



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

2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000161639

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW REPORT

POLAND



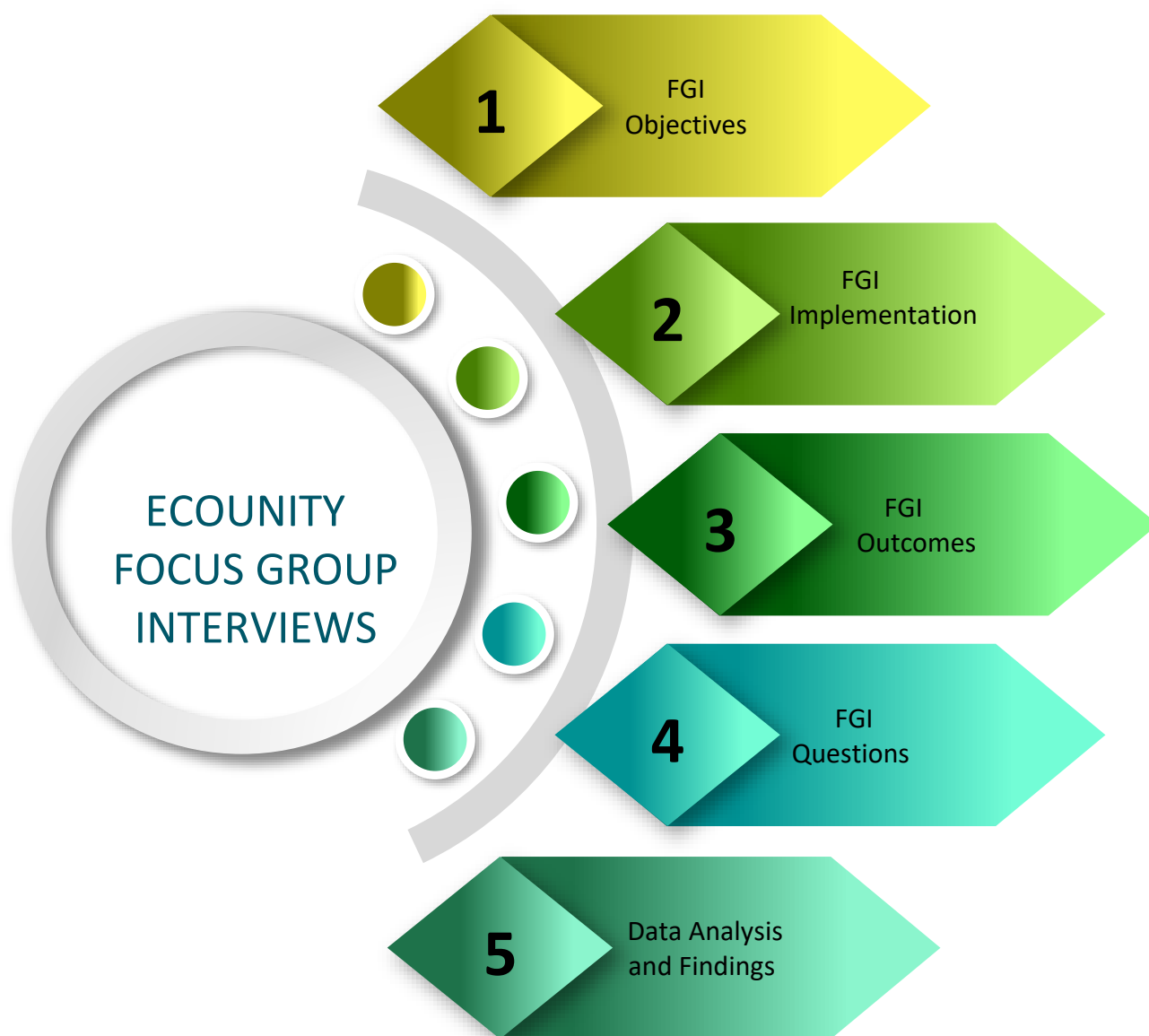
Co-funded by
the European Union



UNIRI



FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW REPORT



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 stage 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 work 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 three focus group interviews with HEI employees, NGO and local authority representatives and students, the data is 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:** Partners encourage participants for focused discussions based on prepared questions.
- **Data collection:** Partners capture key insights and ideas from discussions using designated note-takers, voice recorders, or collaborative online tools.
- **Wrap-up and feedback:** Partners 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 three 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

Students: Suggestion: first, explain the role of local actors including NGOs, soft skills and types of SGD problems to students briefly.

