

OPEN CALL 2026



initiate

The InternatioNal InTercultural
Interdisciplinary wATer nETwork
of PhD candidates working on
water related issues

CALL OF PARTICIPATION

The **INITIATE Platform for PhD candidates**, a pioneering initiative designed to forge a **robust international, intercultural, and interdisciplinary network** of PhD scholars focused on water-related challenges, is now accepting applications for its **2026 cohort**. This platform brings together PhD candidates and their mentors from **12 prestigious universities worldwide**, including three **UNESCO International Centers** located in Delft, Dundee, and Montpellier. The INITIATE Platform is dedicated to facilitating meaningful exchanges among PhD candidates confronting similar issues, thereby fostering the development of **interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge**.



VALUES



Diversity



Representativity



Complementarity



Collaboration

TYPES OF FUNDING

Successful applicants will benefit from comprehensive support, including:

- **Travel and accommodation** expenses for platform-related events.
- **Subsistence costs** to cover daily expenses during on-site platform-related events.
- **Visa application fees**, ensuring a smooth international experience.

OBJECTIVES

The INITIATE Platform aims to:

- Offer a **decentralized perspective** on each candidate's research topic in the short term.
- Build a **durable network** for exchanging experiences on water issues and forming consortia to address global water-related changes in the long term.
- Enhance participants' **global career prospects** by connecting them with an international network of academics and professionals.

CALL FOR APPLICATION

If you're a PhD student registered at one of our partner institutions, proficient in English, and eager to engage in a **transformative experience** that promises not only to enrich your research but also to expand your professional network, we encourage you to apply. Don't miss this chance to contribute to and benefit from a **robust network of peers and professionals** dedicated to making significant strides in **water management and sustainability**.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must:

1. Be a registered PhD student at one of the partner institutions:

- (Australia) Australian National University
- (Canada) Université Laval
- (Canada) Université de Sherbrooke
- (France) Université de Montpellier
- (Ireland) Dublin City University
- (Ivory Coast) University Felix Houphouët Boigny
- (Morocco) University Mohamed 6 Polytechnique
- (Netherlands) IHE Delft Institute for Water Education
- (Senegal) University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar
- (South Africa) Rhodes University
- (UK) Dundee University
- (US) The University of Arizona

2. Demonstrate proficiency in English, with French knowledge being an added advantage.

3. Express interest in intercultural and interdisciplinary opportunities.

4. Commit to active participation in the platform.

5. Show willingness to dedicate time to the platform's programs and **engage** with fellow cohort members.

HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates are invited to:

- Fill out the **application questionnaire** available on the application website (hosted by Rhodes University - South Africa), detailing their interest and expectations.
- Applications must include a **letter of support** from the candidate's PhD supervisor(s). Please visit our website for further details and access to the application form.

Note: Staff and current students from Rhodes University must login as a Rhodes University User, with their Rhodes username and password. All other users will need to register (first time log in) and log in as **"Other Users"**.

**APPLICATIONS DUE
28th FEBRUARY 2026**

Apply here

<https://ru.infoready4.com/>

Note: If you experience any issues connecting to the application platform, please try using a different web browser or opening the platform in an incognito/private browsing window.



SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- The integration of platform participation into the **candidate's future professional plans**.
- The candidate's capacity and willingness to **dedicate time** to the platform and cohort.
- The candidate's potential for **effective participation** from a group perspective.

CALENDAR

- **Application Deadline: 28 February 2026**
- Selection of Candidates: March 2026
- Results Communication: March 2026
- Platform Start: April 2026

ENGAGEMENT

Participants are expected to contribute actively to the INITIATE for PhD platform over a period of 18 months, engaging throughout the programme beyond individual events. Core activities include:

- **One to two online meetings per month**, including training sessions, thematic webinars, working groups, and informal Water Cafés;
- **One to two INITIATE annual in-person workshops**, including one annual hands-on workshop (7 days) bringing together the full cohort for intensive collaboration and networking. The 2026 workshop will take place at the end of October.

To support participation in the workshop, INITIATE covers travel and accommodation, subsistence, visa-related costs

- **Collaborative projects**, initiated by the PhD candidates during the in-person workshop(s) and developed collectively throughout the year;
- **Potential mobility opportunities**, depending on project needs and availability.

Online activities do not require specific financial support, but participants are expected to ensure their availability and active participation throughout the programme.

We look forward to receiving your application and potentially welcoming you to the INITIATE for PhD 2026, where you will play a crucial role in shaping the future of water management research and collaboration.

For more information and to apply, please visit our website:
<https://fr.unesco-montpellier.org/platform-initiate-for-phd>.

Apply Now to be part of a transformative journey with the INITIATE PhD Exchange Platform!

For further inquiries, please contact:

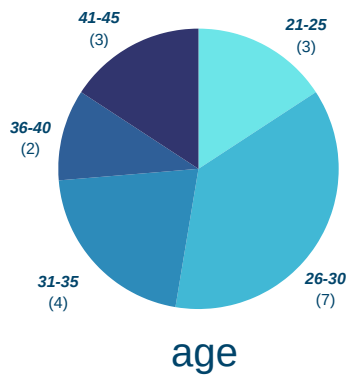
Dr. Beatriz Gasparini: beatriz.gasparini-reis@umontpellier.fr

Dr. Olivier Barreteau: olivier.barreteau@inrae.fr

Or reach out to the designated contact person for your institution listed in the provided material.



