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WATER AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028



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WATER AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028

Union for the Mediterranean

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More than 60 representatives of Mediterranean water youth organisations were consulted and invited to participate in the engagement workshop activities, providing valuable inputs to this present document. Participation and major contributions to the discussions included representatives from CEWAS, Lebanon Youth Parliament for Water, Egyptian Youth Parliament for Water, MedYWat, and Waterlution.

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Executive Summary

Youth in the Mediterranean face many challenges including the mismatch between skills and job market needs leading to a growing phenomenon of the water-employment-migration, which is amplified by the lack of appropriate career development and job opportunities. For these reasons, there exists a strong need to empower and build youth capacity to improve their readiness for the emerging water job market, as well as to enable their entrepreneurial pursuits within the water sector. The UfM seeks to help youth overcome the barriers they face by investing in a long-term water youth engagement strategy which aims to support their professional journeys.

In order to build the capacity of youth whilst tackling the challenges of water in the Mediterranean region, the UfM has developed a 5-year Water and Youth Engagement Strategy. The water youth engagement strategy is based on the Virtues, Narrative and Principles of the UfMYouth strategy which gives an umbrella document for all sectors including water*. This specific engagement strategy on Water aims to support youth through three main objectives including (1) Attracting prime talent into the water sector, (2) Strengthening policy skills, and (3) Building capacity toward careers and entrepreneurship in the water sector. To carry out the objectives, nine key programs have been identified and conceptualized. These programs include: Water Jobs Short Film Features, Water Seminar Series, Water Online Courses, Young Changemakers in Policy: Capacity Building Program, Youth in High-Level Policy Dialogue, Youth seat on the UfM Water Expert Group and Water Task Forces, MED Water Immersion Experience, MED Water Internship Program, Early Career Professional Mentorship Program. The development of these programs was a result of a participatory process and continuous consultations with vested Mediterranean water and youth organizations.

The purpose of this engagement plan is to ensure that youth are integrated into the UfM’s work on water and not included as an afterthought, as developed by the UfM Youth Strategy adopted in December 2021. The strategy provides a matrix to showcase how the various programs are aligned, and can be integrated, with UfM Water Policy Framework for Action 2030.¹ As the UfM works to implement this water and youth strategy, it is recommended that it aligns with other water agendas in the region including The Strategy for Sweden’s regional development cooperation² with the Middle East and North Africa 2021–2025, and the European Commission’s Southern Neighborhood new agenda.³ This represents a key opportunity to leverage existing momentum by other regional initiatives and a chance for synergy creation and partnership development.

To ensure successful implementation of the Water and Youth Engagement Strategy and its programs, it is recommended that the UfM co-develops these programs with youth-led organizations and offers opportunities for youth to play a leadership role in their implementation. The UfM will also need to focus its energy on building partnerships and financial support for the programs to ensure their sustainability and to amplify their impact.

¹ UfM. UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030. Water Agenda Booklet. 2020
² The Government of Sweden (2020). Strategy for Sweden’s regional development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa 2021–2025
³ European Commission (2021). Southern Neighborhood: EU proposes new Agenda for the Mediterranean

* Consult the UfM Youth Strategy



1. Introduction

1.1 Empowering Youth

Youth make up a large portion of the world's population, as well as the UfM member states population. Nearly 15.5% of the world's population is between the ages of 15-24.⁴ Within the UfM member states, a similar population average of 12.8% of the total population are between the age range of 15-24.⁵

If we consider the larger combined youth age groups including between 15-34, 26.5% of the UfM member states population is within this age range. This portion of the population is large. It is large, and it is critical for our future, meaning it deserves our meaningful investment.

Empowering youth makes them feel confident and capable, enabling them to become active contributors and collaborators within their communities. Youth are the leaders of tomorrow.

Youth empowerment can never be achieved unless youths are seen and treated for what they are: an energetic force at the forefront of developing creative solutions.

Indeed, they are proactive, disruptive, want to test their innovative ideas, and transform societies. Their energy is worth being channeled towards meaningful cooperation. Choosing to empower young people is choosing to shape our communities for the better and choosing to invest in our future. It is therefore important that we commit to their empowerment. Youth are the most important asset that the Euro-Med region has as well as the intellectual capital on which it leverages for an inclusive and sustainable development.

In order to empower youth, we can (1) honor the voice of young people, (2) understand and work to implement their ideas, (3) include them in decision-making processes, (4) help them gain the skills and opportunities needed to positively impact their own lives and those around them, and we can (5) share senior authority with young people.

Young people play a concrete role as catalysts of inclusive and resilient societies in crisis response, recovery, and in preparation of future forecasts.

1.2 Defining Youth and Young Professionals in the Water Sector

There are varied definitions of the term youth, and the term has not always been well defined to the water and climate communities. The varying term of youth has also made it difficult to differentiate 'children' as well as 'young professionals' on the age scale. The importance of making this differentiation is so that organizations and programs can best identify which age groups they are targeting within their initiatives.

There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group. The UN Secretariat, for statistical purposes, has defined 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15-24 years.⁶ This definition has been made by the UN under the acknowledgment that member states might have their own and varying definitions of youth.

