2025

Sustainability **Report**



ÖZYEĞİN UNIVERSITY

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Executive Summary

This second Sustainability Impact Report of Özyeğin University (OzU) presents the institutional sustainability framework guiding the University's strategic direction, operational priorities, and measurable objectives through 2029. Building on the baseline established in the previous reporting cycle, it documents progress achieved across five years of implementation while establishing the governance structures, mechanisms, and performance indicators that will shape the next phase of institutional action.

Sustainability is embedded as a core institutional principle across academic, research, operational, and societal engagement functions. The framework is organized around five strategic pillars — Transformative Education; Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation; Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion; Environment and Climate Action; and Social Empowerment and Local Development — and one cross-cutting governance dimension: Governance and Institutional Impact. Together, these pillars and the governance dimension provide a coordinated institutional architecture that translates commitments into operational practice and measurable outcomes.

Beginning in 2026, the University will transition to an annual sustainability impact reporting cycle, monitoring performance against defined Key Performance Indicators, documenting evidence-based outcomes, and supporting continuous institutional improvement. This shift from initiative-based implementation to fully integrated institutional practice reflects the University's commitment to transparency, accountability, and data-informed governance.

Leadership Message

Between 2020 and 2025, Özyeğin University published its first carbon and water footprint reports, rmaintained its position as the foundation university with the highest social impact in Türkiye in the THE Impact Rankings, achieved LEED certification for three campus buildings, and launched the Social Impact Seed Fund to connect research directly with community needs. These are not isolated milestones, they are evidence of a sustainability framework that has matured from individual initiatives into an integrated institutional practice.

Universities are uniquely positioned to address global challenges through knowledge production, innovation, and societal engagement and with that position comes responsibility. At Özyeğin University, sustainability is not a parallel agenda; it is embedded within the core of institutional planning, decision-making, and performance evaluation.

This report documents both the progress achieved since the previous reporting cycle and the strategic framework that will guide action through 2029. The five pillars and cross-cutting governance dimension work in concert to align academic priorities, research capacity, operational management, and external partnerships, enabling the University to generate contributions to sustainable development that are measurable, verifiable, and continuously improving.

The institutional approach is guided by three principles. First, commitments must be measurable, supported by clearly defined targets, indicators, and monitoring systems. Second, implementation must be systemic, ensuring that sustainability considerations are integrated across institutional structures rather than confined to individual initiatives. Third, progress must be collaborative, relying on engagement with students, faculty, administrative units, industry partners, public institutions, and communities.

The inclusion of Governance and Institutional Impact as a cross-cutting dimension reflects a deliberate institutional choice; sustained progress in sustainability cannot rest on individual initiatives or motivated champions alone. It requires robust frameworks, transparent oversight, and accountable leadership embedded in the organization's everyday functioning.

This report constitutes the strategic foundation for the next phase of institutional development. Beginning with the 2026 annual reporting cycle, progress against the targets set out here will be tracked, evaluated, and publicly disclosed, ensuring that the commitments made in these pages translate into verifiable, year-on-year improvement.

About This Report

Purpose and Scope

This report represents the University's second comprehensive sustainability disclosure and a further stage in the development of its institutional sustainability framework. While documenting progress since the previous reporting cycle, its primary function is to define the strategic structure that will guide sustainability integration across all university functions through 2029.

A Strategy-Driven Approach

The report is designed as a strategic instrument rather than a compliance-focused disclosure. It demonstrates how sustainability is embedded within institutional mission and planning processes, translated into five strategic pillars and one cross-cutting governance dimension, and operationalized through measurable objectives, governance arrangements, and accountability mechanisms. This structure establishes a transparent baseline against which progress will be systematically evaluated in subsequent reporting periods.

Stakeholder Engagement and Materiality

The strategic framework and five impact pillars presented in this report were not determined through a top-down planning process. They emerged from a structured Social Impact Mapping Study conducted in 2025, which engaged the University's internal stakeholders through four complementary methods: 31 semi-structured in-depth interviews with administrative unit managers, faculty deans, and researchers; 68 Social Impact Cards completed by administrative units and student clubs; an SDG-based coding exercise mapping approximately 1,000 institutional activities; and a media and communications analysis of public-facing materials. Findings were analysed thematically to identify the areas where ÖzÜ's capacity, track record, and stakeholder expectations converge most strongly, producing the five material impact themes that structure this report. To ensure these insights translate into sustained institutional action, the University established the Social Impact Committee, a cross-institutional governance body responsible for integrating impact data into decision-making and coordinating the annual reporting cycle beginning in 2026.

Transition to Annual Impact Reporting

Beginning in 2026, the University will implement an annual impact-focused reporting cycle. Future reports will monitor progress against established KPIs, document measurable results across institutional domains, assess challenges and adaptive responses, and maintain alignment with strategic commitments. This evolution reflects a deliberate transition from project-based implementation toward institutionalized sustainability governance.

