

Environmental and water protection among youngsters

Research report for the Priority Area Water Quality of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region contracted by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade







CONTENT

	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	- 03
	DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE TARGET GROUP	- 04
1	ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN GENERAL	- 05
2	WATER PROTECTION IN THE DANUBE REGION	- 15
	A. Information and expectations	- 19
	B. Where do they get their information?	- 25
	C. Participation in various programmes and organisations	- 29
3	FOCUS ON MARINE WATERS	- 33
4	CONCLUSION	- 36



Interreg Programme Danube Region



Co-funded by the European Union

This project is co-funded by the European Union (ERDF fund) with the financial contribution of partner states and institutions. The lead partner of the PA04-Water Quality project (DRP-PAC-PA4) that financed this study is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. More information about the EU Strategy for the Danube Region "Water quality" Priority Area: <u>https://waterquality.danube-region.eu/</u>

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research report was based on data collected between 27 June and 4 July 2023 on Netpanel, Hungary's largest online panel. A total of 300 Hungarian residents aged 15-25 were surveyed. The survey focused on the attitudes of young people towards environmental protection, with a focus on water protection in the Danube region. The sample is representative of gender, age, education, type of settlement and region, thanks to careful sampling and subsequent careful weighting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Young Hungarians are aware of the various global environmental problems and their severity. The most frequently heard topic is climate change and global warming.

Although by their own perception they are very concerned about the environment, but they do not see this age group (teenagers and twentysomethings) as being particularly interested in this topic, nor they see the Hungarian population as such.

Environmentally aware almost ends with selective waste collection, and there is a narrow group of youngsters who also carry out activities that require more effort.

Only the fifth of young people would be willing to change their lifestyle to protect the environment.

Moreover, the proportion of youngsters who are regularly informed about environmental issues is (also) low.



WATER PROTECTION IN THE DANUBE REGION

Few young people are sure to have heard about water protection in the Danube region, and this is true for around 100,000 people.

One in two young Hungarians aged between 15 and 25 is specifically interested in a topic related to water protection in this region. The most popular topics are hazardous waste discharges and drinking water problems. This age group considers it is important to have access to credible information on the topic, especially as they feel that there is not enough information.

The school seems to be inevitable, as it is considered important that students learn about water protection. Furthermore, the majority have (only) participated in some kind of environmental or water protection event or programme within the school. However, the commitment to the topic is not visible among young people.

MARINE WATERS

Pollution of marine waters is the most interesting topic, but the most says there is not enough information on the problems what is threatening the marine waters.





DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE TARGET GROUP

The target group of the research is the Hungarian population aged 15-25, whose demographic proportions are the following:



53%

30%

50% of the target group is still studying at secondary or higher level.

Higher

7%





Co-funded by **Danube Region** the European Unio



City

Village

4

I. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN GENERAL



Young people are aware that humanity is facing various global environmental problems. Most of what they hear about is climate change, global warming and air pollution. Not only do they hear about problems affecting their environment, but they also consider them to be serious problems.

When young people think about themselves, they see that they are very concerned about the environment. However, if we ask how interested teenagers and twenty-somethings are in the subject, the level of interest is significantly lower. The Hungarian population is perceived by this age group as a society that is especially not concerned about the environment.

Although a fifth of young people think they are doing a lot to protect the environment, being environmentally aware largely ends with selective waste collection. There is also a narrow group of people who do activities that require more effort, such as composting, recycling and avoiding plastic.

Nevertheless, the majority of young people believe that the environment is an issue that we should all be committed to for the future, and that we should take this into account in all aspects of our lives. However, only one in five would be willing to change their lifestyle to protect the environment.



The proportion of people who are regularly informed about environmental issues is low, and they are stimulated by many platforms regarding this topic (as well).

Danube Region

The vast majority of young people have heard about various global environmental problems at some level.

GK1a. Have you heard about the following global environmental problems what affecting the world? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Young people are therefore also aware of global environmental problems

Hungarians aged 15-25 hear most about climate change and global warming. Almost two thirds of them have heard a lot about water pollution, and only 1 in 10 young people have heard nothing about this environmental problem. They are the least likely to have access to information on melting ice caps and soil pollution, but even so, the proportion of those who have some knowledge of these problems is high.



How much do youngsters hear about global environmental problems?

■ I've heard a LOT about it ■ I have heard LITTLE about it











The seriousness of global environmental problems is (also) felt by young Hungarians.

