

# Water Generation

# 2024 2030

YOUTH  
STRATEGY



INTERNATIONAL  
SECRETARIAT  
FOR WATER



SOLIDARITY  
WATER  
EUROPE

# The urgency to act



Convinced of the vital role of water in fostering inclusive development, the International Secretariat for Water – Solidarity Water Europe (ISW-SWE), is a bold and dynamic organisation which drives systemic transformations towards equitable and sustainable water resource management. The ISW-SWE has always placed civil society at the heart of its action, recognizing its role as catalyst for meaningful change. Aligned with societal and geopolitical shifts, the ISW-SWE works in complementarity and amplification, empowering stakeholders through a collaborative and inclusive «By, For and With» approach.

Recognizing the growing importance of its youth focus, the ISW-SWE introduced, in 2017, a dedicated youth strategy entitled “Water Generation”. The following presents an updated iteration of the Water Generation strategy for the 2024-2030 period.

Acting for water extends beyond resources preservation; it encompasses the promotion of fundamental values, such as human rights, dignity, development and social justice. Empowering and mobilizing changemakers, particularly the new generation, is essential to address these issues in an effective and sustainable way

# Vision 2030

## A mobilised, engaged and influential Water Generation

The ISW-SWE's vision is inspired by the idea of a Water Generation, representing a widespread, dynamic and connected mobilization of young people around the world. This generation is rooted in action and influence, amplifying its voice through the active engagement of youth within their communities. The aim is to acknowledge and actively support the meaningful inclusion of young people in addressing environmental and societal water-related challenges, empowering them to participate in decision-making processes and implement impactful solutions.

### VISION

The voice of youth is stronger and more impactful, and their actions are being increasingly supported and encouraged. Young people join forces through an ambitious Water Generation capable of influencing decision-makers and acting at various levels. The stakeholders of this generation are interconnected, diverse, and dedicated to forging a sustainable future through a collaborative approach that spans sectors, borders, and generations.

### MISSION

The ISW-SWE champions the development of young people's skills, empowering them to harness greater influence as catalysts for change. The ISW-SWE unites a growing number of young people and fosters connections amongst them and between youth and other stakeholders in water-related sectors and beyond. In doing so, it facilitates the exchange of new ideas and innovative solutions.

## OUR APPROACH

# Mobilize, connect, empower



### MOBILIZE

The ISW-SWE has a **significant capacity to mobilize young people** on environmental and societal issues related to water. It is regularly called upon to facilitate the participation of young people in local, cross-border and global processes and initiatives. What particularly sets it apart is its dynamic approach to youth engagement and its boldness in addressing water-related challenges.



### CONNECT

The strengthening of the Water Generation results in better connectivity between its different components. The ISW-SWE plays a crucial role as a **connector** between young people, alumni of the youth water movement, youth organisations, decision-makers and actors involved in the field of water, across diverse sectors, borders and generations.



### EMPOWER

To increase the impact and influence of actions led by and for young people, the ISW-SWE offers young changemakers a **technical and financial support**, as well as specific capacity-building programmes and assistance in building partnerships and developing a strong network.



The ISW-SWE aims to facilitate the mobilization, connection, and support for collective action by young people.

TARGET

# 18-35 years old

The ISW-SWE's Water Generation strategy targets young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

ISW-SWE's approach is to establish a long-term collaboration with young people. One way of achieving this is by valuing the experiences and expertise of alumni of the youth movement for water.

Mobilizing and strengthening the capacities of young people, with a particular focus on young women, in regions of the world most affected by water-related issues, is at the heart of the ISW-SWE approach.

Young people get involved with the ISW-SWE not only as activists but also as part of their personal and professional development journey. ISW-SWE wishes to engage and support youth with diverse aspirations and interests. The ISW-SWE recognizes and values the diversity of the youth water movement, which includes thousands of individuals with diverse cultures, languages, socio-economic backgrounds, values, and expertise, sharing a common vision and desire: to become agents of change.

## OUR VALUES

### A partnership with young people

# Openness

We value diversity and interdisciplinarity. We strive to foster the emergence of new players within the Water Generation.

# Complementarity

We support youth-led action (BY), placing ourselves at the service of young people (FOR) and collaborate with them in a spirit of mutual complementarity and amplified influence (WITH).

# Audacity

Creativity and innovation are at the core of our action.

# Commitment

We act with conviction and determination, and are fully committed to the transparent and effective implementation of our mission. In addition, gender equality and cooperation between generations and sectors are cross-cutting values of our action. Choosing these values means establishing them as ethical principles and respecting them daily throughout all our programmes and initiatives.

