

RésEAU

YOUTH STRATEGY



Photo 1 Painting from India - Sample Postcard of Guinness World Record attempt on Jungfrauoch in 2018

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I. Introduction

Background

Our vision is the one of a water knowledge network in which all young members have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Our mission is to address the specific needs of RésEAU young members by providing them with a stimulating environment to strengthen their skills, to enhance exchange of experiences between generations as well as to broaden the membership of the network to include the younger water generation. The primary target audience of the strategy are the current RésEAU members; new members will be attracted progressively as activities progress e.g. call to current members to invite their young colleagues, collaboration with youth-focused/led organizations, and capacity-building activities.

The RésEAU members' database does not provide any information on members' gender and age, as Dgroup does not have such an option. The exact proportion of young members within the network is unknown; the only number at disposal is that 8% of the survey respondents¹ were below 31. If we consider the survey as representative, we can estimate that in December 2019 there were around 30-40 members below 31 in the network (8% of 449).

One of the four components of the Global Programme Water (GPW) strategy 2017-2020 is 'Young People and Gender Equality'. The strategy mention the need to enhance the skills of young water professionals and to provide them with a stimulating. In the same vein, a few years ago, SDC raised the importance to give more attention to the integration of the young water generation into the tools of the RésEAU as well as to adjust the membership base to include the younger water generation. The need for a youth strategy was emphasized recently in the members' survey, with members mentioning the RésEAU should support existing youth initiatives and strategies, and provide research opportunities for young people. Following this, young RésEAU members were encouraged to participate in the development of the current youth strategy.

Identification of the target group

There are diverse definitions of 'youth'; the UN definition considers individuals between 15-24, the Swiss Water Partnership extends it to below 30 years to include young professionals, while the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) and the International Water Association (IWA) target young professionals below 35. For the RésEAU youth strategy, young professionals below 35 are targeted. Resulting from the RésEAU membership criteria, those young individuals are mostly either working for the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation (SDC) or the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) directly, or as an implementing partner/for an implementing partner. As a result, our target group is different from other young water professionals in the sense that there is an interest in learning more about SDC/SECO (in terms of trends, procedures, topics etc.). Current young RésEAU members are the primary target, but throughout the conduct of the below mentioned activities, new members are expected to join the RésEAU, thus increasing the youth membership of the network. For the future young members of the RésEAU, there will be more flexibility regarding the criteria of 'working' for SDC/SECO or as/for an implementing partner. Students with some experience, e.g. working for a project or an association with a link to SDC/SECO, will be accepted as members.

¹ 6 out of 73 individuals for that question; number from the RésEAU member survey 2019

II. Specific Objectives

Objective 1: Community-engagement

Building-up a community and involving the members closely in the shaping of the upcoming activities and tools is key to create ownership. Through regular exchanges with the principal recipient, the needs and interests of the target group will be assessed, activities designed, and feedback collected, to meet the expectations of the youth². After a call made to RésEAU young members, a task force with young volunteers was set-up in May 2020 to work jointly on the elaboration of the youth strategy. We will make another call for volunteers with the official launch of the strategy. Young members willing to join the task force will be able to do so at any point. As far as possible, attention will be paid to have a gender-balanced task force and representation from the different regions. Considering the volunteer characteristic of their contributions, task force members will be asked to provide for a maximum of 10 days of work per year. These 10 days include among others online meetings, time spent on designing activities, revising documents and providing written feedback. The task force will be consulted on a regular basis and there will be at least two online meetings of the task force per year. Within the SDC GPW, a young collaborator (e.g. academic trainee, Junior Programme Officer) shall be appointed to figure as active link and point of contact, a so called “Youth Focal Point” between the young members of the RésEAU and SDC/SECO (this will be explicitly included in the respective job description).

Objective 2: Capacity-building

Capacity-building activities should be specific to the water sector and in line with the priorities of SDC’s Global Programme Water and RésEAU. Advantage should be taken of the existing RésEAU tools such as webinars, newsletters, e-discussions, blog, etc., when possible. For example, for webinars we envisage at least one per year targeting specifically young professionals in terms of topics, and including young members as facilitators. In addition to that, new capacity-building activities will be created, taking into account the RésEAU’s comparative advantage: its link with SDC/SECO and Switzerland. For instance a Massive Open Online Course on SDC’s water diplomacy³ and/or Context Specific Programme Management approach⁴, or a training on how to conduct an evaluation or answer a call for tender are pathways to be followed up. The task force will decide which new capacity-building activities to create. While online trainings and activities allow for a larger outreach than face-to-face events, not everyone is able and comfortable using online tools, so capacity-building activities need to make sure that no one is left behind, including youth in remote villages and those with limited internet connection or computer skills.