Framework Alignment and Reporting Basis

The institutional sustainability strategy is informed by internationally recognized frameworks — including the GRI Standards, the UN Global Compact, PRME, and the UI GreenMetric, as well as national development priorities that support benchmarking, comparability, and accountability. This report emphasizes strategic articulation rather than full compliance disclosure, while incorporating key principles derived from these global standards and management systems. Participation in international benchmarking initiatives further supports external validation and continuous improvement.

Report Structure

The report is organized to provide strategic clarity and institutional context through the following sections:

Executive Summary and Leadership Message

About This Report

Report Structure

1. Five-Year Achievement Highlights (2020–2025)
2. Context and Strategic Alignment
3. Sustainability Strategy and Strategic Pillars
4. Conclusion: From Commitment to Continuity

1. Five-Year Achievement Highlights (2020–2025)

2020

2020 marked a turning point for Özyeğin University: for the first time, sustainability was systematically measured and transparently reported at the institutional level. The University published its first Sustainability Report in line with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards. Receiving the Zero Waste Certificate and ranking first among foundation universities in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings in the same year confirmed that early commitments were already producing tangible results.

2021

In 2021, sustainability governance was further strengthened with a growing emphasis on social impact and community engagement. Özyeğin University was recognized as the "Foundation University with the Highest Social Impact in Türkiye" in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, third time in a row confirming its leadership in social sustainability. The initiation of annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reporting and the establishment of sustainability-focused student clubs contributed to a more participatory and inclusive sustainability culture across campus.

2022

The year 2022 was characterized by deeper alignment with international standards and an expanded academic contribution to sustainability. As a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact, Özyeğin University published its Enhanced Communication on Progress in line with international frameworks including GRI, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. During the same period, the Erasmus+ ATTUNE (Activate the University for Climate Change) project was launched, and new interdisciplinary courses addressing climate change, energy transition, and plastic pollution were integrated into the curriculum. Meanwhile the Horizon Europe LEGOFIT (Adaptable technological solutions based on early design actions for the construction and renovation of Energy Positive Homes) Project aims to develop, implement, and validate advanced, dynamic, and holistic approaches to creating Energy Positive Homes. The initiative focuses on scalable and replicable smart solutions for both new construction and renovation processes.

2023

In 2023, institutional structures supporting environmental and social sustainability were further consolidated. Özyeğin University became the first university in Türkiye to publish a Water Footprint Report, strengthening transparency in natural resource management. The establishment of the Social Sustainability Lab and the Discrimination and Violence Prevention Unit, alongside receiving the title of “Foundation University with the Highest Social Impact in Türkiye” for the fifth time in the THE Impact Rankings, reflected a mature and integrated approach to sustainability.

2024

The year 2024 represented a phase of institutional integration and operational excellence in sustainability. The University obtained ISO 50001 Energy Management System Certification, embedding energy efficiency into formal management practices, while the Gender Equality Office was reorganized under a broader social sustainability framework and the second five-year Gender Equality Action Plan was published. Maintaining first place among foundation universities in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings and establishing the Sustainability and QHSE Department further reinforced Özyeğin University’s holistic and long-term sustainability governance.

2025

In 2025, Özyeğin University significantly expanded its sustainability impact through capacity building, new certifications, and deepened community partnerships. The University delivered SKD (Business Council for Sustainable Development Türkiye) training, completed a comprehensive sustainability education inventory, renewed its UN Global Compact Communication on Progress, finalized its Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) report, and implemented joint training programs with municipalities. ISO 9001 Quality Management System and ISO 46001 Water Efficiency Management System certifications were achieved, reinforcing the University's commitment to quality, efficiency, and responsible resource management. Özyeğin University became the only institution in Türkiye to receive the 2025 British Safety Council International Safety Award. Furthermore, strategic progress was marked by a protocol with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) regarding Agricultural Heritage Systems; a research project dedicated to women's cooperatives in the Eastern Black Sea; the 'University Empowering the Future of Women' award presented to the ÖzÜ Gender Office; and the launch of the Seed Fund Programs.



Özyeğin University has developed a Social Impact Mapping framework to systematically categorize, monitor, and align the societal value generated across its core functions with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By establishing a structured inventory of projects, research, and community engagement efforts, the University ensures that its contributions to sustainability are documented, tracked, and integrated into its core planning processes.

The mapping methodology involves a multi-dimensional analysis of activities across the University's five strategic pillars, using specific indicators to map internal data against SDG targets. This enables the identification of thematic clusters where institutional efforts are most concentrated and ensures that social impact data feeds directly into institutional reporting and governance cycles, providing a reliable, longitudinal reference for performance evaluation.

The Social Impact Map functions as a centralized data infrastructure supporting both evidence-based reporting and institutional decision-making. It enables the University to identify strengths, evaluate progress, and ensure that sustainability commitments translate into trackable outcomes, strengthening accountability for internal governance and external transparency alike.