## COLLABORATION

# Partnerships at the heart of Water Generation

The ISW-SWE Water Generation youth strategy is based on strong and diversified partnerships, the number and quality of which have progressed considerably between 2017 and 2022. During the 2024-2030 period, the ISW-SWE will continue to increase its collaborations with youth actors in the water space, including youth-led organisations, organisations that support youth and those seeking their involvement.

The platforms and networks launched and managed by ISW-SWE will continue to be at the heart of its strategy. These include the Youth Parliaments for Water – such as the World Youth Parliament for Water (WYPW / ISW-Montreal) and the European Youth Parliament for Water (EYPW / SWE- Strasbourg), the Global Youth Movement for Water, the Central Asia Youth for Water Network and Butterfly Effect Network, alongside its +140 civil society members.

The ISW-SWE aims to strengthen its ties with its current programmatic partners, including the Geneva Water Hub, the International Network of Basin Orga-

nizations (INBO), various watershed management organizations, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and its regional and national entities, as well as Sanitation and Water for All.

The same applies to major donors, including the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the French government, particularly through its Water Agencies (such as the Artois-Picardy Water Agency), the European Union, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC – North America), the governments of Quebec and Canada. For the 2024-20230 period, the ISW-SWE will redouble its efforts to ensure a greater diversity in its sources of funding.

The ISW-SWE also plans to increase the number of collaborative projects (e.g. in the form of a consortium) with partners from various sectors - civil society, private sector, academic - with an emphasis on the search for complementarity.

# Water generation 2017-2022

## Key figures 2017- 2022

The following figures clearly show the significant development of the Water Generation over this period :

+55

Youth Parliaments for Water led by young people at national, watershed and regional levels, under the umbrella of the World Youth Parliament for Water.

370

youth organizations and allies mobilized through the Global Youth Movement for Water aimed at federating the voice of youth for water on a global scale.



From 2017 to 2022, the ISW-SWE empowered several thousand young individuals, enhancing their ability to act as catalysts for positive change. It has firmly established itself as a global and regional hub for youth mobilization and empowerment, while also providing unwavering support for the implementation of grassroots initiatives by young changemakers.

# +500 000

young people mobilized for water through the implementation of initiatives such as the World Youth Parliament for Water, the European Youth Parliament for Water, the Global Youth Movement for Water, the 1 Million Youth Action Challenge and the Youth for Water and Climate Platform.

# 25

decision-making processes influenced by youth, including the World Water Forums and the 2023 United Nations Water Conference

# 200

workshops organised by the ISW-SWE and associated partners of its youth networks to support the capacity of young people for water-related action and innovation

## IMPACT STORY

### Youth for Water and Peace

At the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, the first held in nearly 50 years, Lyazzat Syrlybayeva of the Central Asia Youth for Water and Lynn Porta of the North American Youth Parliament for Water shared youth priorities in Interactive Dialogue 4: Water Cooperation. In the summary presented by co-chair Serigne Mbate Thiam, the need to ensure youth representation in water decision-making bodies by 2030 was highlighted, setting the stage for better youth representation in transboundary governance issues, particularly at the watershed level.

## IMPACT STORY

### Youth for Water and Climate Program

The Youth for Water and Climate Program aims to prepare young individuals to become leaders and entrepreneurs dedicated to tackling sustainable water resource management challenges. Through this 8-month program, which combines in-person workshops, online curriculum, mentorship, and internships, 20 young professionals aged 18 to 30 from France, Sweden, Slovakia, Hungary, and Belgium have acquired essential skills and knowledge in the water sector. As a result of the program, 100% of the participants are now studying or working in the field of water and climate.

# Investing in people's capacity for change, even amidst uncertainty and fragility

Our societies are currently undergoing profound transformations, characterized by a context of uncertainty and environmental, political and social upheavals. In the face of governments' insufficient responsiveness to environmental and societal crises, civil society – especially youth – must speak out and take action.

## INCREASING UPHEAVALS

Crises and conflicts on a global scale are multiplying, generating uncertainty, polarization and withdrawal. Young people can play an essential and positive role in promoting a culture of dialogue and peace.

Civic space continues to shrink. However, in many parts of the world, more and more youth movements are opposing authoritarian regimes. Youth leadership, especially young women, is crucial to advocating for the importance of civic space for social and environmental justice.

A new feeling is emerging on a global scale: eco-anxiety, which particularly affects young people. Water is at the heart of this eco-anxiety, due to droughts, floods, pollution... Young people with eco-anxiety are all the more inclined to engage with the youth movement for water.

Disinformation is an assumed strategy of many actors. Access to verified, high-quality information has never been more critical.

