

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE FOR THE 2026 IWA EMERGING WATER LEADERS FORUM (2026 IWA EWL FORUM)

4-8 October 2026, Glasgow, United Kingdom

WHAT IS THE 2026 IWA EMERGING WATER LEADERS (EWL) FORUM

The International Water Association (IWA) Emerging Water Leaders (EWL) Forum is a platform designed to engage and empower young professionals in the water sector. The EWL Forum aims to provide opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange, and skill development among future water leaders.

The Forum brings together young water professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, and students from around the world who are passionate about addressing global water challenges. It provides a platform for them to share ideas, experiences, and innovative solutions to water-related issues and promotes the role of young water professionals in shaping the future of the water sector.

The EWL Forum typically includes various activities such as workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and interactive sessions during IWA major events, namely the IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition and the IWA Water and Development Congress and Exhibition.

The Forum is organised by the IWA Secretariat with the support of the IWA Young Water Professionals (YWPs) Steering Committee (SC) as well as the specially appointed EWL Forum Programme Committee (***comprises YWP SC members and other active YWP members who want to get involved***).

WHEN IS THE FORUM?

The 2026 IWA EWL Forum will happen during the [IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition](#) in Glasgow, United Kingdom (4-8 October 2026). The date of the Forum will be confirmed. The event will be in person. More information will be added soon.

WHY IS THE IWA EWL FORUM IMPORTANT?

YWPs should be encouraged to contribute to the water sector's advancements. As future leaders, they should be inspired to contribute to the agenda that influences their career development. The IWA EWL Forum is important for several reasons:

- **Empowering the next generation:** the Forum provides a platform for young professionals to develop their skills, expand their knowledge, and build their networks. It empowers them to take an active role in shaping the future of the water sector.
- **Collaboration and knowledge exchange:** the Forum brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines within the water sector. It fosters collaboration and encourages the exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices. This collaborative environment helps drive innovation and facilitates the development of effective solutions to water-related challenges.
- **Building leadership skills:** the Forum offers various activities and programmes focused on leadership development. It equips young professionals with the necessary skills and competencies to become effective leaders in the water sector. By nurturing leadership qualities, the forum contributes to the creation of a sustainable and resilient water future.
- **Promoting a global perspective:** the Forum attracts participants from around the world, enabling the sharing of perspectives and experiences from different regions and contexts. This global outlook is crucial for addressing water challenges that transcend geographical boundaries and require international cooperation.
- **Encouraging youth involvement:** the Forum recognises the importance of engaging young professionals and students in addressing water issues. By actively involving them in discussions and decision-making processes, it ensures that the voices of the younger generation are heard and considered in shaping water policies, strategies, and initiatives.
- **Inspiring innovation and creativity:** the Forum encourages young professionals to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to water challenges. It provides a supportive environment for creativity and

entrepreneurship, fostering the development of new ideas, technologies, and approaches in the water sector.

Overall, the IWA EWL Forum plays a significant role in nurturing and empowering the next generation of water leaders.

WHO CAN ATTEND?

The IWA EWL Forum provides an open platform for young water professionals aged 35 and under, covering various social, technical, economic, and environmental disciplines. Only YWPs registered to the [IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition](#) in Glasgow, United Kingdom (4-8 October 2026) can attend the Forum.

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE IWA EWL FORUM?

The outcomes of the Forum can vary based on the specific activities and initiatives undertaken, being a stepping stone for the development of an action agenda to achieve the vision. Through the formation of a **position paper** or a **report** and other **communication vehicles**, the water sector will be informed about the outcomes of these discussions.

Here are some of the potential outcomes that can be expected from the Forum:

- **Knowledge sharing:** the Forum facilitates the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences among participants. This leads to a broader understanding of water-related challenges, innovative solutions, and best practices. Participants gain insights from each other's work and research, contributing to their professional development.
- **Leadership development:** The Forum focuses on enhancing the leadership skills of young professionals. Through workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions, participants gain practical skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making. These skills enable them to become effective leaders in the water sector.
- **Networking and collaboration:** the Forum provides a platform for participants to connect with fellow professionals, researchers, entrepreneurs, and students from different parts of the world. Networking opportunities facilitate collaboration on research projects, joint initiatives, and knowledge exchange

beyond the duration of the Forum. This can lead to long-lasting partnerships and collaborations among emerging water leaders.

- **Action-oriented projects:** the Forum encourages participants to develop and implement action-oriented projects aimed at addressing specific water challenges. These projects can range from research studies and pilot projects to community engagement initiatives and advocacy campaigns. The Forum provides guidance and support for participants to transform their ideas into tangible actions.
- **Policy influence:** through discussions and engagement with established water professionals and organisations, the Forum can have an impact on water policy and decision-making. The perspectives and recommendations put forth by young professionals can influence the development of policies that consider the needs and aspirations of future generations.
- **Inspirational outcomes:** the Forum aims to inspire participants to become change agents in the water sector. By providing a platform for showcasing innovative ideas and success stories, the Forum can motivate and encourage participants to take on leadership roles, pursue entrepreneurial endeavours, and contribute to positive change in the field of water management and sustainability.

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE SELECTION AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

The EWL Forum Programme Committee (PC) comprises a sub-group of the YWP SC members and any YWP with an active IWA membership who wants to get involved. This is a **volunteer** position and does not include any form of work agreement.

(a) Duties/Responsibilities

The primary responsibility and duty of the PC is to develop and ensure the quality of the scientific and technical programme for the 2026 IWA EWL Forum. It is estimated that PC members will dedicate around 2 hours per week to perform their responsibilities, over 9 months (from April to December 2026). The work will be done voluntarily.