To ensure the effective management and sustainability of these mapped outcomes, the University has established a Social Impact Committee. This governance body oversees the integration of impact data into institutional decision-making processes. By aligning the University’s overarching strategic goals with its five core impact pillars—Transformative Education; Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation; Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion; Environment and Climate Action; and Social Empowerment and Local Development—the Committee enables a more coordinated and strategic approach to societal contribution. This structural alignment ensures that social impact is not treated as a series of isolated projects, but rather as a central component of the University’s long-term strategic direction.

2. Context & Strategic Alignment

2.1 Sustainability Integration Framework

Sustainability has become a defining condition for how societies, economies, and institutions operate. Climate volatility, resource scarcity, and deepening social inequalities now directly shape regulatory frameworks, stakeholder trust, funding priorities, workforce expectations, and institutional reputation. For higher education, this shift redefines the value proposition of the university, as institutions are now mandated not only to generate knowledge but to translate it into credible solutions, responsible innovation, and measurable public value.

For Özyeğin University, sustainability provides the strategic methodology to deliver this value. It serves as a decision lens that aligns our entrepreneurial research identity with societal needs through a structured integration of education, research, campus operations, and partnerships into a coherent set of priorities and outcomes. By treating sustainability as an operating system rather than a separate initiative, we strengthen our ability to address complex challenges through interdisciplinary work, accelerate innovation-to-impact pathways, and demonstrate accountability through transparent reporting.

Our entrepreneurial character is central to this alignment. We define entrepreneurship as the institutional capacity to turn evidence into action, the discipline of designing solutions that are not only theoretically sound but also implementable, ethically grounded, and scalable.

Consistent with this methodology, our sustainability strategy is operationalized through five interconnected strategic dimensions:

- **Research & Innovation Driver:** Sustainability acts as a driver for applied research and innovation. This strategic focus facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and the development of applicable solutions, including deep-tech ventures and policy frameworks, which translate scientific evidence into demonstrable societal benefit.
- **Transformational Education:** The educational objective extends beyond awareness to empowerment. The curriculum is designed to prepare students not only as responsible global citizens but as agile leaders and systems thinkers, equipped with the transversal competencies required to navigate and solve complex sustainability challenges in a volatile future.
- **Institutional Resilience:** Campus operations serve as a demonstration site for best practices. By ensuring the long-term financial, environmental, and social durability of the institution, the campus functions as a "Living Lab" of operational efficiency to demonstrate that resilient systems are both practical and replicable.
- **Value-Driven Innovation:** The entrepreneurial capacity is directed toward bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

- This involves fostering an ecosystem where innovation is measured not only by economic potential but by its contribution to sustainable development, ensuring that new technologies and business models generate public value.
- **Societal Engagement & Co-Creation:** The University adopts a participatory approach to social contribution. Rather than acting as a detached provider, the institution engages as an active partner in the local ecosystem to foster mutual learning and co-create solutions that strengthen community bonds and social equity.

2.2 Strategic Alignment: National & Global Frameworks

Özyeğin University's sustainability strategy is anchored in three complementary frameworks: the UN 2030 Agenda, Türkiye's 12th Development Plan (2024–2028), and the University's own Strategic Plan. Rather than treating these as parallel reporting obligations, ÖzU integrates them as mutually reinforcing drivers that shape its five strategic pillars and cross-cutting governance dimension.

At the global level, the University maps its contribution across four primary impact domains. Research addressing global challenges (SDG 9, 13, 17) prioritizes mission-oriented innovation to generate scalable solutions for climate resilience and industrial transformation. Quality education and gender equality (SDG 4, 5) reflects a commitment to inclusive, high-quality education that systematically bridges gender gaps in academia and professional life. Sustainable campus operations (SDG 7, 11, 12, 13) aim to transform the campus into a nationally recognized model of energy efficiency and circular economy practices. Social impact and partnerships (SDG 1, 3, 8, 10, 16, 17) leverage institutional and community engagement to reduce inequalities and drive regional socio-economic development.

At the national level, each strategic pillar is linked to the 12th Development Plan's priority themes: skills and inclusive education (Transformative Education), green and digital transformation (Entrepreneurship and Innovation), gender equality and wellbeing (Social Justice and Inclusion), resource efficiency and climate action (Environment and Climate Action), and regional development and local partnerships (Social Empowerment and Local Development).

Institutionally, these commitments are embedded in the University's Strategic Plan, where each pillar advances one of its strategic priorities: transformative education and an inclusive learning experience (Priority 2, Leading in Education and Student Experience), entrepreneurship, innovation, and digital transformation (Priority 1, Becoming an Entrepreneurial Research University), social justice, equity, wellbeing, and inclusion (Priority 3, Creating Value with All Our Students and Distinguished Alumni), environment and climate action (Priority 6, Increasing Our Global Impact), and social empowerment and local development (also Priority 6, through the University's wider social and economic impact). The cross-cutting governance dimension is anchored in Priority 7 (Creating Value through Excellence in Governance), ensuring that sustainability, ethics, and social impact are integrated into all core institutional processes, with year-on-year increases in ESG indicators tracked institution-wide and consistent performance in THE Impact Rankings and UI GreenMetric.

