



# PEOPLE & PLANET

Young European Citizens' People & Planet Declaration



# WATER CONFERENCE DECLARATION

## We Are Not Camels. Save Water, Every Day.

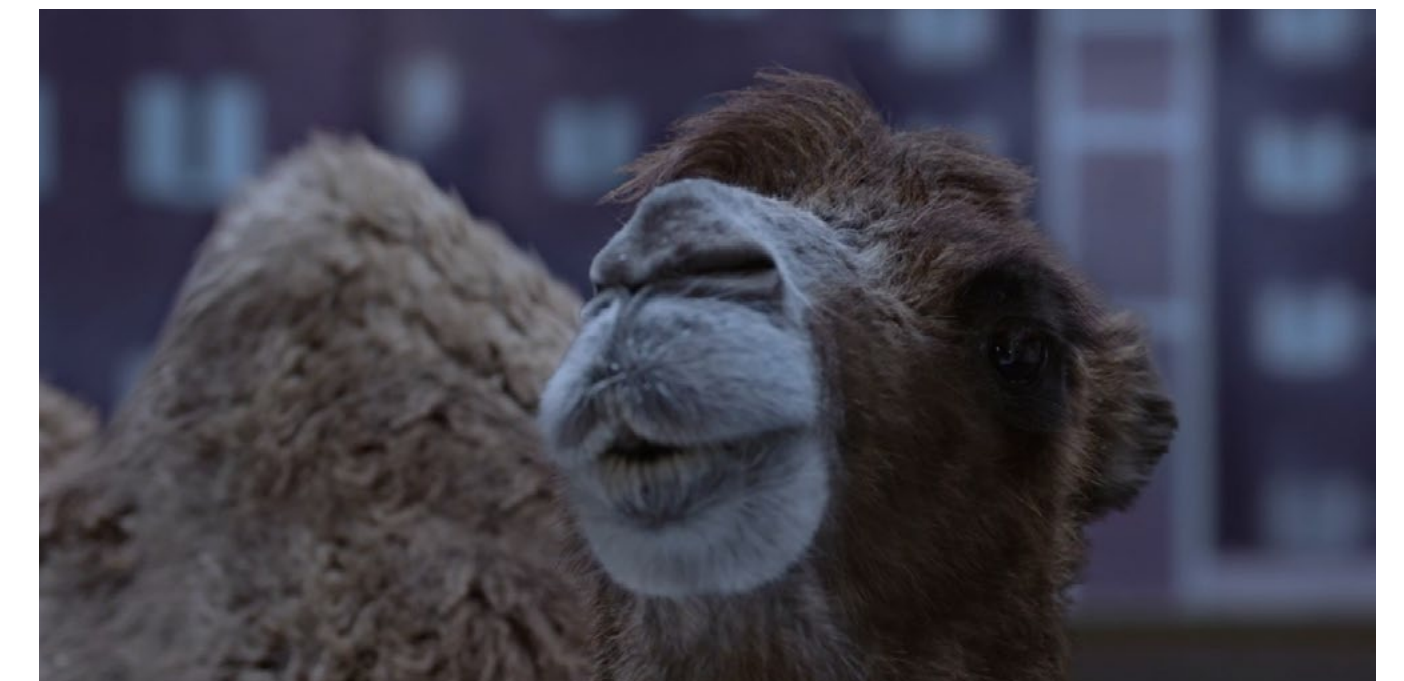
We all need water in our lives.

Nowadays, water scarcity is an escalating reality in many countries around the world, with potentially devastating consequences, if nothing impactful is done to reverse the situation.

Bringing the reality of water scarcity closer to young European citizens, and showing how they can make a change, is the core objective of the campaign #WaterOfTheFuture, launched in March 2022.

One year later, in March 2023, countries across the globe are assembling during the UN 2023 Water Conference, in New York City.

