



Ecology Awareness of Sustainable Green Development: Collaboration of
Universities and Local Actors

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FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW REPORT

TÜRKIYE



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FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW OBJECTIVES

The data collection and content development processes for ECOUNTRY GUIDE AND ACTION PLAN include three focus group interviews and a comparative analysis based on the country-based legal practices regarding environmental protection and SGD.

The first leg of the data collection process comprises Focus Group Interviews with:

- University employees who work with external stakeholders (NGOs, local authorities) daily in researching and disseminating knowledge on environmental issues
- External stakeholders who cooperate with project team members
- Undergraduate students to identify areas where the cooperation between universities and external stakeholders, including NGOs and local authorities, can be improved and to determine the expectations from universities about the forms and content

Focusing on organising 3 focus group interviews with HEI employees, NGO and local authority representatives and students the data will be collected regarding the inquiry about what should universities do and how should they take action to contribute to more interactions with other local actors to ensure sustainable green development.



WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Focus Group Interviews:

- **Welcome and introductions:** Focus Group Moderators briefly introduce the project, focus group interview objectives, and participants.
- **Presentations:** FGI moderators deliver brief presentations on relevant topics as follows:
 - o A better understanding of the expectations of stakeholders in relation to universities' collaborations with local actors.
 - o Insight into the motivations and barriers to university local actor collaborations in environmental protection and sustainability activities, and the potential strategies for increasing cooperation.
 - o University student engagement in local actors' SGD activities.
- **Brainstorming and group discussions:** Participants encourage participants for focused discussions based on prepared questions.
- **Data collection:** Participants capture key insights and ideas from discussions using designated note-takers, voice recorders, or collaborative online tools.
- **Wrap-up and feedback:** Participants summarize key points and answer questions.

Post-FGI:

- **Data analysis and report writing:** Each partner institution uses the pre-defined templates to prepare a FGI report summarizing discussions, findings, and insights.
- **Dissemination**
- Share FGI reports internally and externally through project website, publications.

EXPECTED FGI OUTCOMES

Process-Oriented Outcomes:

Focus on the workshop experience itself and how it facilitates interaction and learning:

- Facilitating the dynamics of discussions within groups
Creating a safe space for open communication
- Highlighting successful initiatives and approaches already implemented by different stakeholders
- Revealing barriers to university local actor collaborations and students' engagement within the scope of SGD.

Results-Oriented Outcomes:

Focus on the tangible outputs and impacts of the workshop:

- Generating 3 detailed FGI reports containing data analysis, key findings, and actionable recommendations for university and local actors collaborations in each partner country
- Fostering ongoing communication and exchange of best practices between stakeholder groups through networking platforms or joint projects
- Influencing local policies or university regulations to incorporate collaborations
- Encouraging broader community participation in sustainable green development efforts
- Contributing to the literature to provide scientific data and inspire further research.



WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

Discussion threads with Students (Including NGOs, municipalities, city councils, business communities)

1. Identification of the university's cooperation with the environment and its awareness among students?
 - *Do you identify the entities with which the university collaborates? What are they?*
 - *What are the thematic areas of cooperation? Did they concern climate and environmental policy?*
 - *What are the forms of this cooperation?*
2. Identified benefits and added value from this collaboration:
 - *Does such cooperation produce results / is it effective?*
 - *What are the key benefits of such cooperation?*
 - *Could these benefits be greater? How do you assess this?*
 - *Does this collaboration enhance your knowledge and competence? How does such education differ from classes in the university halls?*
3. Barriers identified:
 - *What are the most important barriers to cooperation?*
 - *Does anything hinder such cooperation?*
4. Desired future directions:
 - *If the cooperation of universities with various organisations and companies has not taken place so far, with whom do you think universities should cooperate to make the courses you study more attractive?*
 - *Which of the following areas of cooperation will be most important in the future (ask participants to rank and justify their prioritisation):*
 - o *smart cities*
 - o *sustainable finance*
 - o *green economy*
 - o *green agriculture*
 - o *healthy cities*
 - o *other*
5. Closing the discussion – *ask two questions to wrap up the discussion:*
 - *Are universities still needed for environmental protection? To what extent and in what area?*
 - *What knowledge and competences can modern universities teach?*

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

FGI Process and the Data Collected

FGI with Students

FGI Date: 31.12.2024 (Date of completion of focus group discussions with Student)

