

# 7<sup>th</sup> Eastern European Young Water Professionals Conference



## Interviews

17-19 September 2015  
Belgrade, Serbia

[www.eu-ywp.pwr.wroc.pl](http://www.eu-ywp.pwr.wroc.pl)



Organised by:



UNESCO-IHE Institute for  
Water Education



Jaroslav Černi Institute for  
the Development of Water  
Resources



University of Novi Sad



Faculty of Civil Engineering  
University of Belgrade



Wroclaw University  
of Technology



YOUNG WATER  
PROFESSIONALS

## Vince Bakos

Vince is from Hungary, he is professor assistant at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Department of Applied Biotechnology and Food Science.

E-mail: vbakos@mail.bme.hu

### Vince, what was special at the Belgrade conference? Is it different from other?

I have never attended IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference before. It is special due to the presence of plenty of young people having similar steps in their life, facing similar challenges. It gives a special nice atmosphere for sharing experiences and a good platform for open professional discussions as well as for personal conversations. Something special because of

### ... we have a common language through our past history and present chances

tasting together the well-known „Eastern”, we have a common language through our past history and present chances.

### Was it your first presentation?

It was my first scientific presentation on open international forum with strict time limitation. It was



a big challenge for me: appropriately get how to sail on the edge as a means of catching the attention, being understandable and interesting, avoiding to go too much in the details but at the same time highlighting clearly the relevant scientific results. I had kept my fingers crossed for this coming out and I am happy to have done my best.

### Why YWPs should participate at the conferences?

Sure, although the currently used high-tech networking (i.e. databases, internet, skype, ResearchGate, etc.) ensures the easy availability of publications and recent research results as well as the novel innovative technologies, the personal encounters are not replaceable.

The globe is getting faster but happily we are still human beings: it is still nice to meet someone and get to know personally and still nice to see us again. That is important and luckily not possible to be managed either by the best available techniques. Such is life. You can meet great

... although the high-tech networking ensures the easy availability of publications and recent research results as well as the novel innovative technologies, the personal encounters are not replaceable

people and at the same time attending a conference may help you in the next steps of your career, or might be the beginning of successful forecoming cooperations.

### Vince, tell us about YWPs in your country? What has been done, what can be improved?

The Hungarian Water Association (MaSzeSz) has a special chapter for young water professionals. A one-day conference is organized every year for young experts from the broad spectrum of researchers, designers as well as engineers from water utilities. We are on the way to extend this networking to the international forum. This conference has given me an additional driving force for it.

### What do you think could be improved in making the water sector more attractive for young water professionals?

We should make it more transparent particularly for young people. Who cares about water supply, wastewater treatment and water reuse or water scarcity? No one because we are not thirsty enough... In developed countries the man in the street has no idea about the value of water or about the drinking water production or wastewater treatment. We have to show up the importance and beauty of this sector in creative ways (e.g. presentations at elementary and secondary schools, open days for visitors, presence in public family programs, etc.) to bring this field closer to children and young people.

### How will you combine professional career with family?

I have a little son and we are expecting our next baby. For me as a husband and father definitely that gives a sense for my career. It is sure that balancing the time is quite a big challenge, it is important to have a harmonic schedule. I go for it, sometimes get it with success but sometimes that is just a dream. For almost four years I worked both at university and at utility company. It was hard to be well-balanced and finally the point arrived to make a decision and choose one. [For me working in the water sector is more than a job: it is serving people. But family is giving life. And I guess serving people is nothing without giving life. Thus career should also be for life and for giving life. Otherwise what is it for?](#)

**Kiky Agustina Anggraini**

*Kiky is from Indonesia, she is currently doing her PhD in Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (Germany) at the Institute for Water and River Basin Management, Department of Aquatic Environmental Engineering. E-mail: agustina.anggraini@student.kit.edu*

**What was special at the Belgrade conference? Is it different from other?**

I have already joined two IWA YWPs Conferences (in Istanbul and in Belgrade). Among the participants, we can discuss and have a great small talk together. Then we can have special dinner together aside from the gala dinner. There we could have a relax time to know each other and to laugh together. Another thing was the workshop that I found really interesting and informative for the YWPs as well.