The age definition for children also varies amongst the international community. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ defined 'children' as youth 18 years of age and younger. However, many statistical references refer to children as ages 14 and under, taking the assumption that chil-

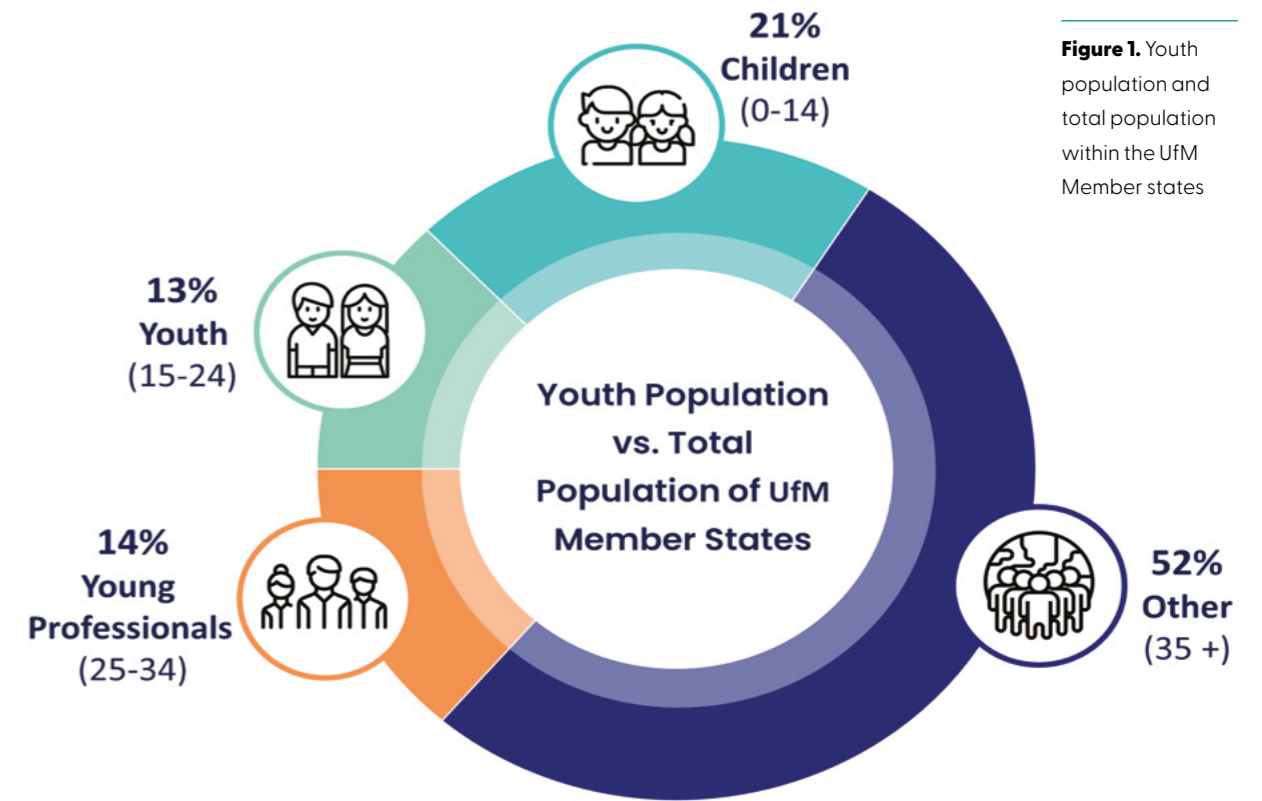


Figure 1. Youth population and total population within the UfM Member states

dren include the ages below the 15 - 25 youth age bracket. For simplicity's sake, we can conclude that persons aged 18 and under are considered 'children' and those above are referred to as 'youth.'

It is additionally important to note that the international youth community identifies as older than the UN Secretariat's definition, including ages 18 all the way through 35. In fact, many leading international water and youth organizations include in their membership youth between the ages of 18 and 35. Typically this loosely defined age bracket is referred to as the 'Young Water Professional.' These organizations include the International Water Association (IWA) Young Water Professionals group⁸, the World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW)⁹, the Water Youth Network (WYN)¹⁰, and the International Water Resources Association's (IWRA) Early Career group. Therefore, based on the above rationale, this strategy will mainly focus its efforts on supporting youth within the age bracket of 18-35 – the Young Water Professional.

1.3 UfM's role in youth engagement and empowerment

The UfM Action for Youth in the Mediterranean can be summarized in one word: inclusion. On 9

December 2021, the UfM adopted the first ever UfM Youth Strategy 2030: Euro-Mediterranean Youth towards a Common Goal.

This Strategy is a concrete response to urgent Youth-Mediterranean needs and obstacles that prevent them from gaining full access to their inherent potential as agents of positive change towards securing a human and sustainable development, hence towards their empowerment.

The Strategy on Water highlights the importance of effective local solutions that provide the necessary skills to integrate the green and circular economy.

The UfM believes that youth are the next generation of leaders who must be invested in and empowered. The UfM seeks to ensure through this youth engagement strategy that every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential in the water sector.

The UfM has taken recent initiatives to continue to build opportunities for youth in the water sector, in parallel with its strategic planning for helping member states achieve sustainable water management. Leading up to this youth engagement strategy, the UfM has shown its dedication to youth through three main projects and years of preparation. In fact,

this youth engagement strategy has been built on the foundations of feedback from recent youth projects completed in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

In 2019, a Joint UfM-CMI Initiative on Water and Youth¹¹ mapped all water and youth organizations residing in the Mediterranean, as well as surveyed 50 of these organizations. The 2019 survey provided key inputs on needs to be filled from youth stakeholders in the water sector. Inputs were also gleaned from the 2019 Stockholm World Water Week event ‘Mediterranean Youth Unites Around Water.’

In 2020, a gap analysis ‘Water and Youth Opportunities in the Mediterranean’ was completed in response to the gap of connecting youth to jobs in the Mediterranean. The analysis reviewed water sector job trends amidst COVID-19 and opportunities for Mediterranean youth employment in the sector. The project also consisted of results from a survey conducted with youth from the Mediterranean highlighting their perception of the future challenges and skills required for the water job market of the future.

In 2021, a review of international youth strategies was conducted as well as the preparatory stages for developing the UfM Water and Youth Engagement

Strategy. Additionally in 2021, a new organization EntreMed was developed and endorsed by the UfM to act as an entrepreneurial hub for youth in the water sector. The combination of these projects (see Figure 2) has led the UfM to this point in developing this engagement strategy for youth.

