

WATER UTILITY MANAGEMENT

# New network to help unite Europe's young water professionals

The ULTIMATE Young Professional program has launched to drive knowledge sharing and support career growth, under Europe's circular economy program.

Dec. 15, 2021



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A new network has been created to unite young water professionals across Europe, named the ULTIMATE Young Professional (UYP) platform.

In total, the project has selected nine large-scale

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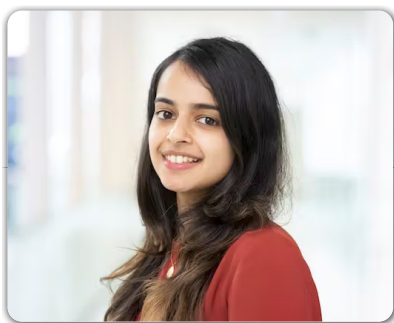


demonstrations (demo sites) across Europe from the agro-food, beverage, petrochemical and biotech sectors. From water utilities to whisky distilleries, the partners represent a variety of stakeholders who could benefit from circular economy activities.

The network has been created as part of the four-year, Horizon2020 ULTIMATE project (indUstry water-utiLiTy symbIosis for a sMarter wATer society), under EU Water in the context of the Circular Economy program.

Nearly 20 young professionals from the partners have joined together in regular workshops, meetings and informal events. They range from policy, consultancy, academia, research institutes and utilities across Europe.

Below are what some of the program's participants hope to achieve through the collaboration:



**Tavishi Guleria,**  
**Scientific Researcher –**  
**Innovation &**  
**Valorisation, KWR**

**Water Research Institute**

## The Netherlands

The UYP platform can provide a platform where young professionals can network, support each other, and grow together.

### approach



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Circular solutions are the need of the hour, and YPs play an important part in realising this transition and, as per the KWR mission, bridging science to practice. This initiative can accelerate circular solutions in the water sector by creating a community from projects such as ULTIMATE to provide a channel for YPs to share knowledge and experiences, learn important technical and social skills and have a space to brainstorm solutions. As American author and speaker, Ken Blanchard says: “None of us is as smart as all of us.”

To make anything attractive for YPs, it is important to listen to their needs and aspirations. This is what this initiative can do. By hearing what the YPs have to say during our periodic meetings, workshops, and informal events and subsequently communicating these insights, we can find ways to attract YPs to the water sector.

For now, my ambition is to develop both technical and non-technical skills and collaborate with colleagues to add value to the sector. I am fascinated by sustainable technologies and solutions that can enable water reuse.

For instance, in the ULTIMATE project we are currently researching electro-chemical methods (electrodialysis) to selectively separate components harmful for crop growth such as sodium, and eventually retaining/extracting valuable nutrients from greenhouse wastewater. In the long term, I would like to work on projects that facilitate homegrown solutions to water shortage and pollution problems.



**Loïc Charpentier,**  
**Water Innovation**  
**Policy Officer, Water**  
**Europe**  
**Belgium**

By connecting young professionals, we are helping to facilitate future collaborations to help drive the circular economy and digitalisation. By creating a community, you build bridges between different actors with different visions and skills. It's always an advantage to encourage this helicopter view to accelerate the development and implementation of circular solutions in the water sector and beyond.

The main advantage of the UYP is to raise the visibility of this sector. The majority of people don't know or understand that behind their tap water, there is an ecosystem of organisations/SMEs, universities, research and technology organisations, NGOs that make this value of water real. The young professionals can also bring fresh ideas on how to communicate the results and reach new members of the public and bring new innovative solutions.

In terms of my ambitions in the water sector, I'm keen to learn more about national narrative and solutions. Secondly, I want to have a positive impact on our society in Europe but also beyond. The water-related challenges are becoming increasingly important. Every

positive project and action pushing for a water-smart society is more than welcome.



**Myrto Touloupi, R&D  
Specialist, Greener  
than Green  
Technologies**

**Greece**

The UYP is a dynamic group that has great potential because young, innovative and ambitious people are involved. We can work together, share our experience and concerns, and propose innovative actions towards the circular and digital transformation of the water sector.

These actions should be in parallel with activities dedicated to stakeholders' engagement and the public's awareness. In that way, we can create water-based synergies, accelerating the adoption of circular solutions at first on a local, regional and European level.

The water sector may become more attractive to young professionals through events and activities dedicated to them. Social media groups, publications and conferences organised by UYP will attract and motivate young professionals. In addition, it is of great

importance to support YPs in developing skills in writing EU proposals.

Through my work in the water sector, I want to achieve water availability for all through water reclamation. My experience until now has revealed that to achieve that, we need to work on two different fields. First of all, we need to develop units, similar to the example constructed in Nafplio, Greece, that treats the outflow of industries and reclaims water that can be used for irrigation. In parallel, we should work on value-added compounds extraction and energy exploitation.

On the other hand, it is of great importance to increase social acceptance. The reclaimed water will be useless if people do not want to use it. The public should understand that by-products from factories and other manufacturing processes are waste only when we dump them. Until then, they are a great source of water and other valuable compounds.



**Mattia Ciampechini,  
Environmental  
Engineering, Aretusa  
Consortium**

**Italy**

As an environmental engineer in the early stage of my career, I hope to use the UYP to further develop in my

field by exchanging views with other European colleagues. Together we can help each other to face challenges or awkward topics in our case studies.

This UYP group has great potential, thanks to its multi-perspective approach and composition. It's not just business; it's a sort of high-performance "professional friendship". Young Professional means innovation, ambition, sense of belonging, confidence, sharing and flexibility: these are the ingredients to bring new ideas and light solutions.

From a technical point of view, the UYP initiative can contribute to accelerating circular solutions in the water sector, creating a sharing network of experiences on the field, presenting progress, analysing scenarios together and comparing different technological or digital solutions to face specific topics.

Furthermore, in these projects, I'm experiencing how creating a collective awareness is important, encouraging environmental and sustainability values, showing the importance of scientific-technological research. So, it can be a useful comparison of dissemination strategies between different European areas toward the general public (e.g. attractions, sights, budget involved, results).

My ambition in the water sector is to collaborate with colleagues on the ARETUSA symbiotic system and share this knowledge with European partners. We want to increase the quality and the volume of water for industrial reuse, reducing groundwater withdrawal. At

the same time, the target is to increase the impact of circular solutions at the local level, creating social awareness and analysing replicability opportunities of this system. Additionally, we are studying the obstacles and barriers to the possible reuse of wastewater in agriculture and exploring the eventual path to be followed to find a solution to face the local problem of water shortage.

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