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## Durban in Brussels Special Report

**YOUNG**  
**Friends of**  
**the Earth**  
**Europe**



(c) Adela Nistora

Durban in Brussels, 2-9th December 2011 was a European youth convergence for climate justice, organised by Young Friends of the Earth Europe in parallel to the 2011 UN climate talks.

This is what happened at Durban in Brussels from the participants' perspective

<http://www.durban-in-brussels.org>

# Durban in Brussels

European youth convergence for climate justice | 2 - 9th December 2011



From 2-9th December Young Friends of the Earth Europe organised 'Durban in Brussels' the second edition of our alternative youth climate justice convergences (which started with Cancun in Brussels in 2010).

Durban in Brussels was organised by a team of volunteers from the YFoEE Climate Justice working group, coming from YFoE groups in Belgium, Germany, Norway and the UK.

As the UN climate change negotiations unfolded in Durban, South Africa, we brought together over 50 young activists from all over Europe to Brussels for a week of workshops, discussions, actions, following the negotiations, live link ups to activists in Durban, and planning and strategising future youth cooperation and campaigning.

Participants came from all over Europe, ranging from Croatia, Finland, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Ukraine, Poland,

UK, Ireland, Lithuania, Hungary, France, and from many different youth and environmental organisations including 350.org and UKYCC.

Over the course of the convergence we published many blog posts, photos and videos. We also connected with and posted news from events, protests, discussions, actions from all over the world.

**Blog:** <http://www.durban-in-brussels.org>

**Photos:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/durban-in-brussels>

**Movie:** <http://youtu.be/8l1e33t6hck>

In this report you can see the highlights of all this work, bringing the atmosphere of this great meeting closer to you.



One of the main aims of Durban in Brussels was to provide an open space for youth around Europe to develop and share knowledge and skills. Each day had an open programme for people to run workshops and for discussions to take place. There were over 20 sessions in just one week, ranging from how to plan actions to understanding why carbon trading is a false solution to climate change.

In the following pages you can read some of the participants thoughts about Durban in Brussels.

For more stories from participants, check out <http://durban-in-brussels.org>



(c) Marika Fiedler

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At Durban in Brussels



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## We started with a session on the impacts of climate change

“Would you take a bus ride if you knew that you only had 33% chance to survive it?”

A question that fits very well the climate negotiations..

## The first few days

Durban in Brussels was a week full of political discussions, workshops, actions and live link-ups via Skype with activists and campaigners in Durban.

It started by getting to know each other, and we enjoyed the wonderful food by our cook Cyrille.

On the first day we participated in a workshop led by David Heller from Friends of the Earth Europe. In an interactive but quite unfair Quiz game (well, climate change is quite unfair...), we argued over land resources that were represented by newspaper bits. The talk ended with a question which fits very well the climate negotiations: “Would you take a bus ride if you knew that you only had 33% chance of survival?”

On the next day we had our first Skype call to Durban (unfortunately without video) with Neva, Cat

and Luke from the UK Youth Climate Coalition. They told us about the atmosphere in Durban and gave us a rough overview of the negotiations, actions they did and the march on the Global Day of Action that happened in Durban at the same time – like the one we participated in Brussels (many people, inspiring atmosphere and very peaceful).

So much to say, and these were just the first couple of days in ‘Durban in Brussels’....

Marika Fiedler, Young Friends of the Earth Germany

Read the full story here:

<http://durban-in-brussels.org/2011/12/03/first-couple-of-days/>



(c) Sophie Manson

The days here in Brussels have been non-stop action packed, with discussions, action planning and live link ups to Durban squeezed into every minute and lasting late into the nights. The only time I felt it really stopped was when we all sat down to share a fantastic meal that's been lovingly prepared by a team of local food sovereignty activists.

Since I found out that we could go visit the farm where the organic vegetables have come from, I've been desperate to get on the bus and go visit.

The day we went was a cold day, the coldest of the year so far I'm sure, but of course the farm

## Farming for the future: Day Five at DiB

workers were all still working outdoors. Walking around we found out that the farm doesn't use any machinery or petrol, doesn't refrigerate any of its food, preferring to cut and deliver them on the same day, and neither is it connected to the main water or electricity supply, being as self-sufficient and low impact as possible. Yet the farm is productive; it's selling vegetables directly to families and restaurants in the neighbourhood, and also employing four young people to work and train to become farmers there.