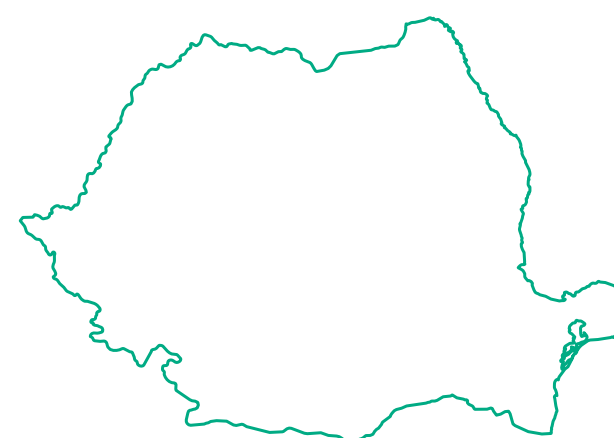
This conference represents a Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028).



# WHO ARE WE

The Youth Advisory Climate Councils (YACC) are groups organised by the People & Planet project to engage European Youth in a more prominent role for the promotion of sustainable development locally, nationally and globally, namely in the fight against climate change and water scarcity.

YACC IRELAND   YACC POLAND   YACC PORTUGAL   YACC ROMANIA   YACC UMBRIA, ITALY



We, young European citizens, understand that water is vital to life.

As such, it should be protected and valued as the precious resource it is.

We need to address both the quality and quantity of the water we provide to People and the Planet – clean, drinkable, and available water to those who need it -, and promote sustainable consumption habits for those that waste too much.

# FACT FINDING

What is the problem?

With the existing climate change scenario, by 2030, water scarcity may displace up to 700 million people around the world.



Half of the world's population will be affected by the lack of access to clean water, in the near future. Even now, globally, one in four lack safely managed drinking water, and two billion people lack adequate sanitation facilities.

Locally, we see that the demand is highest where the supply is least.

In Ireland, sixty percent of supplies are in deficit in normal conditions, and this rises to sixty-six percent in times of drought. In 2022, Italy was hit by the worst drought in the last 70 years, highlighting the progressive scarcity of this resource and its value. Some Romanian rural areas face reduced or lack of water access, and when they do have access, the quality is poor.

In the Portuguese capital metropolitan area, a student's day can be interrupted due to the lack of water in the school facilities. In Polish Silesia, local authorities established new public drinking fountains to enable universal access to water, but these were quickly destroyed and vandalized. As well as this, the pandemic situation made people either reluctant or more cautious to use public facilities.

Additionally, we see two problems with our surface water.

On the one hand, a significant part of our surface water sources is polluted. In Romania, we had recent episodes of water contaminated with arsenic, or the accumulation of waste that forms garbage dams, ultimately impacting animal nutrition and the quality of our food (in the Prahova and Brasov counties). We see the contamination of important drinking water sources with pollutant elements, such as oil and salt water.

On the other hand, we note issues regarding leaks within our systems. Every day we can lose a significant share of treated water due to old and damaged pipes – for example, about 38% in Ireland.

# FACT FINDING

What is the problem?

We may not reflect upon it, but our daily practices also directly contribute to impacting the health of the water surrounding us.

The hidden water footprint of everyday items is not commonly understood or recognised. Do you know that, on average, we need 2.500 litres of water to produce a t-shirt and 12.000 litres to produce a mobile phone? With our population and the economy on the increase, the demand on our already limited water resources is only going to be intensified. Agriculture uses 70% of fresh water globally, but did you know that Portuguese people waste more than a million tons of food every year, about 183kg per person?

People seldom consider the impact of single-use personal care products or other single-use products, for example plastic cutlery for eating. This is often the case with cosmetics, made of glass containers but with plastic components, which are not given the option to be refilled. Further, hygiene products, such as wipes, and menstrual hygiene products have a large water footprint, are rich in polyester and toxic substances that harm humans; how we dispose them after use can also harm the Planet & People.

Households often throw expired or unused medicines down the sewer, due to the lack of information, thus creating dangerous waste. Ultimately, this contamination of waters may lead to the feminization of fish, due to the hormones from drugs. This affects not only fish but also people consuming them.



# WHAT DO WE WANT?



WE WANT CHANGE TO ENSURE THAT WE CAN LIVE IN A MORE SUSTAINABLE ***WATER WORLD***.

FOR THE **PEOPLE**, AND FOR THE **PLANET**.

**LOCAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL** AUTHORITIES ALL HAVE A **ROLE TO PLAY...**

# WHAT DO WE WANT?

- 💧 Promote universal access to water as an essential good and of public access and distribution. Access to water is aggravated by social inequalities and we need to think about those more vulnerable without access to resources;
- 💧 Map out existing inequalities in the access to water as a natural resource and address these at the regional level;
- 💧 Establish public drinking fountains and publish maps for each city with the location of these sources;
- 💧 Promote cooperation with low and middle-income contexts, to invest in the existing infrastructure to prevent water losses during distribution, and in water and energy efficient technology;

- 💧 Make available water measuring devices so that citizens can test the drinkable condition and clarity of their public water. This should be done together with the specialised local water organisations and accompanied with a package of necessary information about water resources at the regional and national level;
- 💧 Increase investment in desalination plants in coastal places suffering from water scarcity. Further financing should be capitalised for the development of cleaner technologies for this desalination, to ensure that the fight against water scarcity does not become an enemy of the fight against climate change;
- 💧 Increase international development and cooperation programmes to ensure the most deprived can access water.

Make water accessible!

# WHAT DO WE WANT?

💧 Advance with more proposals and projects that encourage and promote plans or funding for creative ideas to manage and recover water, such as:

- grey water capturing and reuse, for example for toilet or watering plants, agriculture and industrial needs;
- recycle water also for golf courses, given their high – and unnecessary – water spending level;
- rainwater harvesting and reservoir building;
- invest only in dam infrastructure that are not environmentally impactful;
- promote dual flush toilet that use rainwater and recycles water from the bath and sinks;
- and build all these water capturing techniques into town plans, to make urban planning more water-friendly.

## Develop concrete water recovery solutions!



# WHAT DO WE WANT?

- 💧 Include the water footprint in all selling items (eg clothes, food, electronic devices, among others), similarly to what is being done with the energy efficiency scale. This information will inform the consumers of the water effort behind their purchase;
- 💧 Establish fines and penalties on households and mainly industries for their abusive water use and pollution. This will ultimately contribute to the promotion of sustainable water consumption practices and circular economy, including in relation to sustainable food systems;
- 💧 Provide incentives for businesses' sustainable water use and innovative ideas: for example, benefits for profile companies that choose to invest in the use of soluble materials (which dissolve in water and do not harm the environment) or develop commercial protocols for refilling glass containers (e.g. for cosmetics or cleaning products), which would otherwise be for single-use;
- 💧 Promote water certification of households, as it is done with the energy certification;
- 💧 Provide incentives for households' sustainable water use, be it through the reuse of water or reduction of tap water pressure;
- 💧 Create the environmental currency: exchange the equivalent of monthly water savings for essential goods at the supermarket (through monitoring consumption levels);
- 💧 Develop protocols to store properly the waste produced by personal hygiene products and/or medicines at the household level;
- 💧 Develop a national water ranking for schools and public buildings;
- 💧 EU Member States should implement stricter scrutiny and enforceability measures. The EU banned certain single-use plastics already in 2021. Unfortunately, to this day, we are still able to walk into a take-away and walk out with plastic cutlery, one of the items specifically prohibited. The amount of water used to produce these single-use plastics, not to mention other environmental concerns, is vast.
- 💧 The same should be applicable to the role of digitalization. The European Union has been promoting this as a flagship, also as a way to save paper and other resources, but we still observe a high consumption of paper where it is not needed.

Develop policies and connect them with the implementation on the ground!

# WHAT DO WE WANT?

- 💧 Earmark a minimum of public spending on education focused on sustainability topics;
- 💧 Educate all citizens about the process that brings water from nature to our homes and returns it back to nature;
- 💧 Install high-visibility digital meters with real-time consumption, at home, schools, car wash sites or commercial spaces;

💧 Directed Campaigns and Effective Public Awareness Promotions of water and water saving topics with specific emphasis on water statistics and dismantling stigmas especially around where you refill bottles, not flushing toilets, etc. This can be done through different channels, including online and mass media;

💧 Further engage citizens about the social role of water: this can be done through water saving decalogues, the organisation of coastal or river cleaning events, or the creation of cultural spaces dedicated to water;

💧 Involve young people in all educational efforts. Youth should have always a seat at the decision-making table. Plus, they can come up with out-of-the-box ideas that spark curiosity and creativity in the public street, with or without indirect interaction with passers-by (from flashmobs to street surveys).