⁴ UNDESA (2019). Population Dynamics – World Population Prospects.
⁵ Calculated using the UNDESA Population Dynamics statistics. All UfM member states were selected to calculate the % of the youth population in the region. The only member country not available in this data included Monaco.
⁶ United Nations (2022). Global Issues: Youth. [Web](#).
⁷ UNICEF (2022). The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children’s version. <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text-childrens-version>
⁸ IWA (2020). IWA Young Water Professionals and Emerging Water Leaders Guidance Document.
⁹ WYPW. FAQ: Want to know more about us? Membership. <https://youthforwater.org/faq/>
¹⁰ Water Youth Network.
¹¹ UfM and CMI (2019). Joint UfM-CMI Initiative on Water and Youth. Scoping Note.

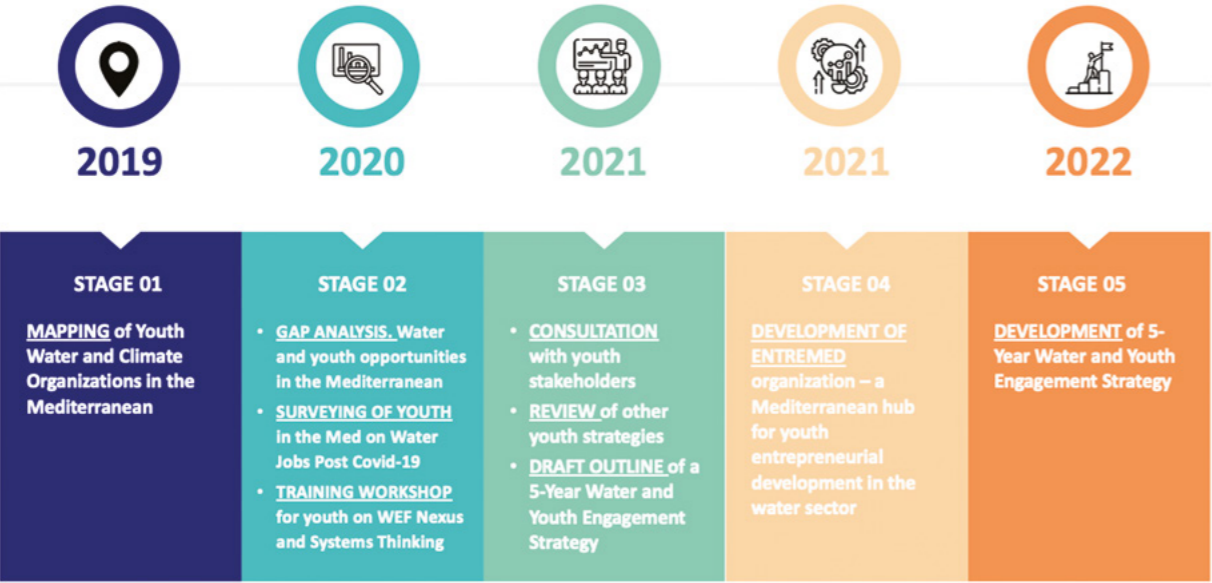


Figure 2. Youth engagement projects and strategy timeline

2. Challenges Facing Youth

2.1 Water-Employment-Migration

The lack of clean, safe and affordable water in a region can negatively impact its economy, which in turn impacts the region’s employment, ultimately leading to the likelihood of migration out of the area. Often referred to as the Water-Employment-Migration Nexus,¹² this phenomenon is impacting the Mediterranean populations, including youth, leading them to migrate to other countries to find adequate jobs and seek better livelihood conditions. More than 25% of youth are willing to migrate to other places as their major needs remain unmet.¹³

2.2 The Mediterranean Youth Employment Gap: Skills Mismatch

The Mediterranean region has a fast-rising population, and the region’s youth are growing up in the midst of a slew of social and economic obstacles—barriers that limit opportunities and limit their ability to compete with global peers. The region’s youth are entering the job market in greater numbers, but unemployment remains high in comparison to global norms, and automation and technology pose future threats. Bringing more women into the workforce is a significant problem for the region. Despite the fact that women make up over half of the population in the region, female labor force participation is significantly lower than male. This is a huge business and social opportunity that has been missed. Another significant challenge is the existing gap or mismatch between the skills earned at traditional educational institutions, and the rapidly evolving demands by the labor market.¹⁵

A survey conducted by Union for the Mediterranean¹⁶ whose aim was to identify employment and

capacity related gaps for Mediterranean youth within water related sectors, shed light on some of these gaps identified by youth in the region. The skills identified by the survey of youth groups included spatial analysis (Arc GIS and other software), big data analysis, machine learning, literacy in digital and online platforms, Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain technologies, technical writing, and ability to publish, systems thinking, water/science diplomacy, water law, water investment, and ability to understand complex systems. Other skills include creativity, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, international experience, ability to work in groups, remote working skills, mediation, innovation, management skills, leadership, communication, and languages.

Reflections about some of the challenges and required skills were echoed at a focus group meeting held with representatives of key water youth organizations in the Mediterranean. Challenges included the lack of internship opportunities, low digital literacy, language fluency requirements, short term work contracts, political barriers, and lack of capacity in understanding policy aspects related to water. Some necessary skills identified by the group included leadership, systems thinking, interpersonal skills, remote work, and digital literacy, among others. In terms of trends in water jobs, it was highlighted that while most advertised opportunities were technical/engineering, there is a growing number of opportunities in water policy and governance related jobs.

McKinsey and Company further identifies thirteen skill groups under four categories that include foundational skills that will help citizens thrive in the future work market. These categories include cognitive, interpersonal, self-leadership, and digital skills (Figure 3). Many of these similar skills were identi-



Figure 3. Skill groups for future work market (adapted from McKinsey and Company)

fied through the UfM survey and through its engagement with youth leaders in the region. As the Union for the Mediterranean aims to develop a long-term water and youth strategy, a unique opportunity exists in aligning its programming with the skills identified by youth in the region. Through such a strategy, the UfM could serve as a bridge between traditional academic training and the rapidly evolving job market demands.