Objective 3: Foster synergies

As there are already many youth initiatives in the water sector, and the aim of the RésEAU is to foster synergies and not duplicate what already exists, an important objective is to make use of existing youth organizations in function of their competencies. The RésEAU will work together with youth organizations to activate the local youth. We will do a scoping exercise to identify the activities and expertise of the different organizations’ youth initiatives in order to be able to channel RésEAU young members to other organizations depending on their needs and interests e.g. RWSN for mentoring or IWA for events and forums or CAY4W for seminars and colloquiums.

Objective 4: Intergenerational knowledge exchange

Intergenerational learning and peer exchange needs to be enhanced within the RésEAU. Possibilities for senior experts to share their experience and knowledge with the younger generation will be facilitated to reduce knowledge loss and guarantee knowledge transfer from one generation to the next. Intergenerational exchange is not a one-way but a mutual beneficial exchange; young members

² Additional objectives might be added to the youth strategy as a result of those regular exchanges.

³ Link: [SDC’s water diplomacy](#)

⁴ Link: [CSPM in SDC](#)

have a lot to share as well. It is important that SDC/SECO staff from both headquarters and regional/national offices participate actively in this exchange, in order to provide a complete overview of SDC/SECO work. Activities that can be conducted in the RésEAU to enhance intergenerational knowledge exchange are e.g. intergenerational research teams providing research and fieldwork experience, co-writing of guidance papers and reports, intergenerational peer review groups, co-organising of activities and more.

Objective 5: Equal representation

The representation of the youth will be ensured in RésEAU activities both among participants and facilitators/speakers, as well as within its decision body. A youth representative will be elected as a Core Group member for a one-year period.

III. Activities

In order to reach the above presented objectives, the following activities will be conducted:

- **Objective 1: Community-engagement**
 - Create a task force with young members for regular consultations
 - Appoint a young water professional within SDC GPW to figure as “Youth Focal Point”
 - Have a **#RésEAU-Youth** for social media posts that are relevant to Young RésEAU members⁵
 - Regular highlights of initiatives led by young RésEAU members shared by the BSM team
- **Objective 2: Capacity-building**
 - Have a youth focus within **current tools** e.g. blog takeover or facilitation of a webinar
 - Create **new tools** meaningful for the group: e.g. training, internship list, fellowship for events/trainings, study tour, MOOCs
- **Objective 3: Foster synergies**
 - Scanning exercise of existing **youth-focused and youth-led organisations**
 - Contact relevant ones to explore **collaboration opportunities** e.g. with RWSN, SWP, IWA, CAY4W, Universities, Research Institutions
 - **Sharing information** on capacity-building opportunities from other youth initiatives
- **Objective 4: Intergenerational exchange**
 - Call to RésEAU members to contribute to the implementation of the youth strategy
 - Create and push activities enhancing intergenerational knowledge exchange such as e.g. mentoring, intergenerational research teams, co-writing of guidance/reports, duo of organizers for activities, etc.
- **Objective 5: Equal representation**
 - Ensure representation in RésEAU **tools & activities**: at least 1 young speaker
 - Ensure representation within RésEAU **decision body**: at least 1 CG member is young
 - Ensure representation among **the participants**: keep track of age of participants attending RésEAU events/activities

⁵ Currently a social media strategy is being developed. In the meantime once per month RésEAU Update focused on youth with information particularly relevant for that community is envisaged.

IV. Timeline

The purpose of the timeline is to provide an indication of activities that will be conducted per objective. It will be adjusted and refined with the GPW Youth Focal Point and the RésEAU members willing to dedicate time to contribute to the implementation of the youth strategy.



Timeline 1 From May 2020 to December 2021

Caption

- ▶ Launch of an activity / Event
- ➡ Activity with fixed duration
- ↔ Continuous activity

Annex: List of abbreviations and important links

CAY4W: [Central Asia Youth for Water network](#)

CG: [Core Group](#)

GPW: [Global Programme Water](#)

IWA: [International Water Association](#)

MOOC: [Massive Open Online Course](#)

RWSN: [Rural Water Supply Network](#)

SDC: [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#)

SECO: [State Secretariat for Economic Affairs](#)

SWP: [Swiss Water Partnership](#)