

Results of 8th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference Gdansk Poland, May 2016

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The 8th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference found home at Gdansk University of Technology (GUT) this year, provided a great opportunity for young and senior water professionals from many countries to meet and share experiences. The fruitful event was held between 12-14th May 2016 in Gdansk, Poland's principal seaport situated on the Baltic coast, on the southern edge of Gdansk Bay. The capital of Pomerania has a thousand-year-long history, in the late Middle-Ages became an important seaport and in the 14-15th centuries a member of the Hanseatic League. Between the world wars the city got autonomy and self-rule as a "free-city" between German East Prussia and the "Polish corridor". During its complex history, several times the city has had key role in connecting West and East, North and South considered as an important cultural, economic and political bridge. The modern growing town of Gdansk and its long academic history fitted outstandingly to the main motto of the conference *Bridging the Gap between Academia, Industry, Services, and Public Sector* and the tarnished university building and courtyard combine properly the modern with historical. Thus this integrating atmosphere rooted on the past centuries coupled by the warm hospitality of the local organizers made Gdansk a perfect host for young water professionals from all parts of Europe.



**166 young water professionals from countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Asia and other countries
8th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference, Gdansk, Poland**

Besides the international organizing and scientific program committee the success of the Conference was highly dependent on the hard work of the local organizing team under the guidance of Dr. Jakub Drewnowski and mentorship of Prof. Dr. Jacek Makinia. This conference has given an outstanding driving force to local young water professionals for making an effort in order to build up the YWPs' chapter in Poland. Prior to the conference a couple of other Polish universities (Poznan, Wroclaw, Bialystok, Silesia, Slupsk, Warsaw, Lublin, Cracow, Warmia and Mazury, Lodz) took also part in co-organization, having moved together for both the forthcoming event and for shaping the future of Polish YWPs by the support of IWA. This powerful start-up of Polish YWPs chapter can serve as a good example for young water professionals of other countries in the region.

Prior to the conference (17th April) a free webinar entitled "Hey, the floor is yours!" was held for the participants in order to help the preparation of platform presenters. The interactive session provided useful advices highlighting how to present and how to prepare for the stage. This first official webinar of IWA had more than 35 online participants and the recorded session was shared with all registered conference participants as well. Those platform presenters, who sent their presentations to the Organizing Committee in time, could get a short review and feedback for polishing and finalizing their work. 44 pre-sent presentations could be revised this way. This kind of support proved to be useful and very efficient resulted in high-quality platform presentations at the conference.

The Conference provided a colourful platform for young professionals and postgraduate researchers from Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and other countries to present their work, research and innovations related to advances in water supply and sanitation, but also in water management in general. Bridging academy and industry, the conference call had firstly invited case studies, pilot-scale experiments and on-site upgrading solutions. Several discussions focused on the applicability of research results in design and operation practice. Besides, it was a very good meeting point for young and senior water professionals. Young people have plenty of questions and doubts when starting carrier, and they are sometimes discouraged by different ambient obstacles that emerge during their work and brake future planning. Another main objective was to bring together a broad range of stakeholders from the water sector and to show how young water professionals can make powerful efforts both individually and in teamwork for building up successful and fruitful future on the edge of science and practice, how to lean on the experience and knowledge of senior mentors and how to add personal creativity, idea and enthusiasm.

The conference showcased innovative solutions and helped forge a common policy agenda to address the water sector next challenges and how to improve both personal careers and organization of national YWPs chapter in it. The conference was designed to achieve these aims with the aid of a senior water professionals committee, which included experienced representatives of educational and research organizations, as well as both governmental and private companies active in the Eastern European water sector. The senior water professionals committee was very helpful in answering questions, solving doubts, directing young water professionals in solving problems, highlighting the importance of different activities, etc.



This year young water professional participants from 14 countries presented their works and experiences

The conference was attended by about 166 delegates representing 14 Central and Eastern European countries, other European countries and countries of Central or Eastern Asia. The profiles of the participants were also as varied as they came from a broad spectrum of organizations active in the water sector: universities, research institutions, water suppliers, operators, municipalities, private companies or non-profit organizations.

62 oral and 58 poster presentations were selected by the Conference Program Committee to be presented at the Conference. The Conference sessions “Water management”, “Drinking water”, “Wastewater treatment” and “Other water related topics” together with the poster sessions covered a broad range of topics. The work and research of young water professionals in the water management area was focused on climate change and pollution impacts on the water resource and flooding protection as well as the physical, chemical and ecological status of surface and groundwater impacting water quality and quantity for agriculture and in drinking water usage. In the Drinking water session the water quality in the distribution system and its modelling, optimization, observation and operation of the networks and advanced techniques in drinking water production and supply were the main points of interests. This year four sessions of wastewater treatment provided a series of interesting presentations focused on energy efficiency, advanced wastewater treatment technologies and new treatment approaches, removal of xenobiotics, urban run-off and sludge treatment as final product of the wastewater cleaning process. The session of “Other water related topics” summed up very heterogeneous emerging questions and challenges mainly for water treatment for special contaminants. Each session was followed up by an interactive discussion between the speakers, the members of the committee and the audience.

