Board and staff members of Student Christian Movements and WSCF Europe met from February 20 to 24 in Skopje (Macedonia) for the annual Staff and Officers Meeting. Hosted by the Macedonian SCM and single-handedly arranged by our contact person Pavlina Manavska, the event was organized at Hotel Bimbo in the city centre of Skopje, and gathered over than 20 participants from Ireland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Britain, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Slovakia, Germany and Romania.

All participants noted the tremendous hospitality of our host Pavlina Manavska. She has spent all free from work time with the participants, lead excursions to the city in the free time between sessions, as well as took care of socializing and post-event programme for those who wished to stay in Skopje a bit longer. Pavlina also did a great job organizing vegetarian meals at local restaurants, as well as worked as full-time interpreter between the participants and the local society.

The event featured two full days of sessions and workshops. On Friday, the sessions were mainly dedicated to the communication between WSCF Europe and SCMs, as well as campaigning. Our new Campaigns Coordinator, Krista Autio, has set in motion the WSCF Europe's Campaign for the next two years, 'Act against Xenophobia and Racism in Europe'. The campaign aims at increasing solidarity among Europeans towards refugees, and bringing them together. The campaign focuses on building interpersonal relationships between volunteers from local SCMs and refugees. Ms Autio has outlined the processes the campaign will be seeing through, as well as the operational objectives for both the SCMs involved, and the ERC. The participants then worked in small groups to identify refugee centres in their countries and to find out, which organisations are already working with refugees. Ms Autio also equipped the participants with tools and resources that SCMs could use in starting with this campaign.

Pawel Pustelnik, Editor-in-Chief of WSCF-Europe’s journal Mozaik, has led an interactive workshop on creative writing, which has been very successful among participants. The
Officers got fresh ideas for their national publications, as well as generated ideas for future issues of Mozaik journal. This workshop was followed by a session by Links Coordinator Maria Kozhinova, which tackled WSCF-Europe’s online communication, as well as how could it be improved.

All Saturday sessions were dedicated to different aspects of fundraising, which in the current economical situation in Europe has been identified as one of the main struggles of European SCMs. The day was kicked-off by a session on the upcoming WSCF General Assembly and fundraising for it, which was led by our Regional Secretary Hans Hommens and Fundraising Coordinator David John Cleary. This session was followed by two workshops on fundraising by Eduard Marcek, a Senior Friend and professional fundraiser from the Slovak Fundraising Centre. Mr Marcek tackled in details both grant fundraising as well as individual fundraising. In the light of fundraising for the GA, individual fundraising received more enthusiastic support from the Officers present at the meeting. The speaker emphasised the importance of personal ties between the fundraiser and the donors. The session has brought to light the current discussion at the Federation on that the SCMs should reach out to Senior Friends and do more effort to make them feel involved in the matters of the Federation.
The day was concluded by a marvellous story-telling by our Irish Senior Friend Salters Sterling. Mr Sterling’s narrative emphasized the inclusion of experienced Senior Friends into the fundraising schemas in the Europe Region and the need to upkeep the intergenerational link.

The Sunday sessions were dedicated to ecumenical networking and to twinning SCMs, which is designed to encourage communication between SCMs and SCMers, to develop a sense of solidarity, support and fellowship, as well as to learn of one another’s cultures and traditions. The sessions were led by the Links Coordinator. The idea was received well by the participants, and encouragingly many twin pairs were formed: Finland (SKY) – Norway, Ireland – Italy, SCM Britain – Finland (OOL). WSCF Europe leadership hopes that as many twin pairs as possible will start functioning already this year!

This year’s event has been very successful, and brought a record number of Officers from all around Europe to share thoughts on ecumenical student work and to learn from one another. We have identified crucial areas of improvement in WSCF Europe’s communication with the SCMs, and took initiative to help SCMs to interact with one another more actively. The Staff and Officers took back to their SCMs important news about the General Assembly and fundraising, as well as about the new WSCF-Europe campaign and developing SCM communication channels. The participants have given a number of suggestions for next year Staff and Officers meeting, which we are expecting to be at least as successful as this year!

Maria Kozhinova
Links Coordinator