## NECESSARY CHANGES

In the face of increasingly pressing challenges, the coming years will require even more rapid change, with youth playing a central role. In this context, the ISW-SWE remains convinced in its ability to contribute to building a sustainable and equitable future, placing civil society – especially young people – at the heart of its action, and working across generations, borders and sectors,

# Youth and water, an imperative for a sustainable future

Young people aged 18 to 35 represent approximately 26% of the global population, totaling just over 2 billion individuals, and they are directly confronted with the escalating environmental, social, and health crises. In this context, youth play a crucial role in addressing the urgent need for action. The urge to drive change has been vividly demonstrated and reinforced

by the substantial growth of the Water Generation over the past 7 years. Many youth organizations have been created while new Youth Parliaments for Water have actively led and engaged in local and national initiatives. Despite this progress, the Water Generation has not yet reached its full potential and faces several challenges in fully harnessing its impact.

The ISW-SWE Youth Strategy 2024-2030 addresses several factors that significantly influence youth engagement in the water sector (Vojno & al., 2022.), including:

- 1 The need to provide technical and financial support to youth-led organizations and initiatives;
- 2 Institutional, social and cultural recognition of youth voices;
- 3 Sustainable support for the practical integration of youth institutions into local, cross-border and global decision-making processes;
- 4 Increasing synergies and mobilization between the different youth initiatives to ensure generational continuity, effective coordination and good promotion of the actions carried out;
- 5 The development of capacities and skills, as well as the creation of a network for sharing experiences.

# Strategic Priorities

The ISW-SWE implements several programmes and initiatives «by, for and with young people for water», based on the following four main strategic priorities.



## Supporting Youth Action and Innovation

The ISW-SWE supports the emergence of creative and innovative solutions by youth, rooted in the local realities of populations most affected by water-related issues.

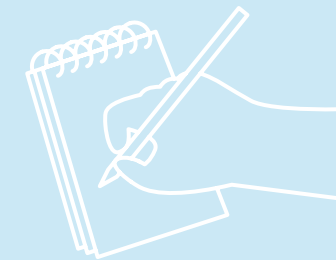
The ISW-SWE will provide technical and financial support for youth-led action, through a flexible funding mechanism. This approach aims to foster the implementation of a greater number of tangible actions by young leaders, to finance local projects launched by young people and to facilitate the expansion of their activities through workshops dedicated to dissemination and peer-to-peer exchanges. Additionally, the ISW-SWE connects the young leaders with a strong and diverse network of partners (NGOs, governments, development banks, companies, etc.) with the aim of offering opportunities for upscaling.



## Mobilizing actors of the Water Generation

The mobilization of youth for water by the ISW-SWE is framed within a perspective that is both local, cross-border, and international. This mobilization is achieved notably through coordinating and amplifying communication and awareness campaigns on water-related issues.

Special emphasis will be placed on raising awareness and mobilizing young people on critical issues such as peace, climate change, biodiversity, health, and inequality. To effectively contribute to the emergence of a sustainable society, it's imperative establish connections and build bridges between water and other significant challenges.



## Training and capacity building

The ISW-SWE is dedicated to enhancing the capacities of young people of the Water Generation, empowering them to effectively tackle water-related challenges. In an era where disinformation is used as a strategy by many actors, it is all the more crucial to equip these young change makers with robust knowledge and transversal skills such as leadership and influence.

Within the ISW-SWE, youth participate in programs that provide them with comprehensive knowledge on water-related issues and key skills that will help them unlock their full potential as agents of change. The sharing of experiences between alumni and emerging young leaders fosters peer-to-peer learning, ensuring continuity in the youth movement for water.

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive capacity-building framework is developed and implemented, including training, mentoring and coaching. This framework aims to accompany young people throughout their journey, by providing them with the tools and support necessary to succeed in the development and implement of their water-related initiatives. In addition, partner organizations involved in youth for water will also benefit from support to strengthen their commitment and impact in this field.



## Strengthening the influence of youth

The ISW-SWE aims to empower youth actors to develop a collective vision of a water-secure future, rooted in common values, principles and goals.

The ISW-SWE will also focus on fostering spaces for intergenerational co-creation. The ISW-SWE aims to go beyond mere participation to ensure a real influence of youth in political processes at national, cross-border and international levels. Within the framework of this priority, an emphasis will be placed on enhancing the participation and influence of youth in watershed management bodies, in the governance of transboundary waters and on the accountability and implementation of commitments made by actors within the international community.

The ISW-SWE will support young people and youth groups in crafting strategic and credible advocacy efforts, tailored to specific processes, leveraging innovative communication channels such as social media, traditional media and communication through art.