Venue: at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Biga Faculty of Economy and Administrative Sciences

Online/Face to Face/Hybrid: Face to Face

Number of Participants: Female (17) Male (4) Total (21)

Findings:

Summary Analysis

Key Themes Addressed:

- University-NGO Collaboration and Environmental Awareness: Participants consistently noted that Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University's collaboration with NGOs on environmental issues is limited, with low awareness among students. While university clubs organize small-scale environmental activities, external NGOs lack significant engagement with the university.
- Benefits and Added Value: Collaboration with NGOs enhances students' social skills (e.g., confidence, communication, teamwork), fosters environmental awareness, and provides a sense of contributing to society. However, these benefits are currently limited due to the scarcity of NGO activities.
- Barriers Identified: Key barriers include inadequate promotion, weak university-NGO collaboration, lack of trust, limited activities, and students' unfamiliarity with NGOs.
- Future Directions: Participants desire stronger university-NGO partnerships, more environmental awareness campaigns, practical projects addressing local issues (e.g., stray animals, waste management), and integration of NGOs into campus life to shape environmental policies.

Frequently Used Phrases:

- Environment: "environmental awareness," "tree planting," "waste collection," "recycling," "Kaz Mountains."
- Collaboration: "NGO collaboration," "university clubs," "communication gap," "lack of encouragement."

- Benefits: “confidence,” “communication skills,” “socialization,” “personal development,” “community contribution.”
 - Barriers: “insufficient promotion,” “trust issues,” “limited activities.”
 - Future: “environmental policies,” “awareness campaigns,” “event organization,” “social media.”
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1. Identification of the university’s cooperation with the environment and its awareness among students?

Summary: Participants highlighted that Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University’s cooperation with NGOs on environmental issues is minimal, with students largely unaware of such activities. University clubs undertake small-scale initiatives like tree planting and animal feeding, but external NGOs have limited engagement with the campus. Awareness of environmental issues and NGO activities remains low due to insufficient communication and promotion.

Analysis:

- **Cooperation Status:** The discussions revealed a consensus that NGO-led environmental activities at the university are scarce or unnoticed. Participant 5 (Group 1) noted that some university clubs organize tree planting and animal feeding events, but external NGOs rarely collaborate with the university. Participant 1 (Group 4) mentioned a single tree-planting event as an exception, stating, “Last year, there was a tree-planting event with an NGO, but I haven’t seen much else.” Similarly, Participant 9 (Group 3) described NGOs’ impact on the university as “insufficient,” emphasizing the lack of visible initiatives. Participant 2 (Group 4) added, “In my years here, I haven’t seen much change; pollution around the campus is increasing, and NGOs aren’t doing much.”
- **Student Awareness:** Students’ lack of awareness about NGOs and their environmental roles was a recurring theme. Participant 1 (Group 1) stated, “Most students don’t even know what an NGO is unless they take a specific course.” Participant 3 (Group 1) attributed low awareness to inadequate event promotion, saying, “Even if events happen, we don’t hear about them.” Participant 7 (Group 3) criticized NGOs’ promotional efforts, noting, “I think NGOs are weak in advertising; I don’t know what they do.” Participant 1 (Group 4) echoed this, estimating that “at least 20% of students in our faculty don’t know what NGO stands for.”
- **Local Context:** The Kaz Mountains, a local environmental issue, was mentioned as an area where NGOs could raise awareness. Participant 4 (Group 1) suggested that NGOs could use “social media or posters to draw attention to issues like the Kaz Mountains,” but noted that such efforts are absent on campus. Participant 3 (Group 3) highlighted the role of NGOs in raising awareness about forest fires and waste management in rural areas, indicating potential for similar initiatives at the university.

Reporting: Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University’s cooperation with NGOs on environmental issues is notably limited, with minimal engagement from external NGOs. University clubs

organize occasional activities like tree planting and animal feeding, but these are small-scale and insufficiently promoted. Students exhibit low awareness of NGO activities and environmental issues, largely due to inadequate communication and promotion by both the university and NGOs. Local issues like the Kaz Mountains present opportunities for awareness campaigns, but no significant efforts have been observed. To enhance cooperation and awareness, the university should strengthen NGO partnerships, improve event promotion through social media, and integrate environmental education into its curriculum.

