

**The
Youth
for Water
and
Climate
Programme**





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The Youth for Water and Climate Roadbook aims to help guide any organization interested in implementing a programme or initiative to support early career professionals as they enter the water & climate space.

This Roadbook is based on the Youth for Water and Climate Programme, developed by the International Secretariat for Water - Solidarity Water Europe (ISW-SWE) in close collaboration with the Global Water Partnership, Good Planet Belgium, cewas, Global Water Partnership - Hungary & Global Water Partnership - Central and Eastern Europe. This guide provides an overview of the tools and resources created to foster the growth and development of young water professionals. Additionally, it presents valuable insights gained from the Youth for Water and Climate Programme experience, emphasizing the crucial elements and stages of implementation necessary for the successful realization of such an initiative.

This document proposes some “food for thought” to enable any organization to replicate the project at their own level and in their own field of expertise. It is not intended to be an instruction manual, but rather a tool for guidance, reflection and inspiration for those interested in the approach.

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YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE WATER SECTOR



As global crises multiply and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports warn of impending climate disaster, the vital importance of integrated and sustainable water management and water security is exacerbated, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Young people make up more than half of the global population and are heavily and directly affected by water issues. Yet, all over the world, young people are at the forefront of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through their actions, young people have shown that they are unified across disciplines and scales to understand, innovate, and adapt to the complex and dynamic nature of the global water systems and climate. More than ever, it is vital to support young people who are engaged and empowered for achieving water security.

Globally, the relationship between climate resilience, water security and youth employment is an urgent issue and will become more central in the coming years.

In the water sector, indicators show that there are serious gaps in the workforce due to the shortage of human resources, differences in the skills required depending on the rural or urban environment, the lack of incentives for workers, and the lack of coordination between the needs of the industry and the offer of educational institutions. Organizations in the water space have expressed the need to gain access to tools, knowledge and expertise to better guide and mentor young professionals as they enter the water & climate space.

Young people have also identified significant barriers regarding employability



and entrepreneurship in the water sector including lack of access to seed-funding, lack of support from organizations, exclusion from decision-making and planning processes and lack of access to education and training.

Young individuals have recognized the importance of strengthening capacity development by aligning the skills and knowledge of youth with water professionals. They also expressed the need to gain more professional experience to foster their careers in the water and climate space.

Furthermore, water-related occupations are frequently viewed as predominantly engineering or technical positions, primarily within the water supply and sanitation sector. That said, the water sector encompasses a broad range of career opportunities, encompassing numerous job types that remain inadequately understood or recognized.

Consequently, it is difficult for young people to navigate the water sector and identify their career pathway. As highlighted in the World Water Assessment Program's 2016 report on water and jobs, water jobs fall into three broad categories:

- Water resources management, including IWRM and restoration and sanitation;
- Construction and management of water infrastructure;
- Provision of water-related services, including water supply, wastewater, waste management and sanitation.

According to the International Labor Organization, 172 million people were unemployed worldwide in 2018. Through 2030, approximately 25 million young people between the ages of 15 to 29 years old are expected to enter the labor force in search of work. In the European Union, young people represent up to 25 percent of the total population. However, youth unemployment and underemployment are persistent concerns (European Union, 2021).

For the Year of Youth 2022, the EU pledges to include “the vision, commitment and participation of all young people to build a better, greener, more inclusive and digital future” (Gospodinova & Dejone, 2021). The actions and goals set out for the Year of the Youth & the Green Deal, provide EU Member States with the opportunity to provide training for young people to increase access to the new jobs of the green and blue economy.

The transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society can have a profound impact on the labor market and - if managed well - can create employment opportunities, including for young people. For example, the ILO’s

2018 World Economic and Social Outlook “Greening with Jobs” forecasts estimate that by 2030, the transition to clean, renewable energy will create about 18 million net jobs worldwide.

Employment is an important channel for youth social, economic, and political inclusion, but attempts to change the system will only succeed if youth have access to the necessary skills and experience to become leaders in their own right. The 2016 United Nations World Water Development Report on Water and Jobs recognizes that the lack of capacity and the challenges facing the water sector require the design of adequate training tools and innovative learning approaches to enhance the competencies of staff as well as strengthen institutional capacity. Through partnerships and innovative mechanisms, we must collectively take action to ensure that youth have access to the relevant tools, experience and programmes to build their career in the water & climate space, contributing to create a more sustainable and water-secure future for all. This Roadbook aims to give us the tools to fill this gap.



