



Report

Mediterranean Youth for Water Network (MedYWat): Connecting the youth from the MED

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WWD2018 in Anafora (Egypt), face to face MedYWat meeting

Water scarcity is one of the major problems facing the Mediterranean region (MED region), and climate change is putting an additional pressure on the already limited water resources. In the Southern MED region, 65% of the population is concentrated in coastal hydrological basins and environmental pressures on water resources are constantly increasing. A common problem of aquifers in the MED region is groundwater depletion and quality degradation due to multiple stresses, especially extractions for the agricultural sector.

In the agricultural sector, which is the MED region's biggest water user, large volumes of water are wasted due to inappropriate techniques or outdated infrastructure. One important reason is that the MED region has some of the world's lowest water service fees for irrigation, enabling farmers to grow water-intensive crops and to reduce incentives for efficient irrigation technologies.

Arable land is being reduced by advancing urbanization, erosion, salinization and desertification of soils, much of it stemming from unsustainable agricultural practices. If existing rates of land degradation continue, by 2020 another 8.3 million hectares of agriculture land may be lost, versus the situation in 1960. To avoid a water crisis, many countries must conserve water resources, manage supply and demand, and reduce water pollution, as well as the environmental impacts of growing population. Considering all previous challenges and the awareness of the role youth can play in MED region, the Mediterranean Youth for Water network (MedYWat) was created.

The Mediterranean Youth for Water network (MedYWat) is supported by the Center for Mediterranean Integration (Marseille, France) and encompasses over 80 young Mediterranean water researchers, entrepreneurs and activ-



ists working on water challenges in the region. This network was launched during the first World Water Day youth workshop on treated wastewater reuse (Marseille, March 2017). The group's motto is "Empowering, Connecting & Change-Making". Its' values are inclusiveness, innovation and a collaborative spirit. Members consider water as a critical public good in the region and are determined to positively impact the fragile water situation of the Mediterranean region, while connecting with other young water networks around the world to amplify the voice of youth on the regional and global water and environmental agendas.

The MedYWat vision is a Mediterranean Region where youth is a recognized, active stakeholder at all levels in water resources management. The mission is to engage young Mediterranean water professionals to create and share knowledge, build capacity and amplify their voice on the regional and global water agenda.

The MedYWat general objectives are:

1. To connect and engage Mediterranean youth from different disciplines working on water.
2. To become a knowledge-based platform which creates and exchanges best practices and opportunities for Mediterranean youth.
3. To create cross-linkages between MedYWat and key decision makers in the Region.

MedYWat organizes and participates in MED workshops, seminars, and webinars, among others, specifically those concerning young water professionals, targeting key Mediterranean institutions and leaders in the water agenda in order to build partnerships with the MedYWat Network and to promote the work of its members.

MedYWat has been working on promoting the role of youth in international events. For instance, a delegation of MedYWat members has participated in June 2018 in the Water Decade high level conference in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, interacting with high level decision makers and with the water youth professionals from Central Asia. Another delegation also participated in the International Water Association seminar in Murcia, Spain, bringing at the forefront the role of youth in water management. In September 2018, members of the network raised awareness on the role of youth and gender in the water sector at the Women, Water and Youth conference in Amman, Jordan. The active participation of youth which took place at the conference occurred in parallel with the promotion of monthly network webinars designed to produce and share knowledge among its members. A good member of the network is considered as a person who is active and ready to exchange ideas with other members, as well as with the wider community. Currently, the network is working towards the World Water Day 2019, whose theme is "Water and Migration". The network is organizing the MED Water Heroes Contest and conference in Marrakech, Morocco, in March 2019, as well as an internal call for papers on issues relating to water and migration.

Focusing on water education, water governance, water treatment and reuse, water management and planning, sustainable blue growth and water and migration, MedYWat works creating an active platform of collaboration between young water professionals in the Mediterranean in order to insure a better water management and knowledge transfer. Further, the network challenges and seeks opportunities for young water professionals seeking to be able to interact and create positive change together with regional water institutions.