They believe that all of these problems are serious problems for humanity.

However, there are still some problems that are known to a greater extent by young people, and which they think are a bigger problem for humanity. These include climate change, global warming and air pollution, which is a much-heard topic these days.

Drinking water problems are something that fewer people have heard of, but they are seen as a serious problem.

Young people say that overpopulation is the "least" problem, although it scores 80 out of 100, so it is actually a serious problem for the world. GK1a. Have you heard about the following global environmental problems what affecting the world? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300 / GK1b. What do you think how big the following problems are for humanity? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, who has heard about the problems



When it comes to making a statement about themselves, this age group is very concerned about the environment.

K1a. How concerned are they about the environment... / K1b. And how concerned are they about the environment... / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

How concerned are they about the environment...





However, the figure on the left is revealing, as their own age group (teenagers, 20-somethings) are already seen as less interested in environmental protection.

Young people feel that the 20-60 age group is the most concerned about the environment (although they believe this group is only somewhat concerned).

While they think that themselves and those in their immediate environment are more concerned about this topic, the more distant the people whom they are asked about, the less they think them to be concerned. The Hungarian population - with an average score of 49 - is not even considered to be a society that is particularly concerned about the environment.



Nearly a fifth of Hungarians aged 15-25 say that they do a lot to protect the environment - this is mainly through selective waste collection.

K2a. Now that you think more about it, how much are you doing to protect our environment? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300 K2b. Please explain what you do to protect our environment. / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, who does something to protect our environment n=298



But for the most part, environmentally conscious behaviour seems to stop at waste management.

In the questionnaire, we asked young people to tell us what they do for our environment, and the highest proportion of young people said that they collect waste separately (in the order of 500-600 thousand young people who collect waste separately), followed by not littering.

But there is a narrower group of young people who already compost, recycle, avoid plastic packaging and single-use plastics, for example.

What are they doing to protect our environment?



Danube Region Co-funded b



It is clear that more effort-intensive, environmentally conscious actions are more characteristic of those who say they are doing more for the environment.

10

K2b. Please explain what you do to protect our environment. / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, who does something to protect our environment n=298



Selective waste collection is even typical of those who only do little for the environment.

Among those who do a lot, activities such as picking up rubbish, composting, recycling, avoiding plastic, reducing waste and drinking from a reusable water bottle are relatively more common.

However, even among them, the proportion of people who take the trouble to do so is around 10-15%.

Education has an important role to play in this area, to show young people why they need to take action to protect the environment and that it is not just about separate waste collection.



The majority of young people believe that the environment is an issue that we all need to be committed to for the future, and that we should take this into account in all aspects of our lives.

11

ATT2. How much do you agree with the following statements about the environment? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

But only the fifth of young people consider that they would be willing to change their lifestyle if it helped the environment.

However, a third of them find it rather difficult to do anything meaningful for our environment, even for people like them.

Relatively few agree that it is unnecessary to take care of the environment, while others do not, 1 in 10 young people strongly agree.



Attitudes towards the environment



Danube Region







ATT2. How much do you agree with the following statements about the environment? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300



Among those who do a lot for our environment, the difference is palpable, not only in their own perceptions and behaviour, but also in their attitudes.

This group is much more in agreement with the statements that environmental protection is an issue that we should all be committed to for the future and should be taken into account in all aspects of life. They are the ones who would rather be more willing to change their lifestyles to protect the environment.

So a narrow group think that it is not enough if they collect waste selectively, but they are also willing to behave differently in their lifestyles, for example as consumers - in fact, as ethical consumers sensitive to environmental protection.

Co-funded by

Danube Region

12



The proportion of people who get information regularly is low when it comes to the environment.

K4a. Do you watch, listen to or read about environmental issues? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300



Moreover, a fifth of young people do not watch, listen to or read about environmental issues at all.

The internet, including news sites and other sites, is where people find the most information. The popular social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) are somewhat in the middle of the pack when it comes to young people's information on the environment.

The sites of government are on the bottom of this list, and it is the less used platform. Reach the youngsters through these sites in this topic is the hardest way.

Young people are stimulated on this topic on many platforms, but typically only occasionally.

K4b. What platforms or sites do you use to watch, listen to or read about environmental issues? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Platforms where they get informed:



Danube Region



Half of young people are not aware of any environmental organisation or company.