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1. TOOLS AND RESOURCES

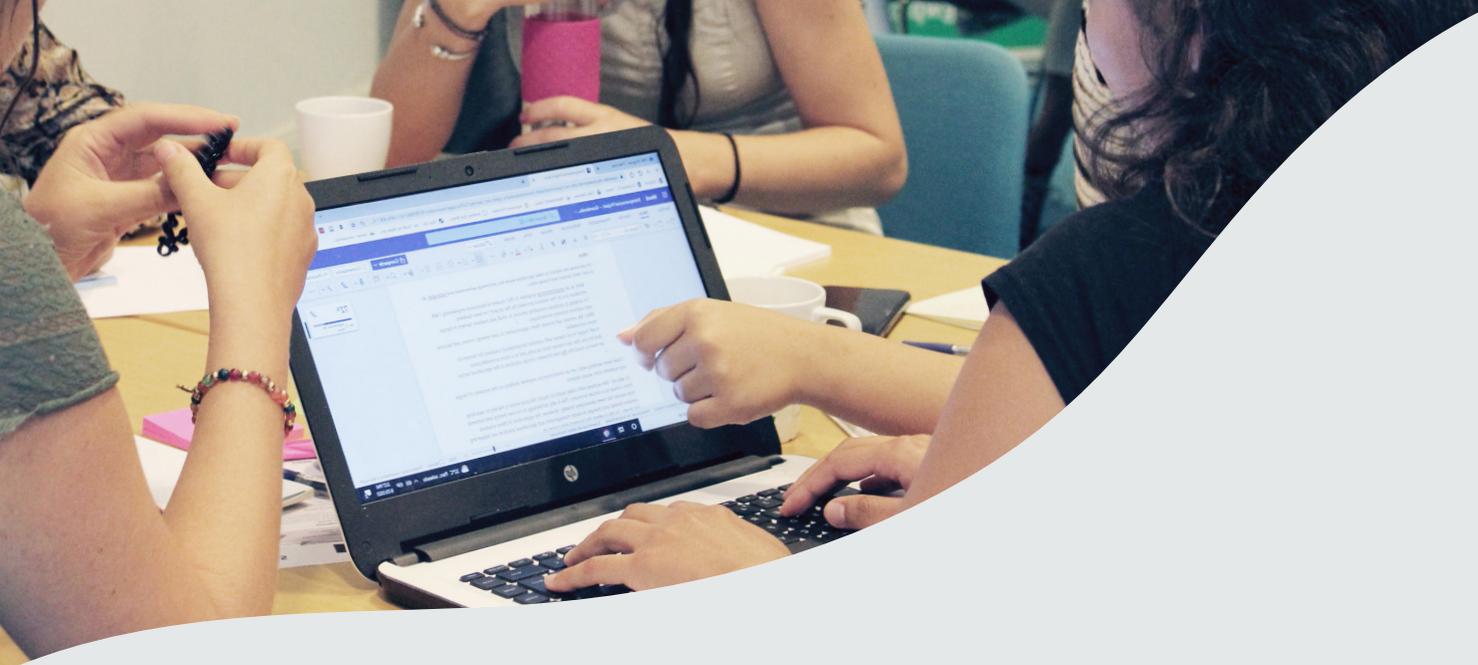


The Youth for Water and Climate (YWC) Programme equips youth to become leaders and entrepreneurs to address the challenges of sustainable management of water resources, build climate resilience and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. The YWC Programme has also allowed for the development of common and innovative methodologies to strengthen a global youth partnership addressing capacity-development gaps in the climate and water space.

For the pilot phase, 20 young professionals aged 18-30 years old from France, Sweden, Slovakia, Hungary and Belgium, took part in the 8-month programme which combined in-person workshops, a mentorship opportunity, support in finding an internship, a community

of practice and an online curriculum. The young professionals acquired transversal and specific skills to develop bankable projects or access employment opportunities.

Following the pilot phase, the YWC Programme partners have developed material which is now accessible to all youth and organizations that wish to replicate and scale the initiative.



ONLINE CURRICULUM **LINK**

The YWC Curriculum is an open-source and freely available online course which aims to inform, motivate and prepare youth to develop innovative and disruptive solutions to tackle some of the planet's biggest challenges, equip them with the needed leadership skills and methodologies to develop their (professional) personality to make a real change, and provide them with methodologies and tools to implement water & climate solutions either as an independent entrepreneur or or as a professional in an existing organization.

