

FLOW

FLOW POLICY BRIEF STUDY ON PIONEERING INITIATIVES

STUDY ON PIONEERING INITIATIVES

We **studied**
five pioneering
initiatives to gain
insight in **what**
drives youngsters
to act for
water
seas
oceans.

Methods



**DOCUMENT
ANALYSES**



INTERVIEWS

24 young people
8 board members &
initiators



FOCUS GROUPS

3 focus groups

ABOUT FLOW



FLOW is an **international and interdisciplinary project** studying young generations' relations and engagement with water and oceans, **their expectations and emotions**. The project brings together diverse young people from all across Europe and empower them to directly interact with marine and freshwater stakeholders from the fields of policy, blue economy and innovation and research.

KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH WATER



FLOW WP3 Policy
Brief - Study on
Pioneering Initiatives

Connectedness

1

Ensure that children now and in the future have possibilities to play in and with **water and nature** on their own and with friends, building connectedness.

Diverse Framings and Approaches

2

Promote a broad variety of framings and approaches for initiatives **instead of one-size-fits-all solutions**, and account for the need for **autonomy**, **relatedness**, and **competence** in initiatives, education, and future careers.

Mutual learning

3

Create **inter-generational communities** as an opportunity for meaningful interactions, intergenerational perspectives and mutual learning.

Constructive hope

4

Foster **constructive hope** through engaging young people **in collaboration with** their peers in meaningful action.



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STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

The pioneering initiatives we studied were either pioneering in **approach** or **theme**.

ENGAGING APPROACHES



CITIZEN SCIENCE



INTERGENERATIONAL
COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION



TRAVEL

RIGHTS FOR NATURE



INTERSECT BETWEEN
WATER, ART AND PHILOSOPHY



ENGAGING THEME

The pioneering initiatives meet basic needs for self-determined action:



Competence - having the right skills and knowledge, and being able to use them in the activities.



Relatedness - relating to peers & nature.



Autonomy - being able to make decisions and seeing the impact.

RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

The different strategies resonate with **different dimensions** of human-water or human-nature connections. A more experiential approach resonates with different motivations than, for instance, a more **reflective** or **emotional** approach.

Some young adults were especially attracted to pioneering initiatives because of their reflective elements, whilst others explicitly gravitated towards pioneering initiatives with more practical elements.

Where the **Clean Rivers** and the **Centre for Coastal Culture** interviewees participated in the initiative because of their engagement with nature and water, participants of the **Embassy of the North Sea**, **Parlement de Loire** and **Classroom under Sails** became more engaged with nature and water through their participation in the initiative.

The findings show that childhood experiences in water and nature are very important for young adults. Both **positive** (swimming, playing) and **negative** (floods, near-drowning) experiences can trigger **deep connectedness** with water and nature.

HOPES, FEARS & FUTURE EXPECTATIONS



When discussing problems related to water, nature, and climate, we encountered a range of emotions, from **anger** and **sadness** to **despondency** and **helplessness**. In dealing with these emotions, several coping strategies emerged:



Emotion-focused coping focuses on decreasing feelings of hopelessness through distraction and news-avoidance, resulting in inaction and lower well-being.

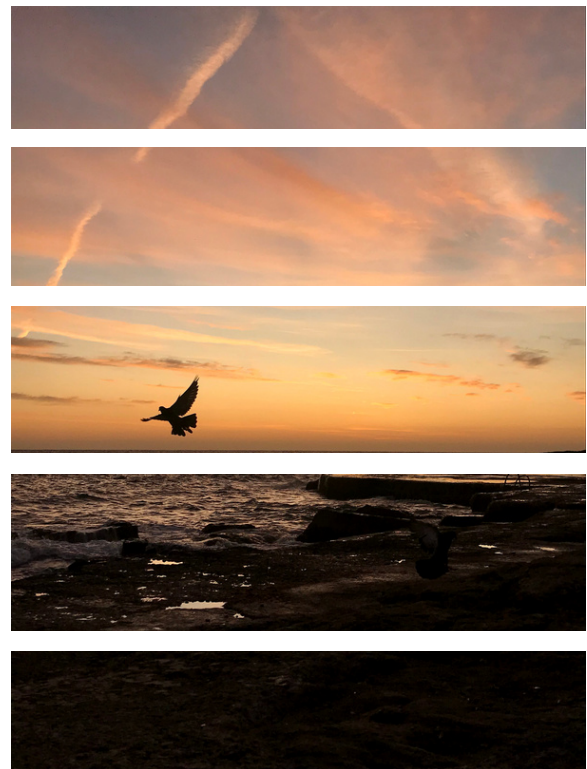


Problem-focused coping focuses on individual action in the private sphere through ambitious lists of environmental actions (e.g. energy saving, vegetarianism, not flying). Results in feeling futile and lower well-being as young people realise the need for collective action to solve these complex issues.



Meaning-focused coping focuses on finding meaning in collective action and trusting that others and governments will end up doing the right thing as well. This stresses the importance of opportunities to meet peers, and leads to constructive hope.

Our study shows a broad variety of how young people relate to the older generations, and only speaking in terms of intergenerational conflicts would not do justice to these rich perceptions. Belonging to an inter-generational community provides the opportunity for **meaningful interactions** and **mutual learning**, creating **intergenerational perspectives** and a broader **horizon**.



-  Sesimbra Centre for Coastal Culture, Portugal
-  Parliament de la Loire, France
-  Embassy of the North Sea, the Netherlands
-  Classroom Under Sails, Germany
-  Clean Rivers, The Netherlands



FLOW

FUTURE LIVES WITH OCEANS AND WATERS

<https://www.flowhorizon.eu/dive-in/>

KIEL, MAY 2024

The summary report is publicly available at FLOW website:

<https://www.flowhorizon.eu/dive-in/>

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