Leaving the farm, I left with a reminder of how disconnected we are with where and how our food is produced and I've vowed to make more effort to buy my food as directly as possible from the people who are producing it, and get stuck in myself with learning to grow my own food!

Sophie Manson, Young Friends of the Earth Europe

Follow the city farm's life here:

<http://www.haricots.org/agriculture/NOH-020209>

## Making Links: Why 'Durban in Brussels' matters to me?

Before I came to Brussels I was working with an Irish community group who had organised a table quiz fundraiser for their anti-fracking campaign. This is just one of the many communities who are mobilising to fight Shale Gas.

At Durban in Brussels we were following developments at the climate negotiations in Durban, and linked what's happening with smart, creative campaigning.

### **But what's the connection between the rural town table quiz and the COP?**

They are two sides of the same struggle to resist neo-liberalism, promote sustainable development and foster a new society built on social and environmental justice.

We noted how the influences of big business and back-room politics could be detrimental to the outcomes in Durban. Similarly, the communities in Ireland are finding exactly the same factors blocking their ability to take control of their environment.

This clear link is strengthened by the fact that the communities are taking on a multi-national gas

mining company who is promoting fossil fuel extraction, leading to local environmental destruction and contribute to increasing climate chaos across the globe.

The fossil fuel industries have been very good at making the link between local and global. They understand the absolute importance of lobbying at national and international level to ensure their hegemony of unsustainability goes unchecked and unchallenged. But they have also become experts in silencing local communities, whether



(c) Adela Nistora

through financial payments, controlling the media or resorting to more sinister actions.

If we are to challenge this, we too must state the link between local and global- and not merely on paper. We must actively foster these links in our daily lives, renewing them again and again in our activism.

The environmental movement has built up significant technical, legal and policy knowledge and employing these in meaningful partnership with communities marries the strengths of political strategy and grassroots participation, and provides a dynamic response to local and global environmental issues.

Durban in Brussels created the space to forge these crucial links, to support and sustain our work in local communities across Europe and for me there is no other way in which we can continue to bring about a sustainable future.

Jamie Gorman, Young Friends of the Earth Ireland

<http://www.youngfoe.ie>

## Getting into action planning

When I arrived to Durban in Brussels I was still feeling a bit jaded about travelling here, but already the group had made a big impression on me. There were some amazing, creative, funny, and incredibly intelligent people there, and some friends that I hope I will keep for life. There is something special about being with people from all different countries, from different struggles, coming together to fight as one.

Over the weekend we decided to focus our efforts on standing with the most vulnerable countries. We did that through demanding the EU to stand with the small island states, Africa and the rest of the developing world. We had a long day of action planning and at the end of the banner making, at

3am, I was thinking: I could have chosen to take my holiday days from work somewhere else, perhaps somewhere warm like Spain, instead of with climate activists in a pokey hostel in Belgium.

But when I was up well past midnight making banners and planning actions, and talking live on Skype with young people doing the same right across the world, the feeling was special. I felt like part of an amazing change in the world... this felt far better than any other holiday.

Alex Lee, Young Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)



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...and, Action!

7th December



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### Youth action in Durban: 'Turning our back on those corrupted by polluters'

Whilst the Canadian minister had been giving a speech - calling Kyoto "history" and promoting tar sands as 'ethical oil' - the Canadian Youth delegation stood up, turned around and displayed messages on their t-shirts saying "Turn Your Back on Canada". As they were taken away by security, the conference gave them a standing ovation. This inspired us a lot for going ahead with the actions in the coming days.

### Youth actions in Brussels: EU - Stand with the most vulnerable!

The youth of Europe were represented when around 25 young people from across the continent stood outside the EU Commission. They chanted for "Climate Justice Now" which means rich nations need to live up their responsibility. It also means that policy should be based on science, and that there is justice for the people who are suffering the affects of climate change right now because of developed nations' unwillingness to act. A second action took place, outside the Polish representation to the EU, as Poland were the EU presidents, and they altered discussions and agendas to suit their positions that isn't climate friendly at all. Due to this, Poland has miserably failed in its first ever EU presidency, and has failed a moral obligation to humanity.

9th December



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### Youth action in Brussels: Action inside the European Parliament

Some youth activists got inside the EU Parliament for a stunt and to leave some messages to politicians: youth from Europe demand action that is based on science and equity. Youth called on the European Union to save the Kyoto Protocol and commit to strong emission reduction targets.



(c) Luka Tomac

### Action in Durban: A flashmob protest inside the conference centre

Activists and even some official delegates 'stood with Africa' inside the conference centre, urging developed country governments to recognise the urgency and their responsibility.



