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Cambiamo ARIA
UNITI PER UN MONDO SOSTENIBILE

in partnership with

Hackathon for Climate Action

Youth participation and engagement in climate solutions

Since 2019, the Italian Committee for UNICEF has annually organizes the "Hackathon for Climate Action" initiative, with the aim of fostering the active engagement and participation of young people in climate solutions and facilitating their dialogue with policymakers. The initiative has been organized, since its first edition, in partnership with IAIA Italia (International Association for Impact Assessment).

The Hackathon is a learning path desinged to engage participants (14-30 years old) in exploring environmental and sustainability issues related to their local areas and designing innovative solutions to tackle climate change and environmental degradation.

The initiative aims to empower participants to provide public and private decision-makers with a set of tangible proposals based on effective ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) considerations.

From the 2024 edition onward, the Hackathon has been organized on a "regional" scale in partnership with Italian regional administrations (the 2024 edition was organized in partnership with the Lombardy Region, and the 2025 edition in partnership with the Umbria Region). In 2025, the Italian Committee for UNICEF and IAIA Italia jointly organized an international edition of the event.

The common goal of the promoters is to foster the participation and active engagement of young people in the collaborative design of innovative solutions in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Since 2019, 350 students have been involved in the Hackathon for Climate Action, and 50 sustainability projects have been developed within the framework of the different editions.

The climate crisis is a child rights crisis

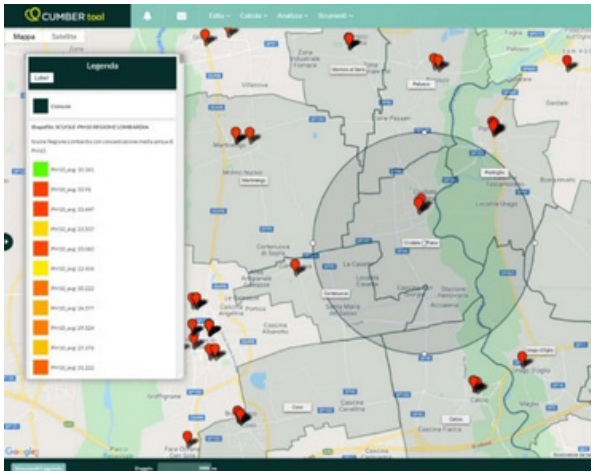
Since the launch of the awareness-raising campaign for children, youth, and families "Cambiamo Aria", the Italian Committee for UNICEF's commitment to addressing climate change-related issues has grown steadily over time. Alongside this awareness-raising campaign, there has also been a growing commitment

to support climate policies and actions for children, teenagers and young people and to encourage participation in decision-making processes.

Children and adolescents are entitled to freely express their opinion in all matters affecting them. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines participation as a fundamental right: the Hackathon is a learnig path precisely because it fosters young people's right to be heard and to be involved in decision-making processes on environmental issues. The climate crisis, in fact, represents a serious threat to the rights of children and adolescents to live in a healthy, clean and sustainable world, and they are entitled to participate in an active and informed way in the effort to cope with climate change (as recently stated explicitly in General Comment No. 26 on the Convention).

How does the Hackathon for Climate Action work?

Thanks to the acquisition of key concepts for climate action and the support of both experts and youth mentors from the UNICEF Young Volunteer Movement (YOUNICEF), participants gain a deeper awareness of the natural and social conditions of their territories and are guided in learning paths of participatory planning and active citizenship that can involve their respective communities.



The participants, split into different groups and supported by YOUNICEF tutor and experts from IAIA Italy, have direct access to data and decision- support tools to evaluate and assess the ecological impacts of their proposals. This allows them to design and evaluate their ideas objectively and transform them into realistic projects. At the same time, by working in an innovative learning environment, participants can use their prior knowledge as well as cognitive and non-cognitive skills, to develop active citizenship skills.

Guided by a specific procedure, based on data and information provided by the q-City5.0 technology platform, they work to codify a problem, to identify a potential solution and to draw up a specific Action Plan.This process for active citizenship that allows participants to identify potential allies and to become aware of the role that each citizen can play. This process enables young participants to gain the necessary confidence to act and create change.

Participants co-design solutions based on tangible Environmental Social and Governance principles. They exchange their views about the design of solutions aimed at improving the sustainability of their local areas and are subsequently involved in a dialogue with local institutions. By presenting their projects, they can contribute concretely and effectively to the climate governance of their territories.

Main goals of the Hackathon for Climate Action

The initiative aims to:

- Promote youth empowerment and the development of green skills
- Improve participants' ability to use data and tools to plan sustainability strategies and projects.
- Support the development of essential skills for collaborative participation in group activities and international negotiations.
- Foster active citizenship and interaction with local institutions to identify common solutions.
- Encourage the creation of new tools for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The 2024 edition of Hackathon for Climate Action – Lombardy Region

The 2024 edition of the Hackathon for Climate Action was organized in partnership with the Lombardy Region within the framework of the Lombardy Protocol on Sustainable Development, which that Italian Committee for UNICEF joined in March 2024.



During the two days event, 50 students developed 7 projects focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation, covering 7 provinces (Milan, Monza Brianza, Brescia, Lodi, Pavia, Cremona, Mantova) of the Lombardy Region.

These projects were subsequently presented at COP 29 in Baku by the Minister for Environment and Climate of the Government of Lombardy Region.



Furthermore, the 7 projects were presented to the by 6th Commission for Environment, Energy, Climate, and Civil Protection of Lombardy Region. The presentation took place in the presence of Commission President Alessandro Cantoni, Regional Minister for Environment and Climate Giorgio Maione, the Commissioners, representatives of local authorities, and the Regional Agency for Agricultural and Forestry Services (ERSAF).

The 2025 edition of Hackathon for Climate Action - Umbria Region



The 2025 edition of the Hackathon for Climate Action was organized in partnership with the Umbria Region.

During the two days of activities, 50 students developed and presented 5 projects focused on climate change adaptation and biodiversity preservation. The participants represented the following high schools: Liceo Scientifico Statale "Galileo Galilei" of Perugia, Liceo "Renato Donatelli" of Terni, I.I.S. "Raffaele Casimiri" of Gualdo Tadino, Istituto Tecnico "Franchetti Salviani" of Città di Castello, and the Istituto di Istruzione Superiore (Artistica, Classica e Professionale) of Orvieto.

The projects were later presented by the participants in the Assembly Hall of Palazzo Cesaroni— the headquarter of the Regional Council of Umbria Region, in Perugia — as part of an event jointly organized by the Italian Committee for UNICEF and the Second Permanent Council Commission of the Legislative Assembly of the Umbria Region. Key attendees at the presentation included: Stefania Proietti— President of Umbria Region; Sarah Bistocchi—President of the Legislative Assembly; and Thomas De Luca—Regional Minister for Energy, the Environment, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, Landscape Policy, and Urban Planning; Massimiliano Presciutti - President of the Province of Perugia.

Hackathon for Climate Action – International Edition

More than 40 students from Ukraine, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Tunisia, together with 150 students from five high schools across Italy, attended the first international edition of the Hackathon for Climate Action, jointly organized by the Italian Committee for UNICEF and IAIAI Italy in 2025.



At the end of the two-day event, the participants presented and shared their ideas and projects in a plenary session which also connected remotely with students from the Italian high schools in Montichiari.