(b) General Procedures

- i. The PC shall report to the IWA Secretariat and, when necessary, the IWA Secretariat will submit requests to the IWA Board of Directors.
- ii. The PC will meet in person at the 2026 IWA EWL Forum (if members of the PC are registered to attend the Congress) and virtually once a month during the months before the Forum (to finalise the scientific and technical programme). Other meetings may also be called as required.
- iii. The activities of the PC will be staffed and supported by the IWA Membership Engagement and Events team.
- iv. Costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence of the PC to attend meetings and the Forum **will not be covered by IWA**. Each member of the PC has to secure their funds independently.
- v. Questions arising at any meeting shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present, and in the case of an equality of votes, the Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote.
- vi. Participation in the PC is at the absolute discretion of the IWA Secretariat, which may terminate such role at any time. In addition, the participation in the PC will be terminated if, in the opinion of the IWA Secretariat, a member:
 - Has failed to fulfil the requirements of proper professional and ethical standards;
 - Is engaged in activities that are detrimental or contrary to the objectives or interests of the Association.
- vii. The IWA Secretariat shall have the right for good and sufficient reason to dissolve the PC.

(c) Selection Process

1. The IWA Secretariat opens a call targeting the members of the IWA YWP Community for volunteers to account for the PC composition requirements.
2. The IWA Secretariat and the IWA YWP Steering Committee will review the applications.
3. The process and results are communicated to the IWA membership community.

(a) Selection Criteria

- Technical expertise (40%): The most important aspect of the applicants will be their expertise as young water professionals. The PC should include both researchers and practitioners, and expertise will be evaluated considering each candidate's career path.
- International experience (30%): PC candidates will be evaluated considering their international experience. The knowledge of international water challenges is essential to create a high-quality programme.
- Leadership profile (20%): The PC members are also expected to raise the international profile of the Forum. Being recognised as international young water leaders helps increasing the interest for the Forum and the levels of participation.
- Past Interaction with IWA (10%): All PC members must be IWA members. Past interaction with the Association is an advantage (e.g., IWA YWP Chapter member, Specialist Group leader).

Successful applicants will be notified by mid-July.

(d) Composition

- The PC shall normally have 10 members, plus the IWA YWP SC Chair, the local YWP Country Chapter representative, and the IWA Secretariat representative. Additional members may be added as required to fulfil specific tasks.
- 7 members of the PC shall constitute a quorum.
- The PC shall be composed of young water professionals, 35 years old or below, using the following diversity principles:
 - i. A balance of geographical representation, endeavouring to have each major continental area represented; a balance between research and practice, science, technology, and management.
 - ii. A balance of interest/expertise between advanced and developing country interests and technologies;

- iii. A balance of technical expertise to represent the full range of subject matter addressed by the Association and discussed during the IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition;
- iv. A balance of gender.

(e) Programme Committee positions

Position	Skills/ Responsibilities	Name
Chair of the EWL Forum 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents the young members of IWA and the IWA EWL Steering Committee during the event; • Supports the development and implementation of the Strategy of IWA Young Water Professionals during the EWL Forum; • Ensures that a well-balanced, high-quality technical programme is organised and presented at the Forum. • Supports the PC in developing the goals and theme for the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chelsea Hayward (IWA YWP Steering Committee Chair)
IWA Secretariat representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents the IWA Secretariat during the event; • Supports the development and implementation of the Strategy of IWA Young Water Professionals during the EWL Forum; • Supports the PC in developing the goals and theme for the event; • Keep track of the number of participants attending the event with the EWL Forum Secretary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isabela Espindola (IWA Membership Senior Officer)
EWL Forum Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting meeting times and agenda; • Drafting meeting minutes; • Keep track of the number of participants attending the event with the IWA Secretariat representative. • Check the actual attendees who came to the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available
Program Development – Academia representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the development and implementation of the Forum programme, helping to stipulate the times of lectures and workshops, what 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available

	<p>topics are offered and who is presenting;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to create an event plan. 	
Program Development - Utility representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the development and implementation of the Forum programme, helping to stipulate the times of lectures and workshops, what topics are offered and who is presenting; • Helps to create an event plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available
Program Development - Governmental Organisation representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the development and implementation of the Forum programme, helping to stipulate the times of lectures and workshops, what topics are offered and who is presenting; • Helps to create an event plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available
Program Development - Consultancy representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the development and implementation of the Forum programme, helping to stipulate the times of lectures and workshops, what topics are offered and who is presenting; • Helps to create an event plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available
Program Development - Technology Supplier representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the development and implementation of the Forum programme, helping to stipulate the times of lectures and workshops, what topics are offered and who is presenting; • Helps to create an event plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available
Publicity/ External Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating flyers, posters, and other promotional materials; • Arranges for interviews and video recordings; • Promotes the conference via social media; • Develops media releases; • Communicates key messages about the conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IWA Secretariat representative • IWA Communications team • 1 position available
Internal Communication & Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates the internal communication of the PC; • Ensure that all equipment needed on the day of the event is secured and delivered on time (including AV system, tables, and chairs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available

<p>Rapporteurs Lead/Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates the volunteer rapporteurs during the Forum; • Help the IWA Secretariat launch the call for rapporteurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IWA Secretariat representative • 1 position available
<p>Local IWA YWP Country Chapter representative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates the engagement and contribution of the local YWP Country Chapter during the Forum; • Helps to create an event plan. • Support the organisation of local activities; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 position available