K3a. Do you know any organisations or companies related to the environment? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300 / K3b. Which organisation or company is involved in environmental protection? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, who knows organisations or companies related to the environment n=152



The best known environmental organisation and company (spontaneously mentioned) is Greenpeace, followed closely by WWF.

The other organisations on the list had a low percentage of mentions, with the WHO at 5%, UNICEF at 3% and UNESCO at 3%, and the others were less than 3% of those who knew of any such organisations or companies.

Although half of young people know of such organisations or companies, nearly 40% did not spontaneously name any.



Danube Regi



After general environmental questions, the focus was on water protection in the Danube region. In order to make it clear to young people what is meant by water protection in the Danube region, the following information text was presented.

"In the next few questions, we will ask further questions related to the environment and its protection, focusing on the water protection of the Danube region, the Danube river basin (hereafter referred to as Danube water protection), which in Hungary means the protection of the Danube, the Tisza and all other watercourses, as well as groundwater. The Danube region includes Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine."

We have also included a short reminder of what we mean by Danube water protection in the relevant questions.

"Danube water protection means: the protection of waters belonging to the Danube region, the Danube river basin ."



II. WATER PROTECTION IN THE DANUBE REGION



Young people consider the leakage of hazardous waste into water and pesticides into the soil to be the most common problems in Hungary. However, few people have heard about water protection in the Danube region for sure, around 100,000 young people. Among them men, 20-25 year olds with higher education and mainly urban residents of Budapest are over-represented.

Every second young Hungarian aged 15-25 is specifically interested in a topic related to Danube water protection. The most popular topics are hazardous waste discharges and drinking water problems. The other topics are not too far behind the TOP2, but it is clear that cross-border water management and water diplomacy are the topics of least interest.

Overall, the age group considers it important to have access to credible information on Danube water protection issues. Drinking water supply problems and hazardous waste discharges are the two topics they think this age group should hear about. Nearly two thirds of young people do not even think they have enough information on these topics. When communicating, it makes sense to focus on these two topics in the first instance, because they are the ones where young people seem to be most receptive. A fifth of young people would like to be informed about the different Danube water issues and consider it important that students learn about Danube water protection in a school context.

Young people also consider it important to be involved in decisions and processes related to the environment and water protection - but what they would do about it is another question.



Few people are sure to have heard of water protection in the Danube region, around 100,000 young people.

DR1. Have you heard about the Danube Region's water protection, the protection of the Danube river basin? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Danube Region's water protection



Although some people remember something about this, they are not at all sure that they have heard of the protection of the Danube river basin.

And almost half of young people have certainly never heard of it.

Among those who had definitely heard about water protection in the Danube region, men, 20-25 year olds, those with higher education and those living mainly in Budapest and urban areas are over-represented.









The leakage of hazardous waste into the water and pesticides into the soil are the most common problems identified by young people in Hungary.

18

V1. How typical do you think the following are for Hungary? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

More than two thirds of young people think that wastewater treatment is adequate at some level.

If we look at the least typical waterrelated problem in our country according to young people, then it is floods. Moreover, almost a third of them say it is not typical, just like drinking water problems aren't either.



How typical in Hungary? Slightly typical Not typical I don't know Very typical Hazardous wastes (e.g. pharmaceuticals, hormones, plastics, industrial and agricultural chemicals) are 35% 11% 10% discharged into water Pesticides, fertilisers leaching into soil, living water 33% 12% 12% Droughts 23% 16% 10% Proper wastewater treatment 19% 15% 16% Aquatic life (e.g. migratory fish) disrupted by 18% 9% 20% shipping and hydropower Drinking water supply problems (e.g. water treatment, drinking water contamination, water 16% 8% 29% shortages, water leakage) 8% Floods 29% 12%



II/A. INFORMATION AND EXPECTATIONS















How much are they interested in?

V2. How interested are you in the following topics? Please think about the Danube water protection. Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300





Half of young people are specifically interested in at least one of these areas.

Among those who are interested, they are interested in **3 topics** average.

The most popular topics include hazardous waste discharges and drinking water problems.

Although the other topics are not too far behind the TOP2. What is clear, however, is that crossborder water management and water diplomacy are the areas of least interest.



Overall, the age group considers it important to have access to credible information on Danube water protection issues.

V4. How important do you think it is for you and your peers to have access to credible information on the different issues related to the Danube water protection? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

How important is the credible information?



People with higher education, urban and those who are interested in Danube water protection are the ones who feel it is particularly important for this age group to have access to reliable information.