**Kiky, was it your first presentation?**

My first presentation on the Young Water

At the first time, I was really nervous, I was worried since English is not my mother tongue and about questions. But after the presentation was done, everything was ok and I just knew that I worried too much ...

Professionals Conference was the one in Istanbul, Turkey. At that time, I was really nervous. I remember that I had to practice many times and counted the time. I was worried about how it would be in the presentation since English is not my mother tongue and what questions that might come. But after the presentation was done, everything was ok and I just knew that I worried too much back then. So, the presentation in Belgrade was my second time and it was better than before. As many have said that the more you practice, the better you will be on doing a presentation.

**Why YWPs should participate at the conferences?**

In my opinion, to participate at the conferences is very important and useful. Why? Because by doing so, you broaden your network. You connect people since you will meet many people that have experiences on the same sector and you can learn many things from them. You will meet, as well, seniors that will give you much knowledge and they are happy to share their experiences with you. You can share your research/work so that you can get feedback. There is also chance to publish your research/work which is important as well.

**Kuky, has network played any role in your career?**

Yes, it has. It was begun on my Master study. I had a chance to know many people who I can say, played many roles in my study life. When I did my master thesis, I had a chance to do a join research with an institute in Karlsruhe, Germany. That was the beginning of my long journey on the water sector. And I got the chance to do my PhD right now because of that network. I knew many people with whom I can discuss and learn with. Also, I had chances to broaden my network by attending some conferences in or outside Germany, where I can connect the people from around the world.



**Tell us about YWPs in your country? What has been done, what can be improved?**

As far as I know, unfortunately, there are no such groups or events that focus on water sector in my country where many people from around the country gather and discuss together. That is why I would like to contact my mentor who may have broader network in the country so that hopefully we can manage to have such groups or events especially for young people. Hopefully that many young people will be interested as well.

I had a chance to know many people who I can say, played many roles in my study life. That was the beginning of my long journey on the water sector.

**Your suggestions for the next IWA YWP conference in Gdansk, Poland?**

Hopefully there will be more people from the public utility/company so that they can share their experience to the YWPs.

**What are your plans for the future?**

In the future, I would like to have a career in the water sector either in academic world or in the public utility especially in my country. I hope that the water sector in my country can be improved and the people aware that water is actually a limited source.

**Stevo Lavrnić**

*Stevo is from Serbia, he is doing PhD about Water scarcity and wastewater reuse in the University of Cadiz, Spain.*

*E-mail: stevo\_lavrnic@yahoo.com*

**Stevo, what was special at the Belgrade conference?**

I haven't been to many conferences so far, but they were quite different that the Belgrade one. There are two main differences. The first one is that it was mostly attended by young people in more or less the same position regarding their careers so I felt the atmosphere was much more relaxed. The second difference is that the conference had many topics that ranged from

The world is changing really fast nowadays and we might shift our interests towards different topics in the future. If that happens, we will already have the contacts to start with.

water supply and modeling to wastewater treatment. I think it gave the participants opportunity to learn new things and to broaden their professional contacts. The world is changing really fast nowadays and we might shift our interests towards different topics in the future. If that happens, we will already have the contacts to start with.



**Was it your first presentation? Tell us about your experiences or maybe fears.**

It wasn't my first presentation at the international conference but the third one. Therefore, I still don't consider myself very experienced in that field and new challenges are welcome. I never had a real stage fright, but some amount of anxiety is always present. I think that's normal for all of us. It is just important to be well prepared and confident. All in all, it was a great pleasure for me to present my work at the conference, especially as it was in my home country.

**Is it important and useful to participate at the conferences?**

I think it's extremely useful! It is a very good chance to meet other professionals from one's field of work and to present one's work to the others. From my experience, people are very relaxed at the conferences and ready to help. For us young water professionals it is very important as we are only at the beginning of our career and meeting other people from the same field is quite important.