1. What are your current environmental activities, soft skills, and what type of SGD problems you would like to solve?
2. What is the motivation for the cooperation and involvement of NGOs in education at your university? Which soft skills would the cooperation with NGOs help to improve? What type of activities do you prefer?
3. How/If does the university support the cooperation with NGOs and what are the barriers?

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

FGI Process and the Data Collected

FGI with Students

FGI Date: 10.02.2025

Venue: Faculty of Economics and Sociology, University of Lodz

Online/Face to Face/Hybrid: Face to Face

Number of Participants: Female (15) Male (5) Total (20)

Questions posed to the participants	Themes	Sub-Themes	The excerpts of participants
Q1: What are your current environmental activities, soft skills, and what type of SGD problems you would like to solve?	1.Environmental Activities 2. Soft Skills 3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Problems	1.1 Segregating waste; Shopping in second-hand stores; Using public transportation 1.2 Communication; Empathy; Creativity; Problem solving; Teamwork 1.3 Burning waste; Dumping garbage in forests; Abandoning waste on the streets	P(1): (...)Well, such a general garbage segregation daily to put it in the proper containers(...); (...)Reusing some things, such as buying clothes in second-hand stores, is also a form of recycling. After all, instead of throwing them away, we give them a second life, and they don't end up in the garbage. (...); (...)This daily choice of bus instead of car when you need to get somewhere also makes a difference. Of course, the car is more convenient, but the bus is a form of mass transportation - more people travel by one means of transport, less fuel is burned, and it's more environmentally friendly (...); (...) maybe at least lower the price of tickets, we do have discounted tickets, but they could be lowered

			<p>further, especially for young people, students (...)</p> <p>P(2): (...) the ability to talk and convince others, for example, to segregate garbage or take environmental action (...); (...)</p> <p>Interpersonal communication; NGOs often require teamwork and interaction with different groups of people (...)</p> <p>P(3): (...) You can see it often because people can even stop their cars, throw garbage on the street, and drive away. It's not individual garbage but whole bags, which is awful (...); (...)</p> <p>Exactly, I noticed the same thing. I live on the city's outskirts, and the road by the forest often looks like this, where I find up to 10 black bags of garbage. I don't know what this is due to - whether people don't have money for garbage collection or whether they don't segregate and think it's easier to throw it in the forest without thinking about how it harms the environment (...)</p>
<p>Q2: What is the motivation for the cooperation and involvement of NGOs in education at your university? Which soft skills would the cooperation with NGOs help to improve? What type of activities do you prefer?</p>	<p>1. Motivation for Cooperation with NGOs</p> <p>2. Soft Skills Development</p> <p>3. Preferred Activities</p>	<p>2.1 Development of social and environmental awareness; Opportunity to gain work experience</p> <p>2.2 Interpersonal communication; Teamwork and group cooperation; Organizational skills; Empathy; Problem solving and creative thinking</p> <p>2.3 Training and workshops; Participation in educational and social campaigns; Organizing events; Volunteering and</p>	<p>P(1): (...) More environmentally friendly training and places at the faculty, more greenery, and fewer parking lots are needed. Student actions related to plants and tree planting. Discounts on tickets from the authorities. We are not interested in contact with organizations or internships. There will be less interest if we don't have the benefits (...);</p>

		community projects	<p>P(2): (...) That's why teamwork in such situations is crucial: group members get along more quickly and motivate each other (...).</p> <p>P(3): (...) Maybe some kind of event, such that it would be a warm, pleasant day, something like that. I don't know how to define it, but it's about an event that would take place at the university (...); For example, for completing a particular task or achieving a goal in a given competition, a set amount would be credited to the account of such an organization. In this way, the more people participate and complete a task, the more funds could be donated to environmental protection (...); (...) Involving sponsors for such an event is essential not to burden the university financially. This way, the funds for organizing these competitions would come from external sources, and the university could only support this logistically and organizationally (...); (...) I think of internships and apprenticeships because we must do them anyway. Some people would volunteer for such programs. Conferences and workshops, on the other hand, are average; instead, these student volunteer programs could convince others more (...).</p>
Q3: How/If does the university support the cooperation with NGOs	1. Forms of University Support for NGO Cooperation	3.1 Organizing environmental and social initiatives (garbage	P(1): (...) The university already has things organized that make it