While 15-19 year olds, those living in villages, who are not students and not interested in the topic are over-represented among those who do not consider it important or consider it less important.





21

On issues concerning Danube water protection, they tend to have access to less information rather than more.

V3. How much information on the following topics do you have access to when thinking about Danube water protection? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Although they hear the least information about cross-border water management, it is the topic that interests this age group the least.

Nearly half of young people consider that they have access to enough or rather a lot of information about floods and droughts.



Lack of information				
	■ Nothing	Too less	s Rathe	r less
Transboundary water management / water diplomacy	19%	18%	30%	6 7%
Drinking water supply problems (e.g. water treatment, drinking water contamination, water shortages, water leakage)	11%	17%	36%	64%
Aquatic life (e.g. migratory fish) disrupted by shipping and hydropower	15%	22%	28%	64%
Wastewater treatment	14%	16%	32%	62%
Hazardous wastes (e.g. pharmaceuticals, hormones, plastics, industrial and agricultural chemicals) are discharged into water	10%	22%	30%	62%
Pesticides, fertilisers leaching into soil, living water	15%	19%	26%	61%
Floods	10% 14	1%	29%	54%
Droughts	12%	15%	25%	52%
22 Danube	Region	Co-funded by the European Union	DANUBE REGION strategy	

Most needs to know about - RANKING

V7. Please rank the areas covered by each of the Danube water protection areas. In the first place, put the one that your age group most needs to know about, and in the last place, the one that they least need to know about. / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Ranked in to the TOP2



Drinking water supply problems (e.g. water treatment, drinking water contamination, water shortages, water leakage)



Hazardous wastes (e.g. pharmaceuticals, hormones, plastics, industrial and agricultural chemicals) are discharged into water



Pesticides, fertilisers leaching into soil, living water



Aquatic life (e.g. migratory fish) disrupted by shipping and hydropower



Wastewater treatment



Droughts





11%

Two topics stand out strongly.

Drinking water supply problems and hazardous waste discharges are the two issues they think this age group should hear about.

Nearly two-thirds of young people think they don't have access to enough information on these topics, and these two topics were also in the top two of the list of interests.

When communicating, it is worth focusing on these two topics in the first place, because they are the ones where young people seem to be most receptive.





Young people think it is important to be involved in decisions and processes related to the environment and water

protection - but what they would do about it is another question.

V10. How important is it to involve young people in the processes and decisions affecting the following areas? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300



Who thinks this is very important?

There is a strong demographic pattern in who considers it important to involve young people in water protection processes and decisions.

Women, 20-25 year olds, those who have higher education, especially college or university, those from Budapest and those who are interested in at least one topic related to water protection are over-represented among them.

From this point of view, the importance of integration into environmental processes and decisions is much more widespread. It is also considered important by 15-19 year olds, as well as those with lower levels of education. However, those in the Eastern region are under-represented.





24

II/A. WHERE DO THEY GET THEIR INFORMATION?





A fifth of young people would like to be informed about various Danube water protection issues.

V6a. How do you feel you would like to be informed about different Danube water protection issues? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Getting information about Danube water protection



There are many platforms for young people to get information (also) on environmental issues, and it is clear that there is a divide in where they go for information on water issues.

This is another reason why it is important to reach young people through multiple channels, including online and offline. **The government sites** are also at the bottom of the list, if we look at water issues – so on this platform is really hard to reach the youngsters.

They prefer to get information from school lessons, documentaries and professional websites.

V6b. Which platforms would you prefer to use for information on different Danube water protection issues? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Platforms what they prefer in these issues:







In primary and secondary education, the subject is covered to some extent - most people have talked about it, studied it, even if only superficially.

V5. What are your experiences, in primary and/or secondary school lessons have you talked about Danube water protection? / V5a. At what level has the issue of Danube water protection been introduced in primary/secondary education? / Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

One in two young people have encountered water issues in a school - either in class or in workshops, activities, faculties or events.

However, there is less coverage and the most have only heard or learned about it in only superficially.



Danube Region

They rather think it is important that students learn about Danube water protection in school.

28

V5b. How important do you think it would be for students to learn about water protection in the Danube in schools? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300



Who thinks this is very important?

There is also a strong demographic pattern among those who consider it very important that students learn about Danube water protection in school.

Women, 20-25 year olds, those who has secondary or higher education and those who has an affinity for the topic are over-represented among them.

Those who are currently still in school, and the younger age group (15-19 year olds), are less likely to consider it important to include this topic in lessons.