**Tell us about YWPs in your country? What has been done, what can be improved?**

Unfortunately, there is no YWP chapter in Serbia. Benefits from its formation would be numerous, as it would give opportunity for young professionals to meet, cooperate and develop their skills. Serbia definitely needs it. I would really be honored to participate in its formation.

**What do you think could be improved in making the water sector more attractive for young water professionals?**

Climate change is inevitable and a strong and connected water sector is needed to mitigate the effects it will have on the society. Engaging young people is essential for it. Financial benefits are certainly one of the ways to attract more young people, but it is also important to welcome them into the network. Young people are keen to learn and develop themselves and if they feel welcomed and encouraged, they will be more satisfied and more likely to stay. I think it is very important to have more projects where young and senior water professionals could cooperate and benefit from each other.

**Stevo, what are your plans for the future?**

I am currently doing a PhD connected to wastewater treatment and wastewater reuse. I

a few more YWPs and I are planning to establish young water reuse professionals group under IWA framework, if you are interested in this topic please contact me in order to have more information...

hope that in the future I will be able to work both in science and industry, where I will be able to apply my knowledge on a larger scale and help improve the sustainability and management of urban water cycle. As far as some more recent future is concerned, a few more YWPs and I are planning to establish young water reuse professionals group under IWA framework in order to provide a platform for better communication and professional development. I would like to use this opportunity to ask all YWPs that are interested or are working with water reuse to contact me in order to have more information.

## **Dominika Sobotka**

*Stevo is from Poland, she is doing PhD in the Gdansk University of Technology, Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Poland.*

*E-mail: domsobot@pg.gda.pl*

### **Dominika, what was special at the Belgrade conference?**

It offers the opportunity to meet professionals from different regions of Europe. For me personally, this is also an opportunity to break away from my specialization and finding out about many interesting ideas and research that go quite well beyond my field. At this conference, in Belgrade, I had the opportunity to better acquainted with

**... this is also an opportunity to break away from my specialization and finding out about many interesting ideas and research that go quite well beyond my field.**



issues related to water management.

### **Was it your first presentation? Tell us about your experiences or maybe fears**

This wasn't my first presentation. The first one took place a year ago on 6th IWA YWP in Istanbul, since then my concerns about the presentation for sure are smaller. For me, a little bit of stress associated with the oral presentation

is always mobilizing. I believe that organized by YWPs conferences are an ideal place for young researchers who are trying to gain experience in presenting their achievements.

### **Domonika, is it important and useful to participate at the conferences?**

If we want become good researchers, we can't just close ourselves in laboratories. Participation in conferences allows us to present ours achievements, acquisition of new buissnes contacts. Discussions, conducted during the conference, also allow you to know the point of view of other scientists on our research. I think one of the biggest benefits is the ability to use the experience of other participants.

### **Has network played any role in your career?**

Of course it is . The network enables almost instantaneous contact with researchers from other research centers throughout the world. The network doesn't once already, allowed me for some kind of cooperation with experienced researchers abroad to solve problems related to my scientific work.

### **Tell us about YWPs in your country? What has been done, what can be improved?**

In the last year, efforts to create a group YWPs in Poland greatly increased, what in my opinion is very good. We have many young and active researchers who seek to create national network of YWPs. This would allow for the exchange of ideas, problems and experiences between young and also experienced scientists.

### **How will you combine professional career with family?**

It's a difficult question. I hope and believe that being active professionally mum is possible. Definitely in everyday life, it will require a good plan and organization. However, professional activity isn't only the daily work. As we know it's also participation in conferences. I think that from next year for conferences I will take my husband

**I hope and believe that being active professionally mum is possible. Maybe one day, my son will grow into the next generation of YWP :)**

and son. For them it will be an opportunity to rest and for me time for my professional development. Who knows? Maybe because of this, he will grow into the next YWP :) So see you on 8th IWA Eastern European Young Water Professionals Conference in Gdańsk!