3. Sustainability Strategy and Strategic Pillars

3.1 Strategy Dashboard

Özyeğin University (OzU) defines social impact in line with its vision of becoming a "globally impactful entrepreneurial research university," as a collaborative, beyond-campus approach that generates transformative solutions to global challenges while creating systemic value with its stakeholders at local, national, and international levels. In this context, the university adopts a comprehensive approach to anticipate, measure, monitor, and manage its social impact, aligning its efforts with its sustainability strategy and ensuring they are evidence-based, ethical, human rights–oriented, measurable, and transparent. The social impact mapping exercise aims to make visible and systematically capture the university's broader impact ecosystem beyond education and research, analyze its current profile within the SDG framework, and provide a reference set to inform institutional social impact governance over the next five years. Based on data analysis and strategic planning processes, five main thematic pillars shaping the university's social impact vision have been identified: Transformative Education; Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation; Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion; Environment and Climate Action; and Social Empowerment and Local Development. These are complemented by a cross-cutting governance dimension that strengthens and integrates impact across all areas.



Impact Area	PILLAR-1 Transformative Education	PILLAR-2 Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation	PILLAR-3 Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion	PILLAR-4 Environment and Climate Action	PILLAR-5 Social Empowerment and Local Development
Strategic Objectives (2029)	Integrate sustainability content into 50% of total courses	Maintain 50% SDG alignment in research projects and secure ₺30M annually in external sustainability-focused research funding.	Construct a campus ecosystem and institutional policies and campus climate on the foundations of gender equality, accessibility, psychological safety, and human rights, positioning this culture as a model for external stakeholders.	Achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 through phased emissions reductions across Scope 1, 2, and 3, maintain Zero Waste certification, and position the campus as a nationally recognized model for circular economy practices and renewable energy adoption.	By 2029, strengthen the University's anchor-institution role by scaling place-based capacity-building, cooperative development, and social mobility pathways — tracked through measurable indicators covering trained practitioners, active partnerships, cooperative ecosystem strengthening, and high-impact social responsibility projects.
Primary SDG Linkages	SDG 4	SDG 9, SDG 13, SDG 17	SDG 1, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 16	SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13	SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 11
12th Development Plan Linkages	“Qualified people, strong family and healthy society" (skills, inclusive education)	"Competitive production through green and digital transformation" (green tech, innovation, entrepreneurship)	"Qualified people, strong family and healthy society" (gender equality, wellbeing, human rights)	"Disaster-resilient living spaces, sustainable environment" (resource efficiency, climate action)	"Disaster-resilient living spaces, sustainable environment" (regional development, local partnerships)
OzU Strategic Plan Linkages	Education quality and inclusive campus (Priority 2)	Entrepreneurship support and industry collaboration (Goal 17)	Social impact programs, scholarship expansion (Goal 16)	Environmental sustainability and efficiency (Goal 18)	Community engagement and industry partnerships (Impact priority)

Impact Area (Strategic Pillars)	PILLAR-1 Transformative Education	PILLAR-2 Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation	PILLAR-3 Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion	PILLAR-4 Environment and Climate Action	PILLAR-5 Social Empowerment and Local Development
Illustrative KPIs	Courses with integrated sustainability content (Baseline: 443; Target: 600) Student Satisfaction Survey — Sustainability Literacy Score (Baseline: 3.1/4; Target: ≥3.5/4) Graduate Competency Readiness Index — sustainability-relevant dimensions (Baseline: 3.6–3.8/5; Target: ≥4.0/5)	GYUE Ranking (Baseline: 6th; Target: Top Five) SDG-aligned research projects (Baseline: 54.7%; Target: >50% every year) External funding for sustainability research (Baseline: ₺5M; Target: ₺30M annually) Publications addressing SDGs (Baseline: 27%; Target: 40% of all Q1+Q2 publications)	EDIB Training Completion — staff (Baseline: 0%; Target: 100%) Gender Equality and Inclusive Campus Climate Score — Student Satisfaction Survey (Baseline: 3.1/4; Target: ≥3.5/4) Reporting Confidence Score — Student Satisfaction Survey (Baseline: 2.8–2.9/4; Target: ≥3.3/4)	Energy consumption per capita Target (2029): 10.57% reduction Water consumption per capita Target (2029): 7.76% reduction Waste generation per capita Target (2029): 12.61% reduction Greenhouse gas emissions Target (2029): 17.49% reduction	TGP Capacity-Building Reach: year-on-year increase in annual participants Number of cooperatives with completed diagnostic and development plans: year-on-year increase Number of people reached through cooperative partnerships: year-on-year increase
Cross-cutting Dimension	Governance By 2029, embed sustainability, ethics, and social impact into all core institutional processes — with year-on-year increases in sustainability budget allocation, a fully operational ESG dashboard, and consistently high performance in THE Impact Rankings and UI GreenMetric. SDG 16, SDG 17 Democratic good governance based on justice (accountability, transparency, civil society) Financial sustainability; efficient academic/admin processes (Goals 19–21) Sustainability budget allocation: year-on-year Number of ESG indicators tracked institution-wide (Baseline: 17; Target: ≥30)				

3.2 Strategic Pillars – Detailed Framework

Pillar 1: Transformative Education

Sustainability Strategy: Evolve the campus into a "Living Lab" where theoretical knowledge is systematically applied to address real-world social, environmental, and economic challenges, leveraging Özyeğin University's interdisciplinary academic structure, strong industry engagement, and project-based learning culture.



In the 2024–2025 academic year, 320 students from seven faculties engaged directly with the Nişantepe community through the Responsible Citizenship course — one of more than 440 courses now contributing to sustainability literacy across the curriculum.

Strategic Actions

1. Sustainability Literacy as a Core Learning Outcome Across All Undergraduate Programs



Özyeğin University embeds sustainability as a transversal competence across its transformative education model. Sustainability literacy, defined to include systems thinking, ethical responsibility, climate awareness, social equity, and responsible innovation, is integrated into program learning outcomes through curriculum revisions and assessment alignment. One of the Transformative Education Program's 10 major learning objectives directly addresses this: "taking an active role in addressing social needs and issues." The three outcomes beneath it focus on analyzing sustainability-related needs and problems, developing possible solutions, and formulating applicable project proposals. Several other objectives also carry sustainability-related outcomes, including ethical decision-making, empathic interaction, multidisciplinary and multicultural collaboration, and critical analysis of contemporary issues. All compulsory courses have been reviewed and aligned with these program outcomes. Since the 2020–2021 academic year, ENG101 and ENG102 have been delivered within the context of the SDGs, ensuring that students develop sustainability literacy alongside English language proficiency.

2. "Campus as a Living Lab" Learning Models

The OzU campus functions as a real-world experimentation space where students, faculty, and administrative units collaborate on sustainability challenges spanning energy efficiency, waste reduction, biodiversity, accessibility, and wellbeing. Campus operations, data, and infrastructure are integrated into coursework, studio projects, and capstone assignments. In the TRL202 Responsible Citizenship course, for example, students develop projects in multidisciplinary groups to address a social or environmental issue in their immediate surroundings, turning the campus and neighborhood into a living curriculum.

3. Student Club Engagement in Campus Sustainability Initiatives

Student clubs play a key role in translating sustainability strategy into action through awareness campaigns, social innovation projects, and hands-on initiatives implemented on campus and in surrounding communities.

- The university nurtures social awareness through the "OzU Care" volunteer umbrella, which connects students with vulnerable groups and social impact projects in the field.
- Experiential learning is fostered through student-led initiatives such as "MakeTogether", where multiple clubs collaborate on complex, interdisciplinary social challenges.
- Academic expertise is shared with the wider public through long-term certificate programs, such as the "Rural Development Expertise Program", reinforcing OzU's commitment to lifelong learning and societal contribution.

4. International Sustainability-Focused Learning Initiatives

Through international partnerships and EU-funded projects, such as ATTUNE, the university expands opportunities for students to engage in sustainability-oriented virtual exchanges, joint courses, and mobility programs. These initiatives strengthen global citizenship, intercultural competence, and comparative sustainability perspectives.

5. LMS-Next Informal Learning Platform

The OzU.Next platform offers online non-credit courses, self-paced or guided, to administrative and academic staff, students, and external stakeholders. It extends the University's sustainability learning offer beyond formal curricula: in recent cycles, a dedicated series of sustainability-focused online courses has been made available to the broader OzU community.

KPIs (Target 2029)

Strategic Objective: Integrate sustainability content into 50% of total courses and ensure that 70% of graduates demonstrate proficiency in sustainability literacy.

- **Courses with integrated sustainability content**

Baseline (2025): 443 (out of 1142)

Target (2029): 600 (out of 1142)

- **Student Satisfaction Survey Sustainability Literacy Score (Student-Reported Competency)**

Baseline (2025): 3.1/4 — derived from "OzU's success in developing sustainability awareness through courses and education content"

Target (2029): ≥ 3.5/4

- **Student Satisfaction Survey Graduate Competency Readiness Index**

Baseline (2025): 3.6–3.8/5 across core competencies (analytical thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, professional ethics, interdisciplinary work, lifelong learning)

Target (2029): ≥ 4.0/5 average across sustainability-relevant competency dimensions

Next Steps

Curriculum and Learning Outcomes

- **Sustainability Literacy Mapping:** Define clear learning outcomes and assessment tools; audit and map existing sustainability-related content across all programs.
- **Transformative Education Transcript:** Monitor student progress in compulsory courses and link club and community activities to program competencies for formal transcript recognition.
- **Faculty Development:** Deliver professional development on sustainability and design literacies; organize cross-unit knowledge-sharing sessions.
- **Applied Learning:** Implement studio and project-based courses with authentic problem sets provided by NGOs or local municipalities.