<p>and what are the barriers?</p>	<p>2. Barriers to Effective Cooperation 3. Recommendations for Improvement</p>	<p>segregation, clothing collection, clothing exchanges); Opportunities for internships and apprenticeships in NGOs; Support by providing space for NGO events; Incentives for students, e.g. certificates for resumes; Organization of environmental and educational events 3.2 Lack of motivation for students to get involved in NGOs (overload of responsibilities, lack of interest); Insufficient number of students willing to cooperate; Bureaucracy and inflexibility in administrative processes of the university; Limited funds for joint projects 3.3 Introduce more attractive incentives for students (e.g., ECTS points, internships); Improve communication between the university and NGOs; Simplify administrative processes; Support student initiatives</p>	<p>easier for us to take care of the environment daily, such as separating trash. There are special garbage cans where you can put paper, plastic or other waste. In addition, there are bike racks by the T building allow you to park your bike comfortably and safely without worrying about something happening to it. These are good beginnings, and initiatives are already in place to help care for the environment (...); P(2): (...) lack of student motivation. This is at the top of the list (...); (...) Bureaucracy is because university administrative processes can make it challenging to establish cooperation quickly (...); P(3): (...) Organizations will have employees, and we can benefit from internships (...); (...) having cooperation centres, students could come up with initiatives on their own and implement them, as well as find funds for such projects. By force, they would undoubtedly be more willing to undertake such solutions (...).</p>
-----------------------------------	--	--	---

Q1:

During the discussion, students pointed to several key actions to protect the environment. Waste segregation was mentioned as one of the most important actions, and it is an integral part of everyday life, both in households and larger residential communities. In addition, students highlighted second-hand shopping. This type of shopping contributes to reducing the consumption of new products, which positively impacts the environment, reducing the production of clothing and reducing textile

waste. The topic of environmental education was also raised during the discussion. The students mentioned participating in various ecological initiatives from an early age. In kindergarten and elementary school, they were taught about water conservation, waste segregation and recycling, among other things. Popular actions were the collection of plastic caps and wastepaper to promote responsible management of raw materials. It was noted that such activities increase environmental awareness and form pro-environmental habits from an early age.

Most students choose public transportation, such as buses and streetcars, instead of car travel. They stressed that public transportation helps reduce emissions and urban congestion. However, many students still use cars, especially when in need of commuting from places to served well by public transportation, which is time-consuming or inconvenient. Some choose to combine different modes of transportation – first commuting by car to one part of the city and then switching to the bus. Alternative means of transportation, such as bicycles, were also discussed. It was noted that the number of bicyclists increases on warmer days, but currently, few students choose this form of transportation. Rewards and incentive programs were suggested to be introduced, such as a system of stamps or gadgets for those who use bicycles, scooters or public transportation. Such initiatives could encourage young people to choose greener solutions. The students also discussed the need for cooperation between local authorities and universities to improve the accessibility and comfort of public transportation. Among the suggestions were lowering ticket prices or introducing free public transportation for students. It was stressed that the cost of travel could be an additional financial burden, making those with cars more likely to choose this mode of transportation. The problem of long commute times was also pointed out – some out-of-town students travel by public transportation for even more than an hour, while it takes them much less time by car. Students noted that introducing more significant discounts on tickets, as in the case of the PKP (Polish largest railroad company), could be an effective form of support for students and, at the same time, an incentive to use public transportation.

Participants highlighted also several serious problems that hurt the environment around them. One of the more serious environmental problems in some regions is the practice of burning waste, which harms health and the entire ecosystem. Another problem is littering, where cigarette butts, cans and other waste often end up on the streets, especially in areas where events are held. This is particularly evident on the outskirts of cities, where residents are less inclined to keep things tidy. Meeting

participants also pointed out the widespread problem of dumping waste in forests, which is particularly harmful in less developed areas, where many people dispose of waste this way, with disastrous environmental consequences. Finally, dumping waste on the streets is also common, especially among people unwilling or unable to pay for garbage collection. This kind of problem requires decisive action and education about environmental responsibility. Students decided that the most critical areas of environmental action they would like to address are pollution and sustainable production and consumption.

During the meeting, the students stressed the importance of several key soft skills needed to implement environmental change and work with NGOs successfully. First and foremost, it was pointed out that communication is key in convincing others to take pro-environmental actions. Expressing one's arguments clearly and persuasively is essential in educational activities. Participants in the meeting also pointed out the role of empathy, which makes it possible to understand the needs of others and actively listen to their opinions. This makes cooperation more effective, and the actions taken impact the lives and attitudes of others. Empathy also helps reduce resistance to change and build positive relationships. Another essential element is creativity and problem-solving skills, especially in NGOs, which often require innovative approaches to environmental issues. Finally, students stressed the importance of teamwork since environmental activities often require group cooperation. Working in a team, sharing ideas and motivating others to act is essential to achieving environmental goals. A team can also influence individuals by helping them adjust their behaviour to pro-environmental norms.