The curriculum consists of four different modules, each with 5-10 topics. The modules contain video tutorials, detailed worksheets that encourage students to put theory into practice as well as additional resources.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- The course can be taken individually, at your own rythm, but for best impact, combine asynchronous and synchronous learning. Sync, whether virtual or in-person, sessions enable deeper understanding and reflection. To learn more about the material developed for the sync sessions, feel free to reach out to the YWC partners.
- The modules presented in this course are independent from each other. We have found that depending on the profiles and journeys of participants, some may choose to "only" folow the modules which are most related to their own learning objectives.
- This course can be used as an onboarding tool for young professionals and interns that are just starting a new job within your organization!

M1

Take up a career in the water and climate sector

- 1.1 Introduction to the water and climate nexus
- 1.2 Current topics and challenges
- 1.3 Key actors in water and climate
- 1.4 Career paths in organizations
- 1.5 Interesting water and climate start-ups

M2

Develop Personal and Professional Skills to become a Great Leader

- 2.1 Shaping your professional goals & identifying your definition of a successful career
- 2.2 What is leadership and what type of leader are you?
- 2.3 Conflict management
- 2.4 Effective communication skills
- 2.5 Work-life-balance
- 2.6 How to build a team: Characteristics of teams and team development
- 2.7 How to build a team: How to build and develop and effective and innovative team

M3

Learn how to start an impactful business or plan your own project

- 3.1 Turning key challenges into (business) opportunities
- 3.2 Develop innovative solutions I
- 3.3 Develop innovative solutions II
- 3.4 Sustainable Business Model Canvas (BMC)
- 3.5 Pitching your ideas
- 3.6 Marketing
- 3.7 Analyze your market and competitors
- 3.8 Learn how to manage your finances
- 3.9 Innovating business models
- 3.10 Financing Water Impact

M4

Start a professional career in a water and climate organization

- 4.1 Typical job profiles
- 4.2 Job searching
- 4.3 For employers: Integrating the workforce
- 4.4 How to prepare for your first job interview
- 4.5 Useful tools and methods to do a great job
- 4.6 On-boarding from a management perspective

MENTORSHIP GUIDE **MENTOR** **MENTEE**

Over the course of the programme, the young professionals were matched with an experienced professional from the water and climate sector, with whom they connected at least once a month. To maximize the impact of this experience, a guide was developed both for the mentors and the mentees.

The Mentorship guide provides guidelines for the mentors, giving them a clear vision of their role and responsibilities. It also provides tips on how to conduct meetings with the mentee and presents best practices to make the experience a success for both parties. This guide provides them with the material needed to take ownership of this role.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- The Mentorship and Mentee guides are most effective when accompanied with regular synchronous follow-up meetings with the programme organizers.

“We often wonder about the impact our work is having on a large scale, but, with the mentorship, I was able to see the difference I was making in fostering the future capacities of at least one person. It was worth it.”

–Danielle Gaillard Piché, Mentor, Global Water Partnership (GWP)

The Mentee guide provides a comprehensive overview of how to start the specific relationship between mentor and mentee. The guide contains tips on how to set up the first meeting, how to clarify your goals as well as how to optimize the impact of the mentorship experience on the mentee’s professional journey.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE [LINK](#)

During the programme, it was essential for the participants to have an avenue for continued communication and a place to share and store resources. The YWC Community of Practice was developed and established as part of the GWP ToolBox. The community provided a safe platform for collaborative and coordinated action, promoting leadership development, idea sharing, and receiving feedback to enhance knowledge and learning approaches within the programme. This online community fostered continuous information sharing among participants, including internship opportunities, events, webinars, resources, and thematic discussions.

A code of conduct and community guidelines have been developed to ensure that everyone uses this platform wisely. The participants were invited to take ownership of this space and actively participate in its design and management.

“The community you build and networking opportunity you get through this program is unparalleled.”

–Chandrakant Singh, YWC Participant, Sweden

If you wish to create a similar Community of Practice on the GWP Toolbox, we would invite you to reach out to the [GWP Toolbox team](#).

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- Have a clear value proposition for the establishment and need for a Community of Practice. Ask yourself, “How will this improve the programme?” “Why do we need a community?” “What will be shared?” “Who will be responsible for content sharing?”;
- Ensure that the expectations from the participants are known and shared;
- Have the participants take ownership and be part of the development of the community activities and content;
- Organizers should also be active on the community to respond to questions and comments;
- Have an orientation session on the community to share all the information and rules of conduct.



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2. WHY AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE YWC PROGRAMME



To address the pressing need for equipping the younger generation to tackle the challenges of water resources management and climate resilience, it is imperative to implement and replicate capacity-building initiatives like the YWC Programme worldwide.

We are cognizant of the different dynamics present within the water and climate space across the world. Thus, the YWC programme is meant to be flexible and should be adapted to fit within different contexts and to respond to cultural differences.

Before implementing a similar initiative, the first step is to conduct an evaluation of the local and regional context as circumstances may differ from

one region to another. According to the outcomes of this evaluation, the planning and implementation phases might need to be adapted to maximize the effectiveness of the programme.

Organizations and youth can choose which tools they wish to use depending on their objectives and context. Each tool developed can be used independently. Yet, for optimal impact, we suggest organizing a complete 8-month programme combining all of the above-mentioned components. The following section will give you the steps to follow to implement a full YWC Programme as well as some tips and tricks that have been gathered following the pilot phase.

PHASE 1

Preparation

Co-development process
Mobilization of participants

PHASE 2

Implementation

Mentoring
Internships
Online Curriculum
and community of practice
In-person workshops

PHASE 3

Wrap-up and evaluation

Evaluate learning material and key
learnings of program
Dissemination activities to share the results
of the project within and outside our network

1. PREPARATORY PHASE

In this first phase, identify the partners with whom you wish to implement the programme as well as potential funding opportunities. This phase should also be dedicated to an inclusive co-development process with relevant stakeholders. We suggest to follow or be guided by the following steps:

A. Co-development process

The YWC Programme was created through a co-development process with several partners and youth representatives. We strongly suggest reaching out to the youth from your region to clarify their needs and expectations as you design your programme. Here are some guiding questions you should ask the youth during this process:

- What are the main gaps related to young water and climate professionals in the region of implementation?
- What are your expectations?
- Which components of the programs would you most benefit from?

The implementation of such a programme works best when it is led by a consortium of organizations each bringing to the table different expertises, experience and competences. In the pilot programme, partners presented expertise in entrepreneurship (CEWAS), in youth engagement in the water space & global water governance (GWP & ISW) and in regional youth mobilization (GWP-CEE, GWP-Hungary, Good Planet Belgium). We suggest building partnerships with institutions of higher learning and community based organizations/funders that are within the targeted areas of the programme implementation. It is important to discuss with all partners the targeted results for the programme, the road map of the programme and the role of each partner.

Establishing strategic partnerships with organizations also offers the advantage of accessing and leveraging their extensive networks for mentors, internships and other opportunities. It is essential to draft a partnership agreement amongst partners and to prepare a partners guide. Once all partners are confirmed, organize an in-person meeting to launch the project, allowing the partners to get to know each other better and to lay the foundations of the collaboration.

B. Mobilizing youth participants

If you plan to launch the programme in countries in which youth mobilization in the water space is challenging, we suggest holding networking events to help identify potential youth participants. Take advantage of the networking avenues that may be created by the partners or institutions of higher learning, to enlighten the youth about the programme and its objectives.

Once the pilot phase of the programme is completed, it is pertinent to consider establishing community/regional hubs led by alumni of the programme, that could help mobilize participants in their schools, organizations and networks. We also invite you to use the dissemination flyers or organize interactive workshops during water and climate-related events to increase mobilization of participants.

One of the easiest ways to mobilize youth participants is to launch a call for applications.

Here are some tools developed from which you can get inspired to support your call for applications*:

- Communication material
- Information webinars
- Selection Criteria & Process

*The examples of documents used during the YWC Programme can be shared by partners as reference. Please reach out to us to access the documents and adapt the tools to your specific context.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- Look for complementarity in your partnership;
- Keep the amount of participants relatively low (about 20 youth);
- Select youth with various backgrounds, interests and from various countries;
- Choose youth and partners who speak the same language;
- Depending on the scale of the project, it is necessary to build a large enough consortium to achieve the desired impact. The optimal number of partners is 5-6.

2. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

A. Mentoring

Mentoring is one of the core elements of the YWC Programme. While some organizations might already have a pool of potential mentors for the programme, it is important that the mentors be selected based on the specific needs and interests of the youth.

The youth should be given the opportunity, at the beginning of the programme, to specify exactly what they are looking for in their mentor and what their expectations are. We've also found that it can be interesting to let the youth propose a mentor themselves, to whom the programme administrators could then reach out to.

Once the mentors have been selected, it is crucial to provide them with the mentorship guide and conduct an onboarding session to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the expectations, roles, and responsibilities involved. It is highly recommended to conduct bi-monthly follow-ups with both mentors and mentees throughout the programme duration. The framework of the mentoring experience is detailed in the mentorship and mentee guides.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- Invite the mentors to offer in-person trainings to the mentees (in their office/business/organization/field);
- Support the youth in clearly defining their goals for the mentorship;
- Encourage the youth to be proactive and reachout to their mentors;
- Do not hesitate to match youth and mentors from different countries and backgrounds as their profiles and interests might still align.

“This program has impacted my journey in so many ways. My mentorship experience allowed me to gain visibility and recognition amongst more experienced professionals in the sector.”

– Matthieu Blanchard, YWC Participant, France

B. Internships

Internships are a key element to access employment opportunities. Over the course of the programme, partner organizations offered internships to some of the young professionals and mobilized their networks to support as many participants in finding an internship. Some mentors offered internships directly to their mentees.

C. Online Curriculum & Community of practice

The participants are invited to complete one module of the Online Curriculum per month. The community of practice is a great space to create discussion threads on each module to allow participants to interact on the given subjects and ask questions.

D. In-person workshops

From the pilot YWC Programme, two in-person workshops were organized, during which the youth met up in Hungary and Sweden as part of their professional enhancement curriculum. These in-person workshops were greatly impactful for the participants, allowing them to gain access to knowledge, experience and to develop connections with their peers, mentors and leading organizations.

“How valuable it is to discuss and exchange thoughts with others from all over the world with different backgrounds and experiences.”

–Ulrika Lundin Glas, YWC Participant, Sweden

The optimal duration for these workshops is 5-7 days and they are most beneficial when the content and structure is co-developed with the participants. The workshops can be structured according to the content and activities of the online curriculum. The online course includes video content as well as self-assessments and downloadable worksheets that can be used directly. Some suggestions of activities include:

- Field trips
- Networking
- Participation in conferences/events
- Skills development workshops
- Youth-led workshops
- Role-playing
- Activities related to job interviews and reviewing of CVs and cover letters

Such engagements should be documented and media interviews can be scheduled to take part during these sessions for future references when documenting the progress and milestones of the programme.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL IMPACT

- Put the participants in 8 different groups that will each lead the animation of the community of practice during one-month of the program. Some activities that they can organize include contests, debates, discussions, viewing sessions, etc.

FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

- Increased transversal capacities such as leadership, project management and communication;
- Development of water and climate specific-skills;
- Access to employment opportunities (100% of participants of the pilot program are now working in the water & climate sector);
- Youth-led projects of exceptional quality are developed, addressing water and climate-related challenges through their technical specifications, efficiency, monitoring, evaluation, and job creation potential;
- Development of connections and relationships with peers, organizations and experienced professionals;
- Strengthened civic and entrepreneurial spirit, providing relevant solutions to local and regional issues.

FOR ORGANIZATIONS

- Increased access to highly talented and skilled young professionals;
- Improved on-boarding programme for young professionals;
- Increased level of employee retention;
- Improved mentorship program amongst employees;
- Peer-to-peer learning opportunities with other organizations;

FOR MENTORS

- Developed professional network;
- Identified and nurtured highly skilled potential talent for their organizations;
- Cultivated new and fresh perspectives to their fields of work;
- Developed a sense of giving back to the next generation and contributing to the development of young professionals.



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3. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES



FROM PARTNER TO PARTNER

- The team leader should be a strong organization with a solid foothold in the water & climate space .
- Choose the partners wisely. Think of the goals you want to achieve with your programme first.
- It is important to establish good coordination, define clear roles and management between partners. Take the time to set a solid cooperation framework between partners.
- Time management is key. The organizing partners are usually very busy people. Setting a realistic schedule, considering the partners' availability and the scope of work will go a long way. Having regular coordination meetings helps to better track progress and adapt to various situations.
- Online meetings are fast and flexible. However, they may not provide the same level of relationship building as in-person meetings. During the event preparation phase, schedule at least a couple in-person meetings to get to know your partners better.
- Once you have formed your team, one of the initial steps is to determine the communication channels and tools that will be utilized. It is essential to choose options that are accessible to everyone involved. Opt for user-friendly tools that are preferably affordable or even available for free.
- In-person workshops can be busy and intense. To ensure smooth operations, it is crucial to plan the program and assign roles well in advance. Make sure that everyone involved is well-prepared and confident in their respective responsibilities.

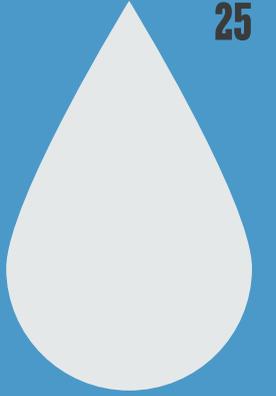
FROM PARTNER TO MENTOR

- Select the right mentors based on the profiles of the youth. Keep in mind that these people have very busy schedules and proper support/coordination is in order. Do not hesitate to reach-out to high-profile individuals with many years of experience; most of them are always happy to give a few hours of mentoring.
- Establish a main contact point the mentors can reach out to if needed.
- Don't forget to frequently communicate with mentors about the progress of their relationship with mentees. Set up virtual meetings, before, during, and after the programme to coordinate, track goals and evaluate the overall progress and address any potential issues that might occur.
- Clearly communicate the expectations to the mentors before the start of the process. Use the Mentorship Guide, which explains all aspects of the programme with detailed roles, responsibilities, code of conduct, and other important elements. This document will help any potential mentor decide if they want to participate and better orient them in their tasks.
- Encourage mentors to offer on-site experiences to their mentees (in the office, on the field).
- Give opportunities to mentors to meet together (online or in-person) to connect with each other and share experiences, especially regarding this specific mentoring experience.

FROM PARTNER TO PARTICIPANT

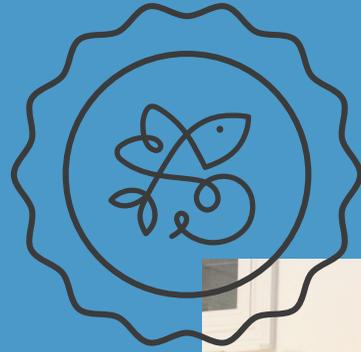
- Students welcome interactive sessions with real-life exercises and problem-based learning.
- Having organizers openly talking about their professional experience offers an additional opportunity for mentorship and further solidifies the relationship with the youth.
- Combine the in-person workshops to conferences and events.
- Combine asynchronous learning activities (online curriculum) with synchronous learning activities (in-person & virtual events).

PERSPECTIVES AND AVENUES TO EXPLORE FOR REPLICABILITY AND SCALING



As you will understand through the nature of this document, we believe that the components and ideas behind this programme can be scaled up and replicated in different contexts. Here are some ideas on how the material developed can be used:

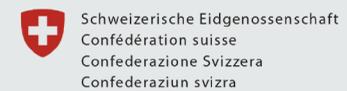
- Lead a full YWC Programme within your organization as an on-boarding process for new employees! You can match your new employees with experienced employees from your organization, create a community of practice to allow the new employees to better connect amongst themselves and with the other teams of your organization, etc.
- The young participants of the YWC Programme can also become new mentors for the next groups of young participants. By keeping the alumni network engaged and involved in such a process, you are increasing the sustainability and potential for replicability of such an initiative.
- As the pilot phase was implemented within an European context, some of the material developed is adapted to the specific context of young professionals from Europe. That said, we believe that this programme can be replicated in different parts of the world! The online curriculum could be translated into different languages and the content of the workshops and factsheets could be adapted to the different work context of youth from different regions of the world. If you are interested in collaborating to make this happen, please reach out to us!
- Translating the content in other languages (the YWC curriculum is currently being translated into Russian and will shortly be available to youth from Central Asia).
- Adding extra modules to achieve a broader reach.



Coordinated by



With the support of



If you wish to learn more about the YWC Programme, please feel free to reach out to us. If you are looking to develop potential partnerships to implement your initiative, we would also be glad to discuss this with you and share lessons learned.



This RoadBook was developed by the International Secretariat for Water - Solidarity Water Europe in close collaboration with the Global Water Partnership, Good Planet Belgium, cewas, Global Water Partnership - Hungary & Global Water Partnership - Central and Eastern Europe, with the financial support of the Erasmus+ Agency, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and l'Agence de l'Eau Artois Picardie.

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