Student Engagement and Partnerships

- **Student Clubs Sustainability Impact Dashboard:** Design and launch the dashboard and student showcase to track and encourage club participation in sustainability initiatives.
- **External Collaboration:** Create structured opportunities for students and clubs to engage with NGOs, municipalities, cooperatives, and rural communities.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Expand sustainability-focused internships and project courses through partnerships with businesses, NGOs, and public institutions.

International Initiatives and Informal Learning

- **Social Mobility Track:** Align EFEB and similar scholarship ecosystems into a unified track integrating financial aid, mentoring, and international exchange opportunities.
- **External Funding:** Develop project proposals to secure external funding for international sustainability-focused learning initiatives.
- **OzU.Next Platform:** Offer self-paced online courses on sustainability competencies and recognize achievements in the Transformative Education Transcript.

Challenges

- **Curriculum Overload:** Resistance from departments and faculty makes it difficult to integrate sustainability without displacing existing content.
- **Discipline Alignment:** Linking sustainability literacy to discipline-specific learning outcomes requires ongoing negotiation across faculties.
- **Behavioral Change:** Moving students and staff from awareness to active, measurable sustainability behaviors is slow and difficult to assess.
- **Competency Measurement:** Evaluating complex sustainability competencies such as ethics and systems thinking requires assessment tools that are still being developed.
- **Teaching Capacity:** Limited sustainability literacy and project-based teaching skills among academic staff constrain the quality of implementation.
- **Data Access:** Restrictions on sharing campus operational data limit the depth of Living Lab integration into coursework.
- **External Partner Capacity:** Stakeholders such as NGOs and municipalities often have different timelines and limited capacity for sustained academic collaboration.
- **Student Turnover:** High annual turnover in student clubs and initiatives reduces continuity and institutional memory.
- **Resource Constraints:** Shortage of funds and human resources slows the development of digital platforms, monitoring systems, and international mobility opportunities.



Transformative Education Program and Competencies

Özyeğin University has developed a Transformative Education Program designed to ensure that every student graduates with a defined set of transversal competencies. The program aims to cultivate graduates who are committed to ethical values and social responsibility, who can think globally and communicate effectively in multicultural and multidisciplinary environments, and who are equipped to lead in business, entrepreneurship, and academia. It is structured around 10 major learning objectives, each with three associated outcomes, producing 30 program outcomes in total.

One of these learning objectives directly addresses sustainability literacy: "taking an active role in addressing social needs and issues." The three outcomes beneath this objective focus on analyzing sustainability-related needs and problems, developing possible solutions, and formulating applicable project proposals. Several other objectives also carry sustainability-related outcomes, including ethical decision-making, empathic interaction, multidisciplinary and multicultural collaboration, and critical analysis of contemporary issues. These competencies are integrated into the university's compulsory courses (TLL100, HIST200, ENG101, and ENG102), and a dedicated compulsory course , TRL100 Transformative Education, has been developed and offered to all students.

Program outcomes will be monitored and reported through compulsory courses, online courses offered via the ÖzÜ.Next Platform, and student activities including clubs and communities. Upon graduation, each student receives a Transformative Education Transcript alongside their academic transcript, formally recognizing the competencies developed across their time at the university.

Student-Led Sustainability: Community Engagement and Behavior Change

The TRL202 Responsible Citizenship course, led by Prof. Dr. Esra Gençtürk, serves as a cornerstone of Özyeğin University's "university without walls" philosophy, bridging the gap between theoretical classroom discussions and active societal participation. Designed to move beyond passive awareness, the curriculum fosters active and effective citizenship by synthesizing scientific and cognitive understanding with direct field engagement. Students are challenged to develop a multi-dimensional, rights-based, and inclusive perspective, enabling them to identify complex societal problems and transform them into sustainability-oriented solutions within multidisciplinary teams. This approach directly addresses several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) through its focus on disadvantaged groups and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by cultivating democratic participation and human rights awareness.

The impact of this student-led model is best exemplified by the large-scale collaboration initiated in the 2024–2025 academic year, involving 320 students from seven different faculties who partnered with 85 students from Nişantepe Middle School. Through projects such as academic support for high school entrance exams (LGS), English language workshops, and sports initiatives, university students observed social challenges firsthand and co-created solutions with local youth. This reciprocal engagement has led to tangible behavioral and academic shifts; for instance, local middle school students reported significantly increased motivation and academic success, while university students developed essential civic competencies, empathy, and a deeper understanding of structural inequalities.

By integrating social and environmental sustainability modules into the project design, the course equips future graduates, as potential policymakers and leaders, to design fairer and more inclusive interventions. Student projects are not treated as academic exercises alone; they are published and shared with the community, extending the reach of sustainability thinking beyond the classroom. Through this structured immersion, Özyeğin University institutionalizes a culture where responsibility is practiced through action, making equity, diversity, and inclusion a lived reality for both its students and its neighbors.

The SustainHUB Academy

The SustainHUB Academy, launched through the collaboration between Özyeğin University and the Business Council for Sustainable Development Türkiye (SKD Türkiye), is a comprehensive executive education program designed for professionals who aim to specialize in sustainability and lead institutional transformation. The program serves as a strong bridge between academia and the private sector, combining academic rigor with real-world business experience.

At its core, SustainHUB Academy integrates theoretical foundations with practical application. Topics such as circular economy, green transformation, climate action, ESG frameworks, and social sustainability are examined not only conceptually but through real case studies drawn from SKD Türkiye member companies enabling participants to evaluate sectoral best practices and develop actionable solutions tailored to their own organizations.

The program is structured as an intensive, multi-module experience. In its inaugural term, launched in spring 2025, it was delivered over six weeks in a hybrid format — approximately 80 hours of content across seven modules blending academic lectures, case-based discussions, applied exercises, and interactive group work. The design intent was explicitly immersive: participants do not just attend a training, they undertake a sustained sustainability learning process.

One of the distinguishing features of SustainHUB Academy is its strong mentorship component. Participants are paired with senior executives from SKD Türkiye member organizations and receive one year of high-level mentoring. This extended mentorship ensures that the knowledge gained during the program is translated into concrete strategic initiatives within participants' own institutions.

Pillar 2: Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation

Sustainability Strategy: Position the university as a global reference point for the social impact of technological transformation, ensuring that digital tools, entrepreneurship, and artificial intelligence serve societal benefit, ethical responsibility, and environmental sustainability alongside economic growth.



Seed funding incubated at OzU has already scaled to €460,000 in EU grant funding, and the University currently ranks sixth among all Turkish universities in the national Entrepreneurial and Innovative University Index (GYUE).

Strategic Actions

1. Start-up and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The Center for Entrepreneurship at OzU strengthens the start-up and entrepreneurship ecosystem through programs such as TÜBİTAK BİGG and specialized mentor networks, supporting students and researchers in transforming innovative ideas into scalable, impact-oriented ventures. A strategic collaboration with Lenovo integrates global industry expertise directly into the Incubation Center, enabling student and faculty entrepreneurs to work alongside Lenovo experts to refine technologies and accelerate time-to-market. The University's priority throughout is the development of solutions that generate measurable social and environmental value alongside long-term financial sustainability.



2.OzU AI Platform as a Multi-Stakeholder Governance Forum

Established in 2025, the OzU AI Platform serves as a high-level governance forum and strategic resource hub designed to bridge the gap between theoretical research and industrial application. By convening senior leadership from global and domestic industries alongside AI experts and academic partners, the platform provides a collaborative framework to navigate the ethical, legal, and technical complexities of digital transformation. This synergy ensures that the University's AI initiatives are rooted in real-world challenges, providing vital venues for testing and implementing university-born solutions within the wider digital ecosystem. While focused on institutional and industry-level partnerships, the platform's activities create a significant knowledge spillover, enriching the University's academic environment through exposure to cutting-edge, applied AI practices.

3. OpenFab as a Sustainability-Driven Innovation Hub

OpenFab is positioned as a cornerstone of the university's commitment to ensuring that technological transformation serves societal and environmental benefit. As a multidisciplinary innovation environment where maker culture, design thinking, and applied engineering converge, OpenFab demonstrates how digital fabrication tools and interdisciplinary collaboration can be directed toward circular economy principles, ethical material use, and sustainable production practices.

This strategic direction is already producing tangible results. In the past year, OpenFab has actively reduced workshop-related material waste, expanded upcycling of materials generated within the university ecosystem, advanced biomaterial research, and strengthened repair and reuse practices — all translating the university's sustainability values into measurable, real-world outcomes. These initiatives collectively demonstrate how an innovation space can serve as both a learning environment and a driver of institutional sustainability commitments.

By embedding sustainability not as a theoretical concept but as an iterative, practice-based culture, OpenFab positions the university as a global reference point for socially responsible innovation — a living laboratory where entrepreneurship, digital tools, and environmental stewardship coexist. This demonstrates that technological advancement and ecological responsibility are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing drivers of long-term institutional impact and international recognition.

4. Seed Funds: Research, Social Impact, Transformative Education

Özyeğin University (OzU) has established a robust internal funding framework that puts into practice its strategic vision of becoming a “globally impactful entrepreneurial research university.” In the 2024–2025 academic year, the university introduced three complementary seed funding schemes—the Seed Research Program, the Societal Impact Seed Fund Program, and the Seed Transformative Education Grant Program—aimed at translating research from conceptual stages into real-world applications while addressing critical global sustainability challenges.