2. Identified benefits and added value from this collaboration

Summary: Collaboration with NGOs enhances students' social skills (confidence, communication, socialization, teamwork), fosters environmental consciousness, and instills a sense of community contribution. Specific activities like search-and-rescue training, waste collection, and music courses provide practical skills and personal growth. However, these benefits are limited at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University due to the scarcity of NGO activities and weak collaboration.

Analysis:

- **Social Skills Development:** Participants emphasized that NGO activities significantly boost social skills. Participant 4 (Group 1) described joining a search-and-rescue team, stating, "I learned to use heavy machinery and gained disaster awareness, which built my confidence." Participant 6 (Group 2) shared, "I have social anxiety, but participating in a seminar with role-playing helped me overcome it." Participant 1 (Group 4) noted that NGOs assigning tasks to students fosters confidence, saying, "When NGOs give students responsibilities, it makes them feel capable." Participant 3 (Group 2) added, "I felt useful during NGO events, which was a new kind of happiness."
- **Environmental Consciousness:** NGO activities contribute to environmental awareness. Participant 1 (Group 1) recounted a waste collection event, saying, "I learned that a plastic bag takes 25 years to decompose, which changed how I view littering." Participant 3 (Group 3) highlighted NGOs' role in post-forest fire awareness, noting, "In my hometown, NGOs helped people understand the importance of forests, and society became more conscious." Participant 5 (Group 1) suggested that NGOs could educate students about the harms of packaged foods, promoting sustainable consumption.
- **Community Contribution:** The sense of contributing to society was a major benefit. Participant 1 (Group 4) described working with Kızılay and Yeşilay, stating, "Knowing I'm making a difference in areas like women's or children's rights makes me happy." Participant 2 (Group 4) found waste collection and tree planting "fulfilling," adding, "It feels good to learn something and meet new people." Participant 4 (Group 2) noted that NGO events helped them overcome social anxiety and connect with others, enhancing their sense of belonging.
- **Limitations:** The scarcity of NGO activities limits these benefits. Participant 5 (Group 1) remarked, "NGOs could offer more, but their weak collaboration with the university restricts these opportunities." Participant 1 (Group 4) noted that faculty-specific engagement (e.g.,

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences) is particularly low, reducing the reach of these benefits.

Reporting: Collaboration with NGOs offers significant benefits, including enhanced social skills (confidence, communication, socialization, teamwork), increased environmental consciousness, and a sense of community contribution. Activities like search-and-rescue training, waste collection, and music courses provide practical skills and personal growth, while fostering sustainable behaviors. However, at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, these benefits are constrained by the limited number of NGO activities and weak university-NGO collaboration. To maximize added value, the university should facilitate more NGO-led events, integrate students into these initiatives, and promote activities through social media to ensure broader participation.

3. Barriers identified

Summary: Key barriers to university-NGO collaboration include inadequate promotion, weak university-NGO partnerships, lack of trust, limited activities, and students' unfamiliarity with NGOs. The university's failure to encourage collaboration and NGOs' inability to engage students effectively exacerbate these challenges.

Analysis:

- **Inadequate Promotion:** Participants frequently cited poor promotion as a barrier. Participant 3 (Group 1) stated, "Events might happen, but we're not informed, so participation is low." Participant 7 (Group 3) criticized NGOs, saying, "Their advertising is weak; I don't know what activities they do." Participant 4 (Group 4) noted, "If even active students like me don't hear about NGO events, their outreach is clearly insufficient."
- **Weak University-NGO Partnerships:** The university's lack of support for NGO collaboration was a common concern. Participant 1 (Group 1) remarked, "The university doesn't encourage NGO partnerships, possibly due to budget issues or political priorities." Participant 2 (Group 2) stated, "The university does nothing to promote NGO collaboration; clubs are more active." Participant 6 (Group 3) mentioned only seeing Kızılay during orientation week, with no follow-up engagement.
- **Lack of Trust:** Trust issues deterred participation. Participant 4 (Group 3) shared, "I pull back when I see NGOs underperforming; it's disappointing." Participant 1 (Group 4) described NGOs as having "closed circles," stating, "Newcomers struggle to integrate because NGOs don't embrace them warmly." Participant 6 (Group 3) echoed this, noting, "Trust is a big issue; I haven't joined NGOs because I'm unsure about their effectiveness."
- **Limited Activities:** The scarcity of NGO activities on campus was a significant barrier. Participant 5 (Group 1) said, "I don't see NGO events around the university." Participant 2 (Group 4) observed, "Pollution is increasing, but NGOs aren't addressing it." Participant 9 (Group 3) bluntly stated, "NGOs have no impact here."
- **Unfamiliarity with NGOs:** Many students lack basic knowledge about NGOs. Participant 1 (Group 1) noted, "Students don't know what NGOs are without specific courses." Participant

1 (Group 4) estimated, “20% of our faculty doesn’t understand the term NGO, especially in departments like finance or banking.”