Co-funded by the European Union



II/B. PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND ORGANISATIONS









More than half of young people have participated at least once in an environmental or water-related event.

V8. Have you ever participated in any environmental or water protection related events? / V8b. Please name those events that you have attended! Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300; those who have participated, n=162



Those who have attended an environmental or water-related event, nearly half of them have been in the past 1 year.

V8a. When have you participated in any environmental or water protection related event? / V8c.. When you have attended those environmental or water protection related events, what did you think of the participants? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, those who have participated, n=162

When have they participated in any event (environmental or water protection)?

Those aged 20-25, those with higher education and those who are no longer in education are over-represented among those who participated 2-3 years ago or more.

As can be seen from these events, the demographic characteristics of the participants show that school events are the ones that they attend the most. Once get out of school, they are less likely to participate in such events.



Although the young people seem rather enthusiastic, they do not seem to be really committed to the topic.

This is what young people see in others at these types of events.



What did they think of the participants?



A small group is involved in any kind of programme or organisation that helps to empower young people, build their capacity or increase their knowledge.

V9. Are you involved in any programmes or organisations (e.g. Youth Council, NGO activities) that help empower young people, build their capacity or increase their knowledge? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300; those who participates, n=93



III. FOCUS ON MARINE WATERS



Pollution of marine waters is the most interesting topic when looking at problems related to sea waters, although other topics are not far behind. More than 40% of young people are quite interested in at least one of the areas of these problems. These problems related to marine water are of relatively strong interest when compared to water issues in the Danube Region. If the two lists are considered together, these issues would be at the top of the list. In terms of the demographics of those who are interested in, the men who have a slightly bigger interest in issues as the threaten of sea waters.

The most says there is not enough information on the problems what is threatening the marine waters. Around 60% of young people think they do not have enough information on these issues. In the area of marine water issues, information on the warming of sea waters and rising water levels are rather available according to young people.



Pollution of marine waters is the most interesting topic when looking at problems related to sea waters, although other topics are not far behind.

SEA1. How interested are you in the following topics? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300



34

Problems related to marine waters are of relatively strong interest when compared to water protection issues in the Danube region. If the two lists are considered together, these issues would be at the top of the list.

In terms of the demographics of those who interested in, the men who have a slightly better interest in issues that the threaten of sea waters.







The most says there is not enough information on the problems what threatening the marine waters.

35

SEA2. How much information do you have access to on the following topics? Base: 15-25 year-old Hungarian population, n=300

Lack of information





As in the case of issues related to water protection in the Danube region, young people experience a lack of information on issues related to marine waters, and also in similar proportions.

About 60% of young people think they do not have enough information on these topics.

In the area of marine water issues, information on the warming of sea waters and rising water levels are rather available according to young people.



IV. CONCLUSION



The level of commitment to environmental protection is not very strong, as could be seen, so it is important to emphasise the importance of environmental protection among young people, and why it is important to be committed to the topic at all.

It is good news that selective waste collection is already being taken up by young people, but it is important to steer young people towards other activities, even those that require more effort. Doing something for the environment should not just be about collecting waste and not littering. In many cases, this would mean a change of lifestyle and habits, which only a fifth of young people would be willing to make. It would be worth pointing out the whys, why it is necessary to do the different activities, why it is good for them and why it is good for our environment.

As few young people are regularly and (it can be said) consciously informed about environmental issues, it is important to provide credible information. In addition to the various Internet sites, documentaries, TV, education would also have a significant role to play in passing on information and involving youngsters in various environmental programmes and events. However, it is clear that government websites are the least informative for the young people and they are not really reached on these sites.

On water protection, two issues stand out: drinking water problems and the discharge of hazardous waste into water. These are the two topics of greatest interest and perceived lack of information by young people. In communication, it is worth focusing on these two topics in the first instance, as they are the ones young people seem most receptive to.





INTRODUCTION OF NRC AND NETPANEL



NRC Marketing Research and Consulting Ltd. is 100% Hungarian owned and has been a leading provider of online research since 1999.

Our complex business is online and offline quantitative and qualitative research with a methodology adapted to the client's business questions.

Hungary's first and largest online research panel.

The largest online respondent communities in our country, the quantitative netpanel.hu and the qualitative qualipool community are part of the NRC's quality online data collection and respondent management service. Our clients: market research companies who conduct research online.

NRC INNOVATIONS from 1999



🔊 netpanel