2.3 Diverse water career paths - reaching out beyond the water sector

One of the key challenges for youth lies in the misunderstanding, or the lack of awareness, to the diversity of water career paths, and the potential ability of young professionals, with their various backgrounds, to contribute to addressing water challenges of the region. Whether one is an engineer, data scientist, social scientist, artist, public policy professional, sociologist, economist, agricultural professional - everyone has a role to play and can contribute to addressing various aspects of complex water challenges. Through creating a water and youth engage-

ment strategy, the UfM needs to take a systems view to water and work toward attracting and engaging talents from across different sectors and areas of professional expertise. This strategy will not exclusively be directed toward young professionals or students pursuing water degrees; instead, a much more profound impact lies within involving youth beyond the water sector, given the tight interconnectedness of water with other sectors- including energy, agriculture, health and others.

¹² UfM (2020). UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030. Water Agenda Booklet

¹³ ILO (2015). Global Employment Trends for Youth

¹⁴ McKinsey and Company (2021). [Opportunity Youth: Imagining a bright future for the next generation](#).

¹⁵ UfM (2020). UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030. Water Agenda Booklet

¹⁶ UfM (2021). [Water and Youth Opportunities in the Mediterranean](#)

3. Key Objectives of Youth Engagement Strategy



Building on the previous consultations mentioned with water youth groups in the Mediterranean and a review of the key skills for the future work marketplace, the UfM Water and Youth Strategy has three specific objectives:

Objective 1. Attract prime talent into the water sector. The key is to ensure that young people understand the jobs that exist within the water sector, the skills required, and the potential impact they could create through different water jobs.

Objective 2. Strengthen policy skills. There is a strong need for youth to be trained before their involvement in policy dialogues to feel meaningfully engaged in such discussions. Empowering and training youth will ensure they are not being 'tokenized' or involved in discussions just because they are young. Instead, this would ensure they are involved because of the valuable contribution they could bring to the table.

Objective 3. Build capacity toward careers and entrepreneurship in the water sector. Water sector immer-

sion experiences, internships, and career mentorship, will support in building youth capacity toward an evolving water jobs market. Building such capacity will in turn have a direct impact on economic development within the region.

The below programs have been developed to fulfill the three objectives. For every objective, three targeted programs have been designed.

Figure 4. UfM Water and Youth Strategy Objectives

3.1 Attract prime talent into the water sector

Program 1: Water Jobs Short Film Features



Brief Description

Through video interviews, youth and young professionals will have an opportunity to take a look into the water sector job market. This video series will provide youth an in-depth look at various water jobs showcasing skills required, job duties, site location details, and impacts the water job might positively have on the environment. This presentation will allow youth to consider which job opportunity might be right for them.

Objectives

1. To promote and show Mediterranean youth and young professionals the water job opportunities that exist.
2. Showcase everyday water job duties, skills, and requirements.
3. Highlight the impact of the job positively impacting the environment and to show any satisfaction it might give the employer.

Activities

1. Interview various water job employees
2. Video footage of location of workplace and other employees and activities involved in the job
3. Preparation of relevant interview questions
4. Editing of video materials to prepare for upload

Program 2: UfM Water Seminar Series



Brief Description

UfM will collaborate with different academic, governmental, private organizations to create seminars on contemporary water issues with the goals of showcasing water jobs to young professionals and researchers, to highlight the work of young researchers, and to promote UfM-university collaboration on water related issues. Additionally, these efforts aspire to lead to the development of a larger university collaboration on water, whereas the UfM might become a larger hub for water innovation.

Objectives

1. To showcase top water related research to university students who are interested in seeking a job in the water sector
2. To highlight the research work of young water researchers and professionals
3. To promote UfM as a water hub amongst university partners and collaborators

Activities

1. Scheduled seminars at UfM member states' universities with a water focus
2. Student research presentations or research fairs to be held at universities
3. Recorded seminars will be collected for further reference on a UfM Water website page

Program 3: Consortium for Water Training in the Mediterranean



Brief Description

One of the reflections we heard at consultation meetings is a gap in courses that focus on regional specific content related to water challenges. Developing such a water consortium that includes key universities in the region would have the potential of providing unique content that builds capacity of graduates in issues relevant to the region. Such a hub could build on existing courses which could be made available across multiple institutions. It could also serve as a platform through which new courses and skill-specific modules would be developed and offered to undergraduate and graduate students across the region.

Objectives

1. Improve the access of Mediterranean youth to training material that build skills necessary for the future water job market
2. Develop a water consortium/ knowledge hub hosted by UfM which includes universities from across the Mediterranean region
3. Develop water courses unique to the Mediterranean context which could be available for youth across the region

Activities

1. Benchmarking exercise: to identify the gaps within water courses offered across institutions in the Mediterranean
2. Identify key university partners and programs interested in being part of this consortium
3. Develop courses and modules to be offered through this capacity building hub

3.2 Youth in Policy Dialogue

Program 4: Young Change Makers in Policy: Capacity Building



Brief Description

There are often challenges for engaging youth in meaningful policy dialogues. The first is that youth are not familiar with the setup, processes, dialogue rules, or even aware about the potential influence they could have on the outcomes. The second is that senior leaders are unaware of how to best integrate young people into the policy dialogues in a way that youth feel engaged, respected, and empowered. This program focuses on building the capacity of youth to engage in policy dialogues related to the environment, while also placing emphasis on preparing senior leaders to better engage youth in the conversations.

