made it possible for us to sleep at a local PTPI member's home instead of a hostel. Me and Emil, a guy from chapter The Smiles in Plovdiv, ended up with the most wonderful family of Natalia, who is amongst the most active members of the Katowice chapter. Her mother is a

teacher in Russian and her English was not her strength, so we were communicating a weird and funny mixture of half-English and half-Russian with her. Natalia's father turned out to be an experienced scuba-diver who had travelled half the world looking for underwater adventures. The deep conversations we had with the family, the Polish food we tried at their home, the warmhearted hospitality we experienced there were among the highlights of our stay in Poland. On the last evening, we even had a small barbeque in their garden, which finished with all of us watching the Bulgaria – Finland volleyball game.



The conference itself was as expected passionately and competently organized – we had a treasure hunt around Katowice, opera and rock performances during dinners and opportunities to brainstorm on thoughts and ideas about PTPI’s future. We, as young people supported by the scholarship, had the privilege to share with the whole plenary our views on some of UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, including topics like fighting poverty and inequality, improving education and others. Nothing of that however would be as amazing as it was if it wasn’t for the spectacular young-spirited and open-minded conference participants. Being around so many truly awesome people was yet another proof for me that PTPI brings out the best in us and gathers together people, who believe what I believe. And together we might even be able to bring to the world peace through understanding!



ANNA HARUTYANYAN- YEREVAN; ARMENIA

People to People International (PTPI) creates cultural connections around the world to help people to become effective leaders in creating a more peaceful world, the aim of which is to get acquainted with new people, to promote intercultural exchange, explore global issues, to enhance international understanding and friendship, exchange ideas and experiences. The European Conference 2018 took place in Katowice-Poland from 5-9 September. During the European Council Meeting on 8 September in the youth panel I spoke about one of our projects to highlight the contributions of our youth membership towards achieving UNDP's sustainable development goals. We (Yerevan, Armenia, Community Chapter) chose the 4th - Quality education.



The project was "Providing education for 60 children in Armenia". We provided basic education for the children with lack of knowledge using the methodology of non -formal education. And in the result of activities we formed virtual platform where the youth can share their ideas and suggestions and also have an active communication together. Now we are going to continue this project in 10 regions of Armenia.



As to this conference I would like to mention that it was a great opportunity for me and for our chapter to be involved in and to be part of such a wonderful, unique meeting. This conference proposed a more comprehensive framework for development, for making connections with people from around the world. I have learnt a lot from this great and amazing experience. This was really instructive experience. Due to the workshops meetings, discussions we could easily find us involved in the program, create cross-cultural connections between all chapters, come up to new ideas, gain new skills.



Another part of our conference is homestay. This is the fastest and the interesting way to feel you not as someone who comes from the other country, but to feel that we are all the same and we are people to people and together we can create something better not only for us but also for the whole world. I really do believe that we are just a big family and being together is the best way for making this world connected and peaceful.



I am going to organize meeting in my country with our chapter's members and also non-members. During the meeting I will speak about the importance of having such kind of conferences, because due to this meetings you can get acquainted with new people from different nationalities, share ideas, gain new skills and find new friends.

ANDREA ILLIE – ROMAN; ROMANIA

Attending the PTPI conference in Poland this September has been a really life-changing experience for me. Full of adventures and even challenges, it makes it hard for me to decide where to start.

Before leaving my home town, I was very excited about going abroad without my parents for the first time and meeting people from all over the world. I have to be honest though, the same thoughts also scared me a little bit, as it meant getting out of my comfort zone for good. Although I've been a part of the international conference that my city had hosted in 2016, I knew that this experience would be very different from the other one. Having to talk in front of all these people was rather mind-boggling for me at first, and I could only imagine the worst that it could happen: babbling, falling whilst making my way to the stage and so on.



The trip to Poland was long and tiring, but we were lucky to visit Budapest and Vienna on our way there, which has been a blast. At the same time, I became more and more conscious that my speech was going to be in just a couple of days from then. Happily, none of my fears came true, and I have to say that it has been an honour to talk in front of so many people, of all ages and nationalities. Everyone was so kind and I truly felt like I had something to learn from everybody's stories. We have discovered Katowice together through different activities and we made new friends that we would've never dreamt of meeting if we hadn't come there.

Thinking back, I must say that I've actually enjoyed delivering a speech in front of an audience and I would do it time and again. I am very grateful for this experience that has been given to me and I am looking forward to the next PTPI conferences and keeping in touch with the people that I've met and, why not, visiting them too.

EMIL MITRINDJAKOV- PLOVDIV; BULGARIA

Becoming a PTPI volunteer was maybe the best decision I have ever made. Firstly, I was part of our nuclear local family called PTPI Smiles. Afterwards, I became Public Relations of it. So I started getting my head out of the box. However, for me the aims were higher. Step by step, I started having an overview of what PTPI actually is. Not only in our chapter, but round-the-globe as well. And I started dreaming of going somewhere abroad on a leadership academy, conference or just on a homestay program. I did most of my dreams in PTPI, though I was not able to attend a conference.

One day, out of the blue I heard that there is a scholarship for the 2018 conference in Katowice. That was my chance, so I grabbed that opportunity, I wrote the documents and I was selected. I was going on a conference and even better on a homestay as well. All of us who won a scholarship had to prepare a panel discussion on one of 17 sustainable development goals. So I chose to talk about reduced inequalities. I was preparing my speech for a week. When the moment for going in Poland came I was pretty nervous. Neither it was that I was going to fly for the first time in my life, nor because of the conference. I was just nervous because of overweight luggage. Fortunately, I was flying with another volunteer from Bulgaria who had won a scholarship, too.



When we landed in Katowice I felt a sense of relief. Our host came with her mother to take us from the airport. And then the fun started. Living in a host family is amazing experience. We watched together a volleyball match, we had a barbeque night. I loved them, even though we were home only to sleep mostly. The conference itself was very well organized. We had time for walks, as well as workshops, but what will make me remember the conference were the people who I met there. All of them full of positive energy who are going to do their best to help you.



The speech went very well and this was another reason to make me feel a relief. Each night we had a dinner where we were exchanging experience. After that we were having parties. But as everything the conference had an end. I went home full of memories and friends who I will keep close to my heart forever. Moreover, after the conference I had a dream and it was to see the next conference in my city. And who knows, it might happen. In conclusion I want to express my gratitudes to the whole PTPI family for making my participation possible by supplying funds for our scholarships.

Thank you. "PEACE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING."