

UNICEF Hungary's Climate Heroes program has grown into a nationwide youth climate protection gathering

Children spoke up confidently and asked experts questions about what they feel and what they expect regarding their future

Budapest, 25 March 2026 – More than 600 students from every corner of the country arrived at the Planet Budapest venue, set up in the Hungarian Railway History Park, to learn, ask questions, and engage in conversations with experts about climate change. The young participants were eager to understand what future-shaping changes they need to prepare for today—changes that will affect not only their environment but their everyday lives as well. Renowned Hungarian experts participated in the roundtable discussions, including a psychologist, futurist and generational researcher, economist, human ecologist, child protection specialist, molecular geneticist and biology teacher, as well as the State Secretary for Circular Economy and Climate Policy from the Ministry of Energy.

The voices of young people were represented on stage by UNICEF Hungary's Young Ambassadors, who shared the perspectives, questions, and concerns of their own generation while actively encouraging audience participation. One of the event's key goals was to foster open social dialogue: creating a safe space where there are no bad questions, only collective reflection and problem-solving. This year's conference focused on contrasting different viewpoints, a theme that immediately captured students' interest. After the discussions, numerous questions were directed at the experts, and many conversations continued informally during the breaks.

Can we remain human in the age of algorithms? Why do I really feel anxious when I think about the future? How can we know what is truly sustainable? Does selective waste collection actually make a difference? Can I reduce my digital carbon footprint with just a few clicks?

Questions like these arose throughout the event, where students could seek answers not only from experts but also from representatives of civil society organizations, companies, and government bodies.

In addition to the talks, the UNICEF Experience Space hosted representatives from various sectors—from IT professionals and scientists to university students—who demonstrated the many ways individuals can contribute to a more sustainable future. Participants agreed that critical thinking, innovation, and an environmentally conscious mindset play a key role in any career. Children also explored the visually engaging, interactive exhibitions of Planet Budapest, which further strengthened learning through personal experience.

“Since many of our programs in Hungary focus on the rapidly deteriorating mental health of children, we know that climate anxiety also plays a significant role. According to our 2022 representative survey, 90% of young people experience anxiety and 33% report feeling anger regarding climate change, with the sense of helplessness causing serious frustration. This

year's experiences confirm again that young people are far from indifferent: they engaged with exceptional enthusiasm, their questions poured in continuously, and many shared their personal views with us. During the theme day, they could follow a colourful, experience-based 'pathway,' deepen their knowledge through striking exhibitions, and meet others in person at the UNICEF Experience Space. This live, engaging presence is our most important goal each year, because we believe that active participation is one of the keys to reducing climate anxiety," said Antónia Mészáros, Executive Director of UNICEF Hungary.

"There were so many programs available that children often had difficulty choosing which ones to join. Some planted seeds or created sprouting experiments, others made sculptures from waste, while many were more interested in technical solutions, such as recycling an old mobile phone. The so-called 'forest bathing' session offered a chance to slow down and reconnect with nature during the day," a teacher reported.

Climate Wake-Up Lesson – the newest initiative of the program

Students attending the event were also introduced to a new module of the program. Led by UNICEF Hungary's Young Ambassadors, the Climate Wake-Up Lesson offered a preview of the interactive workshop, which will soon be available to schools in Budapest. During the two 45-minute sessions, volunteer trainers use experiential learning tools to build on children's existing knowledge and teach 10–18-year-olds about the connections between climate change and children's rights.

The aim of the program is to provide reliable information and immediately applicable actions to help prevent and alleviate climate anxiety. The workshop can be requested free of charge. More information: [HERE >>>](#)

A little chick "hatched" by the end of the event

A giant hen made from waste materials symbolized the issue of waste accumulation and the importance of recycling in the center of the UNICEF Experience Space. Students contributed to the installation by crafting a small chick entirely from recycled materials, further strengthening the message together.

UNICEF Hungary remains committed to supporting young people in climate protection and providing them with opportunities to learn, ask questions, and voice their opinions. The organization welcomes young "planet protectors" to join its program. More information: [HERE >>>](#)

UNICEF Hungary's ClimateHeroes program is supported by prominent companies: Indotek Group, Alteo Energy Services Plc., Dentons, E.ON, and Magyar Telekom.

The venue for the 5th ClimateHeroes Youth Meeting was provided by the Blue Planet Foundation and Planet Budapest.

Images from the event: [HERE >>>](#)