Objectives

1. Developing the capacity and knowledge of youth to participate and engage in meaningful water policy discussions
2. Train leaders to better engage young people in policy dialogues

Activities

1. 6 Week 1.5-hour online trainings to be delivered to young people
2. 1-3 hours online trainings to cover materials to equip leaders to better engage young people in policy dialogues
3. Preparation of training materials for both leaders and youth
4. A model UN roundtable with youth leaders - debate on water security within the Mediterranean

Program 5: Youth in Policy Dialogues



Brief Description

Young people often lack opportunities to be meaningfully engaged in high-level environmental policy dialogues. It takes a dedicated organization to open the doors. In this project, the UfM will identify relevant and key high-level international dialogues where youth can meaningfully participate¹⁷. Young people who have completed the 'Young Changemakers in Policy' program, will be admitted participating in the high-level conversations opened by the UfM.

Objectives

1. Creating opportunities for young people to be meaningfully engaged in High-Level environmental policy dialogues
2. Build the capacity of the next generation of water policy leaders

Activities

1. Identifying key international water dialogues for Mediterranean youth to meaningfully participate
2. Workshops to help youth develop and craft their messages for key high-level dialogues
3. Youth presentations and interventions to be had at key global conversations on water and climate.

¹⁷ The UfM Youth Strategy also engages young people in policy dialogue

Program 6: Youth Seat on the UfM Water Expert Group and Water Task Forces



Brief Description

Further creating space and opportunities for youth to engage in water governance and management is an overarching goal of the UfM's youth engagement strategy. A permanent seat for a Youth representative to join the UfM Water Expert Group will ensure full information and voting rights to a young person.

Objectives

1. To create space on the UfM Water Expert Group (WEG) for youth to have an equal opportunity for leadership within the organization
2. To create space for youth representation on the leadership team for the following task forces:
 - Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus
 - Water-Employment-Migration Nexus
 - Water Supply - Sanitation - and Hygiene (WASH) Nexus
 - Water and Climate Change Adaptation (WCCA) Nexus

Activities

1. Open an application process to review new youth leaders
2. Develop youth candidate profile
3. Selection process of candidate
4. Briefing session for newly elected youth, to ensure they are up to speed on expectations, rules, and procedures for Water Expert Group meetings

3.3 Capacity building for a career in the water sector

Program 7: Immersion Experience



Brief Description

This will be a hybrid program that will include a week of online training, followed by the week of field experience, team building, and solution co-creation. The online part of the program will include short modules that provide all participants a common background on systems thinking and sustainable development. This will be followed by a week on ground experience which includes field visits to learn more about a country's water challenges and the different stakeholder groups and sectors connected with these challenges. This week will also include a structured program which allows young students and professionals to form interdisciplinary teams geared to develop innovative technical, policy, or social/behavioral solutions to address the identified challenges. The team will work together throughout the week until they are ready to pitch their proposed solutions and business ideas.

Objectives

1. Provide opportunities for cross-cultural integration and experiential learning opportunities within the Mediterranean Region
2. Build capacity in systems thinking and leadership in the water sector
3. Foster innovation and entrepreneurship through creating interdisciplinary solutions to context specific regional water challenges

Activities

1. Identify host country and organize field visits with local stakeholders
2. Develop online modules on systems thinking and leadership training
3. Develop modules on interdisciplinary team development, business plan development, and pitching
4. Develop application process and acceptance criteria

Program 8: Internship Program



Brief Description

This program would build on the existing UfM internship program by creating a pool of policy, industry, and academic internship opportunities within member nations of the UfM like Erasmus or IAESTE, this program will offer the opportunity for students to spend a summer in a Mediterranean country where they can build their experience and network within the region. The program will facilitate matching between areas of student expertise and company/organization needs. This would be facilitated through a virtual job fair and online application process.

Objectives

1. Provide internship opportunities in policy, industry, and academia for youth in the water sector
2. Match young professionals with internship and job providers across the Mediterranean region

Activities

1. Organize annual virtual job fair bringing together students with industry professionals, academics, and other organizations looking to hire
2. Identify the list of organizations and list of participating academic institutions to which this program will be available
3. Develop application process and matching criteria
4. Ensure opportunities for exchange of students across different countries within the region

Program 9: Early Career Professional Mentorship Program



Brief Description

This program aims to build on the wealth of expertise that exists across different career areas within the water sector while ensuring a mechanism for communication and collaboration with early career professionals in the field. This collaboration could take different forms: co-authorship on research articles, supporting the development of policy engagement activities, or contributing to the development of ongoing projects within the private sector. This can be viewed as a longer-term virtual internship opportunity which allows a young professional access to have regular meetings with a senior mentor who could provide career guidance and collaboration opportunities.

Objective

Match early career professionals with mid-career and senior mentors, providing opportunities for intergenerational collaboration.

Activities

1. Identify a group of mid-career and senior professionals at partner organizations who are willing to participate in the program
2. Develop program application and matching criteria
3. Identify possible categories of collaboration

Figure 5 maps out the identified programs according to the level of effort and the potential impact they are expected to have in meeting the outlined objectives of the youth engagement strategy. It also indicates the level of financial resources expected to be dedicated to these programs.

Figure 5. Mapping of Impact and Effort of proposed water strategy programs



4. Opportunities for Strategy Alignment

Figure 6. Mapping of proposed youth engagement strategy programs with UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030

4.1 Aligning and Integrating Youth and the UfM Water Agenda

The purpose of this engagement plan is to ensure that youth are integrated into UfM’s work on water and not thought of secondarily. The UfM sees the integration of youth to mean that youth are woven into UfM processes instead of being treated as a separate body of people with separate processes. The

UfM Water agenda through the UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030 focuses on four thematic areas: 1) Water Energy Food Ecosystem Nexus, 2) Water Employment Migration, 3) Water and Sanitation Hygiene, and 4) Water and Climate Change Actions. Table 1 highlights which youth programs within this strategy can be linked to and integrated with specific interventions outlined in the UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030.

	Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus			Water-Employment-Migration Nexus		Water Sanitation and Hygiene Nexus		Water and Climate Change Adaptation Nexus	
	Generate and disseminate Nexus knowledge	Share knowledge on Nexus analytical methods	Share knowledge on technical innovations	Generate and disseminate WEM knowledge and innovation	Design and implement pilot interventions with replication potential at local level	Knowledge shared and capacity built	Demonstration applications	Capacity building on CCA methodologies, policies and technologies	Design and implement pilot adaptation projects with replication potential at local levels
Water Jobs Short Film Features	X					X	X		
Seminar Series	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Consortium for Water Training	X	X	X	X		X			
Immersion Experience	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Internship Experience	X			X		X	X		X
Mentorship Program		X		X					



The three programs under objective 2 (Strengthening Policy Skills) were not specifically included in the table above as they do not necessarily represent a specific thematic area of focus. Instead, the programs - youth and policy dialogues, young changemakers in policy program, youth seat on the Water Expert Group and other water task forces, are cross-cutting and were developed to provide a significant opportunity for youth leadership in the water sector as well as a role across various thematic areas within the UfM Policy Framework for Actions 2030.

4.2 Aligning water youth engagement strategy with other regional strategies

The youth engagement strategy can leverage the momentum created by other regional strategies and could benefit from aligning its direction with them. These strategies include:

- *The Strategy for Sweden’s regional development cooperation*¹⁸ with the Middle East and North Africa 2021–2025: which explicitly focuses on supporting environmentally and climate resilient sustainable development, and sustainable use of natural resources including fresh water. It also focuses on inclusive and sustainable economic development, and circular

economy approaches that improve the environment, limit climate impacts and create green jobs.

- *The European Commission’s Southern Neighbourhood new agenda*¹⁹: which emphasizes the potential of transforming challenges into opportunities through building partnerships across the region. The new agenda emphasizes the need to build opportunities in the fields of vocational education and training, sport and digital education and youth. It further outlines activities for economic empowerment of youth and the provision of local opportunities to reduce migration.

¹⁸ The Government of Sweden (2020). Strategy for Sweden’s regional development cooperation with the Middle East and North Africa 2021–2025

¹⁹ European Commission (2021). Southern Neighbourhood:EU proposes new Agenda for the Mediterranean

5. Building Synergies: Strategic partners and role in strategy execution

As the UfM executes the outlined youth engagement strategy, it will build on existing strategic regional partnerships and synergies with their existing programs and activities. This section highlights a list of key partners and maps out the proposed programs they would potentially have a role in. A major part of launching this strategy in its first year will involve engaging these partners in the development of the proposed programs and identifying ways to secure funding. More information about this will be shared in subsequent sections.

5.1 Mapping partners and proposed programs

Annex I includes an initial mapping of the proposed programs and the potential UfM partners who could contribute to them. This mapping was done based on the type of activities these partner organizations might either be interested in funding, participating in, or co-hosting. This initial list of partners has been extracted from the UfM Water Policy Framework for Action 2030. Further partners, especially including academic institutions within the Mediterranean region need to be identified. Such academic institutions will be the main source of graduate and early career professionals who will be the key beneficiaries of the proposed programs.

5.2 Building Synergies

The proposed programs in the Water and Youth Engagement Strategy will leverage existing platforms and thematic areas of expertise present among the different partners' activities. We aim to collaborate with these partners to identify areas of synergy and funding opportunities to support the development of the different programs. One such collaboration

could be with UNESCO's Groundwater Youth Network which aims to focus on developing programs and activities dedicated to "enhancing the engagement of youth in addressing water security issues." Another example is GWP-MED with its different youth focused activities including GEMWET, an ambitious project with tangible benefits for green youth employment and smart agriculture in the community of Ghar El Melh, Tunisia. It includes the application of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus approach to farming plots and the development of green business ideas of local youth.²⁰ The outcomes of such projects could be integrated in the developed courses, for example. Furthermore, existing on-ground partnerships on such a project could be leveraged toward building the Immersion Experience program.

EntreMed is a recently developed organization (est 2022) based out of Spain which leads and facilitates communication and cooperation amongst the water youth entrepreneur sector in the Mediterranean region by becoming a platform and a clearing house of sector information on organizations active in the sector and on state-of-practice in the field. A water and youth hub like EntreMed would be the prime location for housing programs related to Objective 3 in this strategy plan: Build Capacity Toward Careers in the Water Sector.

²⁰ GWP-MED (2021). [GEMWET](#)

6. Implementing the Youth Strategy

Figure 7. Projects categorized by low, medium or high need of resources

6.1 Monitoring and evaluation

A program monitoring and evaluation framework (Annex II) has been developed to track the impact of each program. The framework includes one or more (up to four) indicators for evaluating each program as well as how the indicator will be measured. This monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed as a starting guide for monitoring the progress of each program but may be altered throughout each program development stage.

6.2 Financial resources for implementation

The proposed programs will have varying levels of funding needs to support their implementation. The UfM water team will actively seek ongoing funding opportunities in collaboration with its partners to support the youth programs under the water and youth engagement strategy.