Q2:

Students' motivation to cooperate and involve NGOs in education at the university depends mainly on the form and attractiveness of the activities. Many indicate that traditional methods, such as posters or lengthy emails, do not attract their attention. Instead, students prefer more interactive and engaging initiatives, such as workshops, contests or events that are short, understandable and tailored to their interests. The idea of earning ECTS credits for participating in NGO workshops was well received, as it would combine learning with practical experience. Students agreed that additional motivation, in the form of concrete benefits, would encourage more people to participate. They stressed that few people engage selflessly – if tangible rewards, such as ECTS credits, gadgets or certificates, could be earned for participating in green projects, interest would increase significantly.

Working with NGOs could also help students develop soft skills such as communication, teamwork, creativity, project management and organizational skills. Some students indicated they would be more willing to engage in activities if they were more hands-on, based on direct involvement and experience. They noted that organizing environmental events, such as tree planting or pro-environmental competitions, would impact participants more than theoretical lectures. Some noted that despite the need for such initiatives, the prevailing belief is often “someone else will do it for me.” They also pointed out that the lack of interest in NGOs may be due to how information is presented – repetitive patterns make the topics boring, and the content is quickly forgotten. Therefore, to effectively encourage students to cooperate, it is necessary to diversify the forms of activities and provide real benefits, such as ECTS points or valuable prizes.

In conclusion, students showed openness to cooperation with NGOs, provided the initiatives were engaging, practical and attractive. Cooperation should be tailored to their needs and combine education with real action to effectively and actively motivate young people to participate to benefit the environment.

Q3:

According to the students, the university can support cooperation with NGOs in various ways, although it faces some barriers to effective partnerships. Students noted that environmental and social initiatives, such as segregating garbage, collecting clothes and organizing environmentally friendly events, such as clothes swaps, are implemented in their department. The university can also support organizations by providing students with internships and placements, allowing them to become more involved in NGOs’ activities. Additional incentives, such as such as certificates or earning ECTS credits for participating in green projects, could make cooperation more attractive. Students pointed to the need to improve the university's ecology and sustainable transportation infrastructure. There was a proposal to increase the number of bicycle racks.

A system of free bicycles and scooters for students was also suggested, with their availability controlled by student ID, like other transportation applications. It would also be necessary for this system to be linked to the dean's office and consider only current ID cards. It was also suggested that university spaces could be transformed into more green areas. Students suggested greening existing parking spaces and adding benches, which could positively impact the aesthetics and comfort of being

on campus. The need to install charging stations for electric cars was also pointed out, as although few students currently use them, this could change.

Regarding environmental education, it was stressed that standard methods of communicating information, such as emails and posters, are ineffective. Students indicated that interesting emails written in an engaging way or recommendations from lecturers with whom they have good memories could be more motivating. An additional incentive could be optional classes related to environmental topics, which students could choose according to their interests. In summary, key actions by universities should include not only cooperation with NGOs for internships and apprenticeships but also implementing more innovative and engaging forms of education and improving infrastructure to support green forms of transportation. According to students, there will be more interest in such initiatives if they are combined with tangible benefits, such as ECTS credits, certificates or direct facilities on campus.

The main barriers to cooperation between universities and NGOs include several factors. First is the lack of motivation among students – many are unwilling to get involved in NGO projects, often due to a lack of interest or an excess of responsibilities, leading to such initiatives' marginalization. Another barrier is the insufficient number of people willing to cooperate. Even if a small group of students are interested, they do not have enough clout to attract larger organizations. NGOs, with limited resources, are reluctant to get involved if they don't have enough support. In addition, bureaucracy and inflexibility in the university's administrative processes can make it much more challenging to establish cooperation quickly.

Another problem is the lack of funding, which limits the ability to develop projects with NGOs. Finally, a mismatch of goals between the university and NGOs can be problematic. Common goals are key to making cooperation effective and successful. Students believe that to improve collaboration between universities and NGOs, there should be more flexibility in organizing activities, attractive student incentives, and enhanced communication. They also point to the need to simplify administrative processes, allowing cooperation to be established more quickly. In conclusion, the university can support this cooperation, but it faces challenges related to bureaucracy, lack of student motivation, and financial constraints.

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- Brief press news about the FGIs (both in English and in your native language)
- 6- Efficient practices that the participants offered.
- 7- Transcription records (in English)