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The young activists of Durban in Brussels were pleased to note that they're not the only people in Brussels following events at COP17. Making a rare public statement, Manneken Pis, perhaps the city's most famous resident and tourist attraction, expressed his concerns that the EU were not doing enough to save the Kyoto Protocol and agree strong and binding emissions reductions.

Wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the slogan "EU SAVE CLIMATE" he implored European negotiators not to 'piss away our future'. His announcement, made to crowds of tourists who had come to enjoy their Belgian waffles in his company, was a timely reminder of the important role that the EU can play in providing leadership in Durban.

## Action during the Heads of States meeting



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On the last official day of the conference in Durban, EU leaders came together in Brussels, but not for discussing climate change. They had 'more important' things to talk about, like how to implement austerity measures across Europe for short-term recovery. Unfortunately long-term problems that could affect the entire planet wasn't on their table, but youth were outside, demanding action on climate change now.

From the press release:

20 young citizens from 10 European countries called for the EU to commit to at least 40% emissions reductions on 1990 levels by 2020, at a protest near the European Council building in Brussels today.

'We need less emissions and more ambition', said Conrad Richardson, spokesperson for the activists. 'The EU must support a strong second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol based on legally binding emission reduction targets for industrialised countries, without carbon trading.'

'Energy efficiency in Europe is essential to achieve the 40% reduction in emissions required to halt the effects of climate change across the globe', noted Richardson.

Read the full press release here: <http://durban-in-brussels.org/2011/12/09/eu-up-your-targets/>



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## Mobilising around the world



Since the end of Durban in Brussels we've been hearing news from all over the world about events and marches people organised to put pressure on decision makers and demand climate justice.

Some examples from what happened around the world include 'Durban in Oslo' organised by Young Friends of the Earth Norway to raise more awareness about climate justice through workshops and discussions. A similar youth event happened in Vilnius, Lithuania, with an anti-nuclear action at their Environment Ministry. Young Friends of the Earth Scotland ran training days for young people and started a campaign against industries that can block the fulfilment of the Scottish climate legislation.

There were big marches in Durban where the climate summit took place. In solidarity, there were countless demonstrations around the world. In Europe the biggest

march was in London, starting at the St Paul's Cathedral at the camp of Occupy London Stock Exchange, and in Brussels thousands attended the march organised by the Belgian Climate Coalition.

Durban in Brussels was about building something bigger than the Conference of the Parties (COP), as no matter what happens at the negotiations, it is a great catalyst for civil society action. The climate justice campaigners who gathered in Brussels and those activists who have been to Durban form part of a movement that is growing stronger every year, demanding and bringing about change in the fundamental ways we treat the planet and each other.

Marco Cadena, Young Friends of the Earth Europe Steering Group

See pictures about actions in Durban and around the world:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/foei>



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## Mobilising the world for climate justice

On 3rd December there were mass demonstrations across the world to demand climate justice from world leaders, and in Scotland, Lithuania and Norway, Young FoE groups organised their own national youth convergences for climate justice.

# Next steps and campaigning after Durban in Brussels



It was amazing to see people from all over Europe coming together for Durban in Brussels. We hope that this short report helped you to get a feel for it if you couldn't make it! :)

Although politicians in Durban listened more to polluters than people, next year a more integrated European climate justice movement can make things change.

Our aim now is to build the European youth climate movement outside of the negotiating rooms and to start to bring something together which we will shape and lead.



## More information on Durban

If you'd like to read more about what happened in Durban, and the reactions to the outcomes of the conference, read the assessment by **Friends of the Earth International**:

<http://goo.gl/CEkvY>

## Get campaigning

In 2012, YFoEE will be busy continuing our work to demand climate justice.

Next stop is the YFoEE Network Gathering in March 2012. The YFoEE climate justice working group will be planning the next phase of the Push Europe campaign, due for launch in Spring 2012, and will be running a session about Durban in Brussels and YFoEE's future climate justice campaigning..

While it is important that there is an international process to limit the path towards irreversible climate change, we know that progress also needs to be made outside of those walls. It is very inspiring that despite the disappointing negotiations, civil society – and in particular, young people – are not giving up.

If you want to join or find out about any of the YFoEE activities or climate justice work contact YFoEE at:

Website: [www.youngfoee.org](http://www.youngfoee.org)  
Email: [youngfoe@foeeurope.org](mailto:youngfoe@foeeurope.org)





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