## Promote the value of water among all citizens!

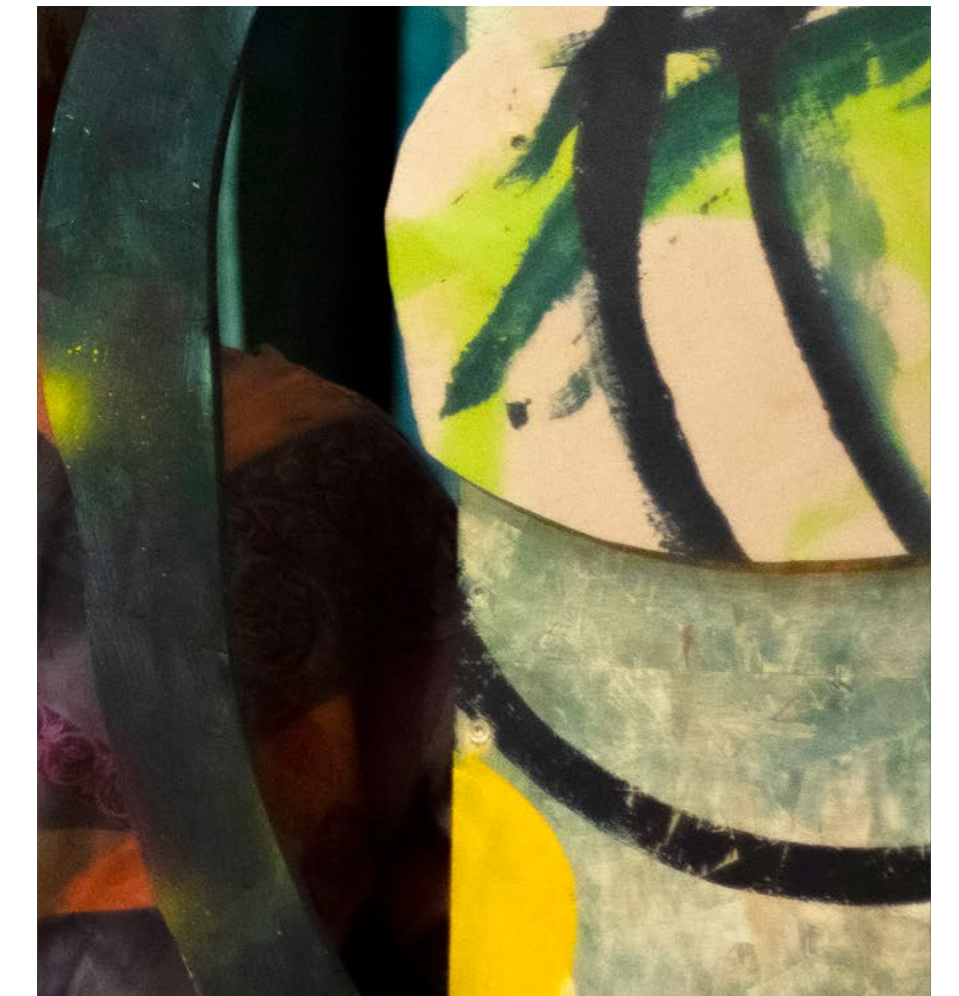
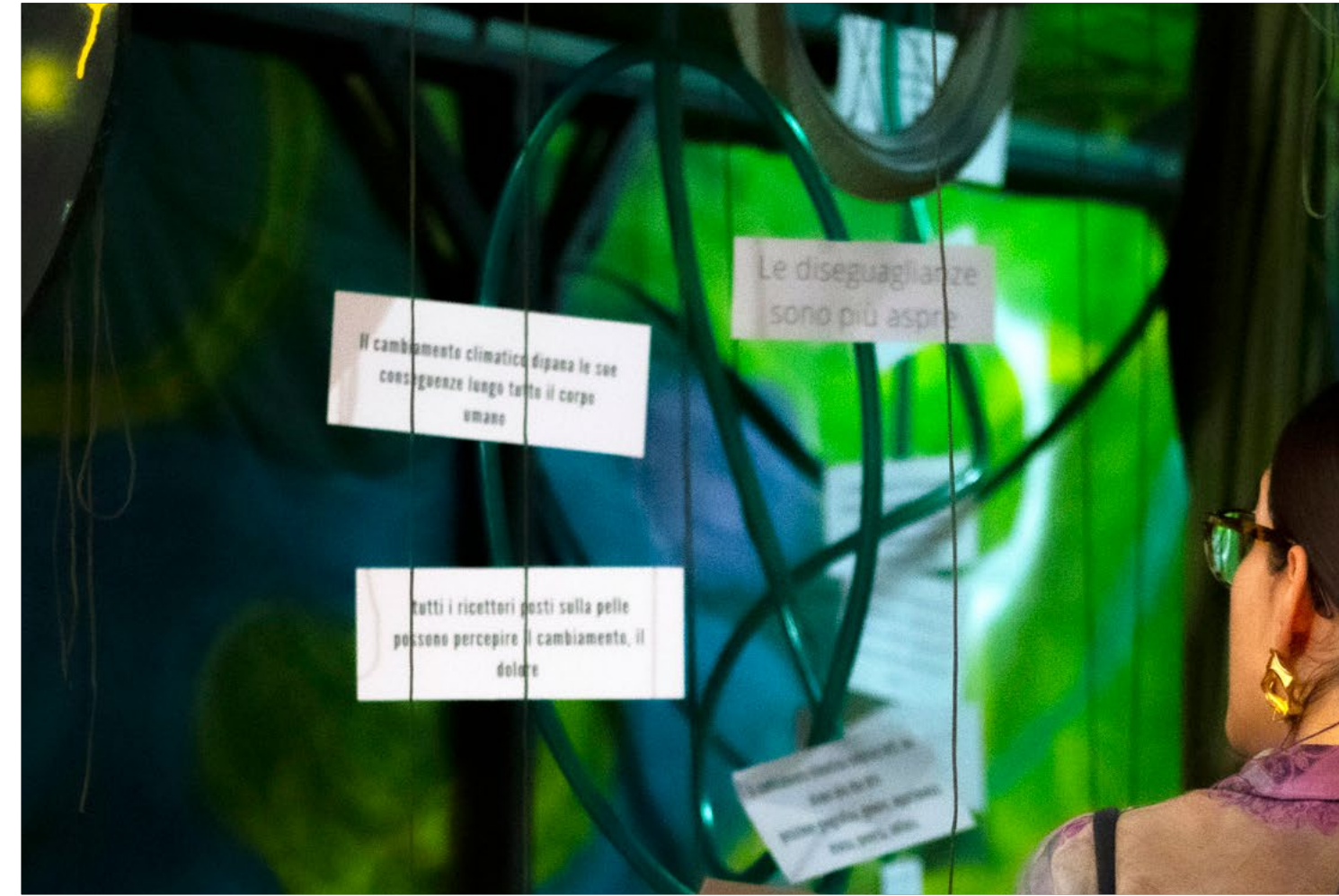
# WHAT DO WE WANT?

## We want to see real action!

Within our governments and among our decision makers, both locally and globally, in terms of the systems we use.

We realise that we all have an individual responsibility when it comes to climate change issues.

However it is imperative there is real action at higher levels in implementing far reaching solutions and not just reinforcing individual actions such as “flush the toilet less”.



# THANK YOU FOR READING.



waterofthefuture\_org



waterofthefuturecampaign



wotf\_org



waterofthefuture.org

The project People and Planet: A Common Destiny is a European project that aims to mobilise Young European Citizens to the challenges and consequences arising from climate change and, in this way, encourage them to take the lead in adopting more sustainable lifestyles. It also aims to improve practices of Local Authorities, allowing for active engagement of youth in the policy-making process and aiming at the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

People & Planet is a project co-funded by the European Commission through the DEAR Programme. It involves 17 organisations - local authorities and CSOs - from 8 EU member states and Cape Verde, that want to help to better care of our planet.



This publication was produced with the financial support of The European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the People & Planet project and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.