Reporting: Barriers to university-NGO collaboration include inadequate promotion, weak university-NGO partnerships, lack of trust, limited activities, and students’ unfamiliarity with NGOs. Poor event promotion and communication gaps prevent students from engaging with NGOs, while the university’s failure to foster partnerships—potentially due to budget or political constraints—limits collaboration. Trust issues arise from NGOs’ perceived inefficacy and exclusionary group dynamics. The scarcity of campus activities and students’ lack of NGO knowledge further hinder participation. To overcome these barriers, the university should enhance NGO outreach through social media, establish formal collaboration channels, and educate students about NGOs through workshops and curriculum integration.

4. Desired future directions on Universities' role in shaping environmental policies

Summary: Participants urged universities to play a proactive role in shaping environmental policies by fostering stronger NGO partnerships, organizing awareness campaigns, addressing local issues (e.g., stray animals, air pollution), and integrating NGOs into campus life. Suggestions included environmental seminars, recycling projects, social events, and curriculum enhancements to promote sustainable practices.

Analysis:

- **Stronger NGO Partnerships:** Participants emphasized the need for robust university-NGO collaboration. Participant 1 (Group 1) suggested, “NGOs could organize social events on campus to boost environmental awareness, like workshops for younger students.” Participant 2 (Group 4) proposed, “The university could work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for environmental projects.” Participant 4 (Group 1) added, “NGOs could lead large-scale events like tree planting if the university supports them.”
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Environmental seminars and campaigns were frequently recommended. Participant 5 (Group 1) stated, “NGOs could educate us about the harms of packaged foods to promote sustainable consumption.” Participant 7 (Group 3) suggested, “NGOs should raise awareness about campus cleanliness and greenery.” Participant 6 (Group 2) noted, “Seminars on climate issues sparked my interest; more of these would engage students.”
- **Local Issue Focus:** Participants highlighted local environmental challenges. Participant 4 (Group 3) pointed to Biga’s air pollution and stray animal issues, saying, “NGOs should address these with university support.” Participant 3 (Group 4) emphasized stray animals, stating, “I’ve been a victim of stray dogs; NGOs need to work on this.” Participant 4 (Group 3) also mentioned waste issues in Ağaköy, noting, “We cleaned up trash there, but NGOs should take the lead.”
- **Practical Projects:** Recycling and creative initiatives were proposed. Participant 4 (Group 1) suggested, “NGOs could make toys from recycled materials to attract attention.” Participant 1 (Group 1) proposed a points-based recycling machine, saying, “A machine where you deposit

bottles for rewards could encourage recycling.” Participant 6 (Group 3) called for “practical projects over just awareness, so students can act.”

- **Curriculum Integration:** Enhancing the curriculum to include NGO collaboration was recommended. Participant 2 (Group 4) shared, “A volunteering course taught me how to communicate with institutions; more such courses would help.” Participant 3 (Group 4) noted, “I’ll take a course next semester that includes NGO work, but it should be available earlier.”

Reporting: Participants envision universities taking a proactive role in shaping environmental policies through stronger NGO partnerships, awareness campaigns, practical projects, and curriculum enhancements. Collaboration with NGOs can drive large-scale environmental initiatives, while seminars and social media campaigns can boost student engagement. Addressing local issues like air pollution, stray animals, and waste management in Biga is critical, with NGOs leading practical projects like recycling and creative reuse. Integrating NGO collaboration into the curriculum, through courses and workshops, will equip students to contribute to sustainable policies. By fostering these directions, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University can become a leader in environmental policy development, both locally and beyond.

Confidential Annexes (Uploaded to the Archive Folder)

- 1- Participant List
- 2- Presentation/s
- 3- If possible, video records
- 4- Screenshots (showing the number of participants)
- 5- Efficient practices that the participants offered
- 6- Transcription records (in English)