As a closing of the first day’s professional program, several national YWPs chapters (Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Spain and Poland) presented their story, powerful steps and their connections with IWA for building up a community and network for the young water sector in their country. The presentations were continued by the podium discussion of senior researchers (Helmut Kroiss, Jacek Małkinia, Florin Iliescu, Andrea Jobbágy) who shared their personal experiences as mentors of young water professionals. At the end, some YWPs having moved from academy to industry or inversely shared their personal professional story highlighting the challenges and beauties of each field.



Discussion between young and senior water professionals

At the end of the first day, a cultural program preceded the gala dinner in the European Solidarity Centre. As Gdansk was the birthplace of the Solidarity movement, the symbolic building and its rich, impressive and also tragic exposition gave a deep and wide overview on the daily life, challenges and fights of the Eastern Bloc under the power of communist regime of the Soviet Union. The gala dinner organized in the same building was heated up by a series of short toasts and exotic background music.

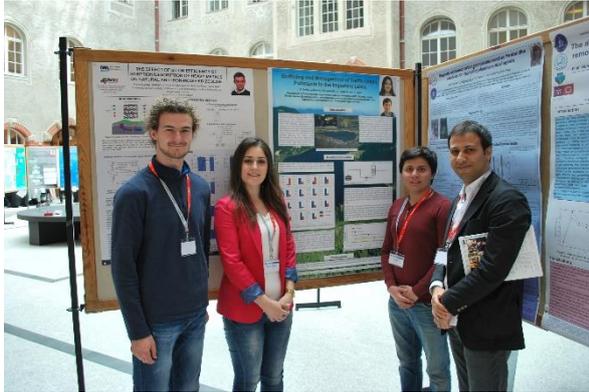
The conference was closed by an award ceremony for the best presentation to Sabic M. (co-authors: Vukovic Domanovac M., Mestrovic E.), Department of Industrial Ecology, Faculty of Chemical Engineering and Technology, University of Zagreb (Croatia) for the oral presentation "Evaluation of various samples of activated sludge for a start-up of pharmaceutical wastewater treatment plant". As best poster presentation was awarded Danilycheva M. (co-authors: Pervov A., Andrianov A.) from National Research University "Moscow State University of Civil Engineering" (Russia) for the presentation "Preliminary evaluation of new green antiscalants for reverse osmosis water desalination".



Award for the best platform presentation, the winner is Monika Sabic (Croatia)



Award for the best poster presentation, the winner is Maria Danilycheva (Russia)



Poster session in the courtyard



Networking and free discussions during the coffee breaks



Active participation of sponsors



Chairs of YWP groups from East and West Europe

At the end of the second day, a dinner took place on an old ship in the city which had free atmosphere and opened up a young forum for further personal discussions and for an amazing party. The small groups of all nations had the stage for special national singing performances. It was a great time for going out together and enjoying spontaneous folk-dance and folk-music performances as well as *99 Luftballons* or *O sole mio* performed by conference participants.



Performance of team from Hungary



Performance of the from Germany

On the third day (Saturday 14th May 2016) the interesting workshop of Endress+Hauser invited the participants for the presentation of their latest know-how in the water/wastewater

industry.

The conference included a cultural excursion in the afternoon.



Endress+Hauser workshop

Numerous advantages of taking part in the 8th IWA YWP Conference, besides expanding knowledge and presenting current research and work are meeting people, travelling, exchange of opinions and very important expanding personal professional network. The exchange of knowledge and learning from others and other countries' experiences are sometimes crucial for a deeper understanding of our own situation and practices. By sharing very similar historical and technical circumstances and having the same financial means, professionals obviously have a very close point of view about the problems of the sector.

The Conference was a good place to start innovative discussions and get new ideas. In the same time, this is a great way for Young Water Professionals to build their career on an international level. Giving presentations, meeting technical senior experts and learning about new achievements in their field of interest is a next step on the way to a successful water career – something what every motivated Young Water Professional is seeking for.

Experience of the 8th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference has once again shown that young water professionals have benefited immensely from meetings and round-tables, enabling them to meet scientists with the same interests and to consolidate. It is evident that a natural combination of new ideas of young specialists with the experience of well-known scientists is very fruitful. As a chairwoman of the Organising Committee I would like to thank all participants, members of the Program and Organising Committees and sponsors who contributed to the organisation of this Conference and transformed it to an extraordinary event.

The 9th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference will take place in Budapest, Hungary. The exact date and the special issue of the conference are still open depending on the next year IWA International YWPs Conference. The picturesque town of Budapest occupies both banks of river Danube, has around 80 geothermal springs and the world's largest thermal water cave system. The capital of Hungary has long academic history coupled by emerging and advanced industrial issues related to water and wastewater and has hosted numerous conferences in this field in the recent years. We are looking forward to the 9th IWA Eastern European YWPs Conference to be held at Budapest University of Technology and Economics, co-chaired by Vince Bakos (professor assistant at Dept. Applied Biotechnology and Food Science) which will be a great opportunity for seeing us again and sharing experiences.

Come close to water, see you soon in Budapest!