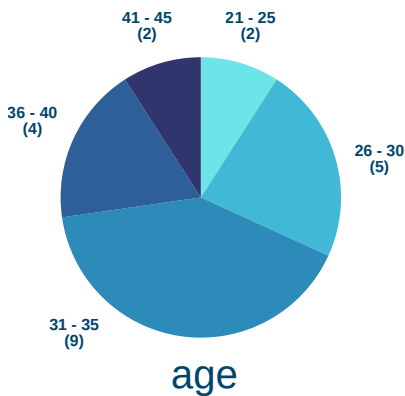
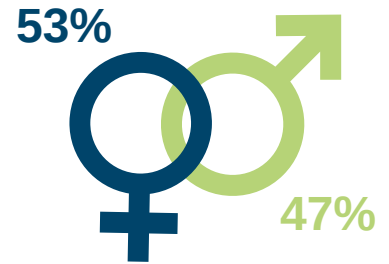
THE COHORTS IN NUMBERS



2024

19 PhDs

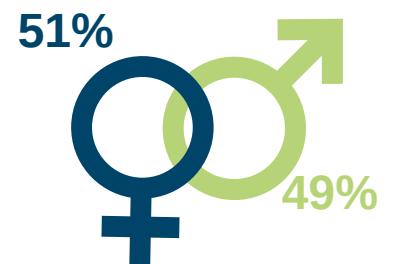
11
nationalities



2025

22 PhDs

18
nationalities



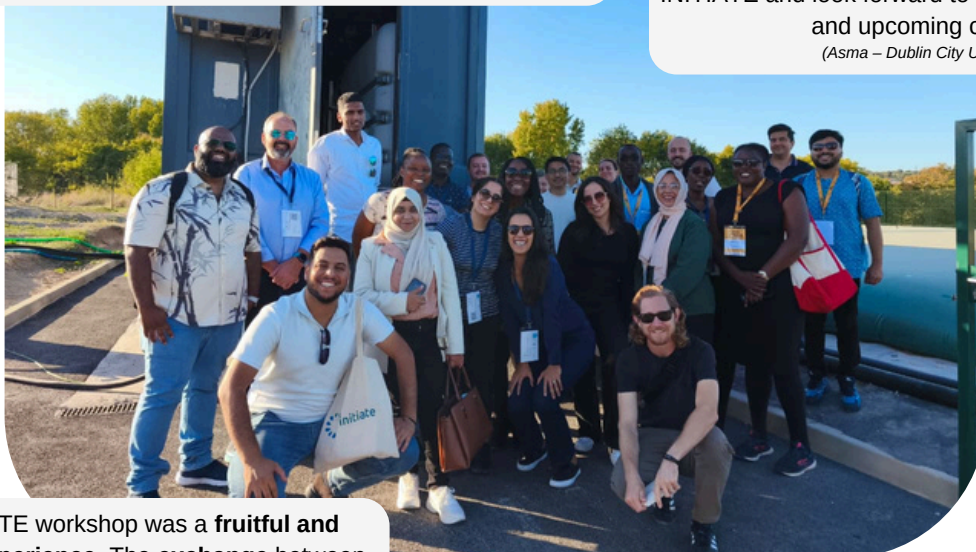
SOME FEEDBACKS

Personally, it was a fantastic experience from both the **academic/professional side** as well as on the **personal and human side**. A great opportunity to share and discuss research, projects, ideas, and to explore how others in the **wider 'water field'** are doing. How they are dealing with complex problems, what are the **challenges** and what are the **opportunities that can drive us forward**.

(Mitia – University of Dundee)

What sets the INITIATE program apart is its **distinctive and productive approach on group collaboration** as an essential follow-up. (...) Its action plan as a 1st cohort's collaborative work (...) will help us **engage in broader achievement** of our research goals beyond PhD. I highly appreciate the long-term aspect of PhD engagement by INITIATE and look forward to collaborating with this and upcoming cohorts.

(Asma – Dublin City University)



The INITIATE workshop was a **fruitful and enriching experience**. The **exchange** between doctoral students with various research themes around water allowed me to open up a little more to **other aspects of the water sector**.

(Awa – University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar)

UNIVERSITY CONTACTS

- (Australia) **Australian National University:** Joseph Guillaume, Joseph.Guillaume@anu.edu.au
- (Canada) **Université Laval:** Stéphanie Guilherme, stephanie.guilherme@gci.ulaval.ca
- (Canada) **Université de Sherbrooke:** Marie-Amélie Boucher, Marie-Amelie.Boucher@usherbrooke.ca
- (France) **Université de Montpellier:** Olivier Barreteau, olivier.barreteau@inrae.fr
- (Ireland) **Dublin City University:** Fiona Regan, fiona.regan@dcu.ie
- (Ivory Coast) **University Felix Houphouët Boigny:** Dimitri Soro, dimitri.soro@gmail.com
- (Morocco) **University Mohamed 6 Polytechnique:** Abdelghani Chehbouni, Abdelghani.CHEHBOUNI@um6p.ma
- (Netherlands) **IHE Delft Institute for Water Education:** Leon Hermans, L.hermans@un-ihe.org
- (Senegal) **University Cheikh Anta Diop Of Dakar:** Awa Fall, awa10.fall@ucad.edu.sn
- (South Africa) **Rhodes University:** Nelson Odume, n.odume@ru.ac.za
- (United Kingdom) **University of Dundee:** John Rowan, j.s.rowan@dundee.ac.uk
- (United States of America) **The University of Arizona:** Sharon Collinge, skcollinge@arizona.edu



This initiative is supported by the "UM2030" program of the France 2030 Plan (ANR-21-IDES-0005) and the I-SITE Excellence Program of the France 2030 Investment Plan (ANR-16-IDEX-0003).

