Call for Proposals – ESN meeting 2021

Young Scientist Steering Committee (YSSC) letter to young ESN members

As you all know there is no biennial ESN meeting this year. This does not mean there is nothing happening at ESN. In fact, it means there is a space in everyone’s calendar to plan! This may sound inappropriate given that we are all currently threatened by a global pandemic, which has turned our lives upside-down for the foreseeable future and made all of us face a lot of uncertainty and distress. We understand that you might ask if it makes sense to invest time and work to plan events. Yes, it does make sense! Keeping yourself occupied, giving you something to look forward to and distract you from constantly checking the news could actually be very beneficial. If we follow the rules of this situation, it will be over at some point and then we will probably be very pleased to have ‘business as usual’. So why not make use of the time now and prepare for normal-life craziness to return?

Normally when young scientists plan to go to a conference, we look at a meeting program, discuss with our PIs, decide to go and start preparing: abstract, travel support, etc. Even if you are more experienced, this probably does not change much, apart from not having to discuss with your PI and probably having a clearer idea about the finances. Have you ever considered looking at this from another perspective? Are you aware that YOU could be part of the program? It might sound like a tremendous effort and very difficult. We will give you a few points to take into consideration on obvious questions before you put the thought aside again.

1) I am not a classical neurochemist, so I don’t know which topic I could go for.
   Don’t be put off by the word chemistry! Look at the program from past meetings and you will see that not everything is strictly chemical or molecular. There is a bit of chemistry in everything and we are open to a variety of topics.

2) I am only a Postdoc. PIs have to organise meetings!
   Nice try! The YSSC is also composed of Postdocs and PhD students and we put our proposals in as well. Therefore: Sorry, that’s not an excuse, the earlier you start the sooner you realize it’s actually not that difficult.

3) How do I start planning a symposium or a workshop?
   a. Find a colleague to do it with you
   b. Decide on a topic
   c. Decide on a scope. Workshop or symposium? How many speakers? Also here programs of other meetings can be a good source of information
   d. Contact people you know who work in that field. Remember: It’s great to get the big shots, but you don’t have to! It is worth giving others also at your career stage a chance
   e. Contact potential speakers. The worst they can say is no, so what’s to lose? Have a couple more in mind then you would need. Be polite, not pushy, say who you are, describe what you want them to do, give them a date for a reply (around 2 weeks). If they don’t get back to you, remind them once, if that does not help it might be for the best
   f. Write the proposal, but remember that you need the confirmation of the speakers for that

4) What about the money (registration fees, travel support)?
   ESN waives the registration fees for the chair and all invited speakers of the session! Travel costs are not covered by ESN, but you could look for other sources or go with
local speakers. Even if you cannot support their travel, this is unlikely to put everyone off. Just be honest about it! People might still come and combine it with holidays or meeting collaborators.

5) Why should I do all this, what’s in it for me?
Experience, recognition, networking, confidence and something on your CV that makes you stand out from others who did not take this opportunity.

The call for proposals for the next ESN biennial meeting in St. Petersburg is out now! Deadline for submission is the 31st of May 2020. So, if you want to shape the meeting with your idea, your thoughts and your topics, here is your chance! Questions: esn-yssc@outlook.com or check out the information: https://neurochemsoc.eu/

Even if you are still not convinced that organising a symposium would be a good idea, please keep an eye out for applications for Young Members Symposium (YMS) travel award, come along and present your poster and be a part of it!

Stay safe, at home and positive,

Your ESN-YSSC