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27th SETAC (Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry) Europe Annual Meeting, Belgium



The 27th Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) was held between the 7th and 11th May 2017 at the Square Conference Centre, Brussels, Belgium. In my field of study this is, without argument, the largest meeting. The meeting brings together biologists, biochemists and biophysicist with a goal of environmental protection and sustainability.

This year saw well over 800 delegates from all around the world. In addition to the conference there were several arranged workshops that ran alongside the conference. The workshops included networking and communication skills, interview skills, life after PhD, as well as many other topics aiming to equip young researchers in the sciences for the future.

I am beyond grateful that I was one of the recipients selected for the 2017 Royal Society of Biology Travel Grants (MRSB), which supported my attendance at this year's SETAC conference.

At the start of the five day conference, I attended the conference opening. As this was my very first conference, I was at first a bit dazed to see such a large group of researchers, which was a mixture of well-grounded researchers with years and years of experience in the field, as well as young researchers. This feeling was short-lived as several researchers walked up to me to strike conversation and I felt a part of the group.

I gave a poster presentation on the third day of the conference on the results from the studies we conducted on enhanced vermiremediation of hydrocarbons contaminated lands using biosurfactant, where we used two species of earthworms, *Eisenia hortensis* and *Lumbricus terrestris*. My poster stand, alongside fellow researchers' poster stands, was constantly busy with a lot of interested researchers keen to learn more about the research. I met several researchers who wanted me to update them further on future results of the research, which I must say was very encouraging and delightful as this was my very first international conference.

In addition, I entered for the young scientists' award and although I didn't take home the prize I did receive very good commendations as well as constructive criticism, some of which I have already implemented into my methodology.

Aside from the academic activities, it was my first time ever in Belgium and I visited several tourist spots in the course of the week; as a big lover of the arts I visited a couple of art galleries which I found amazing. And I definitely wouldn't have had a complete trip without having some Belgian chocolate. Overall I had an amazing experience.

Once again I am very grateful to have been selected as a recipient of the travel grant which allowed me to be a part of the conference. This has without question boosted my confidence, my presentation skills and my communication and networking skills, all of which has equipped me for the future. I would most definitely recommend fellow researchers to apply for the grant.