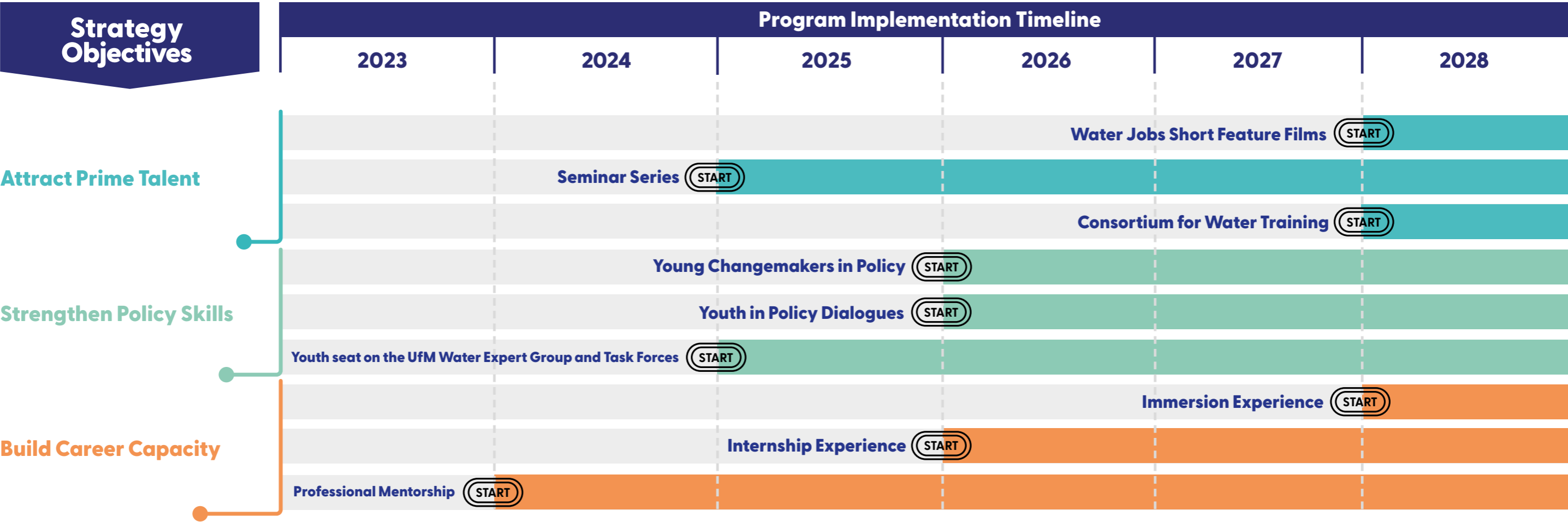
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Water Jobs Short Feature Films			X
Seminar Series	X		
Consortium for Water Training		X	
Young Changemakers in Policy		X	
Youth in Policy Dialogues		X	
Youth Seat on the UfM Water Expert Group	X		
Immersion Experience			X
Internship Experience	X		
Professional Mentorship	X		

6.3 Timeline

The implementation of these programs is intended to happen within the context of the next five years. Projects have been evaluated and scheduled for start based on their level of impact vs program effort (see figure 5). Programs that require lower funding and

lower effort will be implemented first, while those that require a higher level of effort and funding will be implemented later within the five-year time frame. The timeline below indicates the year of intended implementation for each program. The timeline is meant to be a guide for project implementation but will vary depending on available funding opportunities.

Figure 8. Program Implementation Timeline of the UfM Water and Youth Engagement Strategy Programs



7. Conclusions



While youth make up nearly 26.5% (between the ages of 15-34) of the UfM member states population, and while water security issues continue to be on the rise, the importance of empowering youth in the water sector has never been more important. Beyond the mere idea of youth empowerment, this strategy takes another step by defining how it will support youth for the coming years to better integrate, train, and support young people entering the water sector or continuing their development within

the field. The UfM seeks to be the leading agency in the supporting and training the next generation of young water leaders. It will take more than just the UfM to accomplish the objectives outlined within this strategy. Implementing this strategy will require a high level of collaboration and support of interested and relevant partners in the Mediterranean region. Our future depends on water and the future leaders managing it.

Annex I. Mapping of UfM Water Partners with potential opportunities for water and youth program engagement

Figure 9. Mapping of UfM Water Partners with potential opportunities for water and youth program

Potential Program Partners	Water Jobs Short Film Features	Seminar Series	Consortium for Water Training	Youth in Policy Dialogues	Youth Seat on the UfM Water Expert Group	Young Changemakers in Policy	Immersion Experience	Internship Program	Mentorship Program
	ATTRACT PRIME TALENT	STRENGTHEN POLICY SKILLS		BUILD CAREER CAPACITY					
European Commission				✓		✓		✓	✓
Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resource Development and Management (INWRDAM)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ)	✓	✓	✓						
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)	✓								✓
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	✓								✓
Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
UN Environment Programme (ENEP)		✓							
Global Environment Facility (GEF)		✓							
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	✓	✓						✓	
UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (UNESCO-WWAP)			✓			✓		✓	✓
GreenTech							✓		
Smart Desert Project-WEFE Nexus Implementations (SDC)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
MedYWat				✓					
GWP-Med									✓
UNESCO Med			✓					✓	✓
League of Arab		✓						✓	✓
IE Med in Barcelona		✓							✓
Waterlution		✓					✓		✓
IntreMed Integration		✓				✓		✓	✓

Annex II. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Water and Youth Programs

PROGRAMS FOR OBJECTIVE 1: ATTRACT PRIME TALENT INTO THE WATER SECTOR

Programs	Indicators	Definition
Water Jobs Short Film Features	Number of young professionals viewing water job short films	Number of young professionals viewing water job short films
	Number of times videos have been shared	Number of times videos have been shared
	Number of jobs represented in short films	Number of jobs represented in short films
	Number of countries in the Med region represented in short films	Number of countries in the Med region represented in short films
	Level of video impact in showcasing water job duties, skills and requirements	Total number of youth that reported they 'strongly agree', or 'agree' that the video showcased accurately water job opportunities, skills and requirements
UfM Water Seminar Series	Number of Mediterranean universities included in research consortium	Sum of Universities within the UfM member states who are a part of the UfM water research consortium
	Number of young researchers presenting their work	Number of research presentations give by young professionals
	Number of intergenerational dialogues and presentations	Number of intergenerational dialogues and presentations
Consortium for Water Training	Percentage of students advancing from water training to a water job.	Number of those who attended one of the water courses and received a water job divided by the total of those who enrolled in the course.
	Number of courses provided	Number of water courses provided by the UfM
	Instruction time provided	Total number of instructional hours provided through the training courses.
	Student completion rate	Total number of students enrolled and completed the training divided by the total number of those enrolled, multiplied by 100.

