

Young neurochemists – the future of our Society

Probably every member of ESN has noticed by now that 2019 is a special year for ESN. Of course, it's the year of our biennial meeting! This time we were the guests at the Università degli Studi di Milano where the local organising committee led by Nico Mitro, Massimo Aureli and Angelo Poletti put together a great event in a very welcoming atmosphere all within the walls of a historic but certainly lively University. There are too many highlights to give justice to the meeting in this short format starting from the exciting scientific programme and fascinating lectures by our young scientist lecturership and Bachelard awardees to future-shaping decisions by the Council and Business meetings, and election of the new Council members, Secretary and President.

A central role in this year's meeting was given to young scientists. Why? Because if you are not established in your field yet and have not settled in your niche then you, as a young scientist bear many challenges. ESN has always been supportive and puts young people more and more in the spotlight. On the first day of the Milan meeting the "My first conference" event welcomed those who for the first time attended the ESN conference. Around 30 people came along and got a tour through the venue, spontaneous insider knowledge from former ESN president Alessandro Prinetti as well as tips and tricks on how to plan your conference and get the most out of it. After the event, at least a few faces were familiar to everybody and it was great to meet even more people when the official program started with the opening ceremony.

The workshop "How to make a living with a PhD" invited young scientists to get hands on some tips in career planning strategies as well as some personal views on the motivation, experiences and scientific pathways of senior scientists. It made workshop organisers feel truly appreciated seeing that ESN officers and other more senior scientists have joined the event. Despite the late hour and the long meeting day, nearly everyone (around 40 people) stayed for the informal reception afterwards. Looking back now, it still feels fantastic that all of these organised events attracted many young scientists. These people could have easily wondered off to the inviting streets of Milan, but they did prefer to stay together at the meeting and that made the efforts of the organisers so much worth it, thank you!

The morning of Wednesday, September the 4th, started with the best possible send-off for young members, females in particular. This year, Bachelard Lecturership awardee Prof Pam Fredman gave her personal insights on how to be successful in science, administration and still have a private life. No slides, no listing of the experiments, results, no showing off, but still a huge impact factor on everyone in the audience. This lecture is now available on-line at the ESN website, and you all are invited to read it!

On a more personal note from myself as the young scientist representative of ESN, the ESN officers had trusted me with the task of putting together a team of young scientists to form an ESN-Young Scientist Steering Committee (YSSC) in order to promote ESN, connect young members and make sure their needs are heard and they are aware of what ESN offers. Indeed, five young scientists from Russia, Estonia and Italy have already started investing their time and thoughts together with me in how to make ESN an even more welcoming place for the future plenary speakers, lecturers and grant applicants from Europe. Working together is so much more what a society should look like and much more fruitful than working alone.

I am very grateful to all those who have spoken or helped organising the young scientist events. Thank you all for being so open about your personal and professional experiences in science and beyond. It was a great to see that we are all not just scientists with distinct plans, but also just human beings no matter at which position we are on our career paths.

So, very exciting times in 2019 for our small but growing society! What will happen in 2020? Stay tuned!

Eva-Maria Blumrich, ESN Council member and Chair of the ESN-YSSC.



“My first conference” – Eva-Maria Blumrich (in the centre) greets a group of young scientists arriving to the ESN meeting held in Milan University.