PROGRAMS FOR OBJECTIVE 2: STRENGTHEN POLICY SKILLS

PROGRAM	INDICATORS	DEFINITION
Young Changemakers in Policy: Capacity Building Program	Number of young professionals successfully completing policy capacity building program	Number of young professionals successfully completing the policy capacity building program
	Instruction time completed	Number of instructional hours completed by young professionals
	Level of preparedness of youth to engage in high-level policy dialogues	Total number of youth that reported they 'strongly agree', or 'agree' that they were well prepared for their policy engagement opportunity
	Level of competence of leaders in engaging youth in policy dialogues	Total number of UfM leaders that reported they 'strongly agree,' or 'agree' that they felt they were prepared in helping youth in policy dialogues
Youth in High-Level Policy Dialogues	Number of youth presentations at high-level water and climate related conferences	Number of youth presentations at high-level water and climate related conferences
	Youth feels they have been meaningfully integrated in high-level dialogues	Total number of youth that reported they 'strongly agree', or 'agree' that they were satisfied with their participation in high-level dialogues.
Youth Seat on the UfM Water Expert Group	Ratio of youth to non-youth leadership on the UfM Water Expert Group	Number of youth on the UfM Water Expert Group divided by non-youth on the UfM Water Expert Group, multiplied by 100.

PROGRAMS FOR OBJECTIVE 3:
BUILD CAREER CAPACITY

PROGRAM	INDICATORS	DEFINITION
Immersion Experience	Number of participants completing the immersion experience	Number of participants completing the immersion experience
	Hours of education	Total hours of education completed by young professionals
	Number of innovation projects and business ideas	Total number of innovation projects and business ideas produced by the young professional participants completed the immersion experience
Water Internship Program	Number of youth connected to water sector jobs	Number of young professionals who completed the internship program and entered the water sector job market, divided by those young professionals who completed the internship program, multiplied by 100.
	Number of companies involved in offering internships to young professionals	Number of companies involved in offering internships to young professionals
	Number of young professionals that completed the internship program	Number of young professionals that completed the internship program
Early Career Professional Mentorship Program	Number of Young Professional-Senior Professional collaborative publications	Number of Young Professional-Senior Professional collaborative publications
	Number of months mentorship lasts	Number of months the pairing and continuation of communication between a young professional to a senior professional has lasted
	Number of paired mentorships	Number of young professionals paired with a senior professional
	Number of intergenerational dialogues and presentations	Number of intergenerational dialogues and presentations

Annex III. Youth Consultation Session Summary

As part of the continuous consultation activities throughout the process of developing the programs under the water and youth engagement strategy, our team held a focus group online consultation session on June 9th, which brought together key youth leaders in regional water organizations. The session included multiple discussion segments which allowed for brainstorming and providing feedback to the proposed programs under the three key strategy objectives.

Overall, there was general support for the presented programs. Participants shared their thoughts on potential partnership opportunities on some of the programs where synergies exist with their ongoing activities and initiatives. Particular programs of interest included the short videos program, the youth leadership related programs, the immersion water experience, the MED water internships, and the early career professional mentorship program.

Participants conveyed that short videos would be impactful and would help highlight the message of the diversity of career paths within the water sector. Caution was given about the importance of considering the appropriate social media channels and target audience for this program as part of a throughout strategy. Another thought was about the importance of creating these videos in different languages, or at least having them with subtitles, to ensure wider accessibility.

Regarding the youth in policy process programs, there were several comments suggesting that youth in policy programs should not be limited to high-level engagement but should also include local policy processes, emphasizing also the desire for youth to be represented at all levels. A few youth also made

recommendations that youth involvement on any board or working group should be designed for long term involvement. They followed up by noting that these youth selected as board members or working group leaders should be given a mentor or body of support in order to show them how to walk through providing valuable feedback and as well as how to maneuver through any unfamiliar processes.

Participants also showed great interest in the idea of creating a regional water internship program (similar to Erasmus, but specifically for water in the Mediterranean region). This would require building partnerships and exchange opportunities across different academic, public, and private sector organizations.

Furthermore, the early career mentorship program received support from the group. Participants suggested that the program include mentorship in resume writing, soft skills, technical skills training to match with the desired career path. Some challenges for that program include the availability of senior mentors who are interested to participate in such a program because of time commitment and other considerations. Ensuring the success of this program will require creatively thinking of ways to engage senior professionals in the process.

Youth Feedback Session Notes 9 June, 2022

All notes taken below were taken from verbal comments delivered from youth participants as well as their written comments taken from the zoom meeting.

Objective 1:	Attracting Prime Talent into the Water Sector
General Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short videos with impactful messages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crucial way to promote Ambitious program, perhaps focus on one area in water Consider which channel this will be shared, must be considered when determining audience Have partners involved Subtitled for different languages Videos can also be for those transitioning from high school to university I like the idea of a variety of actors for the video; also taking into account journalists and the media outlets in the Med, which they are talking more and more everyday about water related issues It could also be interesting to showcase in the video the different "career pathways" of the people being interviewed. It can be overwhelming for a young person to decide which career they wish to pursue. It could be interesting to hear the different stories/thought processes of how the interviewees decided to pursue the career they currently have. And also choice of Language of videos should be taken into account, especially for MENA region Arabic may have a Greater impact
Potential Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American University of Beirut

Objective 2:	Building Youth and Environmental Policy Dialogue
General Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentorship for youth on the board for long term involvement Should also focus youth in local policies Should also include based on gender I like the part of introducing the young on the policy processes how they work ... is important I love the comment of Giuseppe regarding the local policy making. How can the local processes feed into the more global processes. I think this is essential to ensure youth are represented at all levels.
Potential Partners	IFI - Isaam Fares Institute
Objective 3:	Capacity Building Toward Careers and Entrepreneurship in the Water Sector
General Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regarding the career matchmaking, it'll be great to also have mentorship on resume writing, soft skills, technical skills training to match with the desired career path Mentors can often be hard to recruit because of time commitment and because of 'what's in it for me' factor
Potential Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERASMUS-MED Youth for Water and Climate Program



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