5. Long-term Research Capacity Through Post-Doctoral Fellowships

Building on its established post-doctoral program, Özyeğin University dedicates fellowship positions specifically to sustainability-related challenges. This targeted initiative aims to attract high-caliber, early-career researchers specializing in sustainability transitions, applied innovation, and responsible technology. By embedding these fellows within relevant faculties and research centers, the University fosters a specialized talent pipeline dedicated to advancing rigorous scholarship while accelerating the development of transformative solutions.

6. Industry-Academia-Public Synergy

Özyeğin University constructs its innovation ecosystem on the principle of Industry-Academia-Public Synergy, where industry, academia, and public stakeholders collaborate toward shared strategic goals. At the operational core of this synergy, the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) manages the integration of academic research into the industry, protects intellectual property rights, and oversees the commercialization of technology-based startups, directly transforming university knowledge into economic value. In the realms of production and design, OpenFab promotes the "maker culture" by bringing together students, academics, and corporate professionals; as a dedicated FabLab, it provides entrepreneurs with the technical infrastructure and training necessary to transform theoretical concepts into

tangible prototypes. The industrial dimension of digital transformation is further advanced through OzUBEX, which, with financing from the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Industry and Technology, enhances the Industry 4.0 competencies of SMEs—particularly in the white goods supply chain—to make them competitive actors in the global market. Playing a critical role in translating scientific output into policy and practice, the Center for Energy, Environment and Economy (CEEE) contributes directly to UN Climate Change processes and Türkiye's National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, delivering interdisciplinary solutions ranging from nanoscale research to sustainable urban applications.

This technical and operational capacity is fortified by the principles of social responsibility and inclusivity through the Sustainability Platform and the Gender Equality Office. The Sustainability Platform shares university knowledge with the public through training, consultancy, and creative activities like ideathons, while the Gender Office ensures that all academic and institutional processes are implemented with gender sensitivity, serving as the guarantor of an inclusive innovation culture. Addressing the need for future strategic governance, the OzU AI Platform, established in 2025, functions as a neutral dialogue forum and strategic resource hub that convenes industry leaders and academics to navigate the ethical, legal, and technical complexities of digital transformation. This entire interactive process is sustained by the Lifelong Learning Academy, which blends the university's deep academic expertise with sectoral experience to design customized training programs for individuals and organizations, aiming to enhance societal competence across all ages. This multi-layered structure ensures that university-industry-public cooperation is not merely a project-based partnership, but a living innovation ecosystem shaping Türkiye's digital and sustainable future.

KPIs (Target 2029)

Strategic Objective: Maintain 50% SDG alignment in research projects and secure ₺30M annually in external sustainability-focused research funding.

- **GYUE Ranking**

Baseline (2025): 6 (Top ten)

Target (2029): Top Five

- **SDG-aligned research projects (%)**

Baseline (2025):54.7% (29/53)

Target (2029): above 50% of all research projects explicitly aligned with SDGs, every year

- **External funding for sustainability research (₺M / year)**

Baseline (2025): ₺5M

Target (2029): ₺30M annually

- **Publications addressing SDGs**

Baseline (2025): 27% (104/385)

Target (2029): 40% of all Q1 + Q2 publications

Next Steps

- **Interdisciplinary Research Centers:** Establish four new centers focused on AI, Health, Energy, and Robotics, complemented by a Women's Leadership in Science and Technology initiative.
- **Integrated Research Ecosystem:** Incorporate Social Sciences, Law, and Design into the research ecosystem to address the cultural, ethical, and societal implications of AI and digital transformation.
- **Policy Influence:** Translate OzU AI Platform discussions into policy notes and briefing documents contributing to national strategy documents and regulatory frameworks.
- **SDG Mapping and Research Tracking:** Develop a comprehensive SDG mapping framework and systematic tracking system to capture societal, environmental, and policy-related outcomes across all research projects.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration Incentives:** Refine internal incentive structures — including funding schemes, workload recognition, and career progression criteria — to reward faculty engaged in interdisciplinary sustainability research.

Challenges

- **SDG Alignment Measurement:** Defining consistent criteria for what qualifies as an SDG-aligned project remains methodologically complex and requires cross-faculty consensus.
- **Commercialization vs. Social Impact Balance:** Ensuring that entrepreneurship support prioritizes social and environmental value alongside economic returns requires ongoing governance and evaluation mechanisms.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration Barriers:** Structural silos between faculties, differing academic cultures, and workload recognition gaps slow the transition toward genuinely integrated research and innovation.
- **Sustaining Industry Partnerships:** Maintaining long-term, substantive industry-academia collaboration beyond individual projects requires dedicated relationship management and aligned incentive structures.
- **Post-Doctoral Pipeline Continuity:** Attracting and retaining sustainability-focused post-doctoral researchers depends on competitive funding, career pathways, and institutional visibility that are still being developed.

Catalyzing Research and Innovation: Özyeğin University's Seed Funding Ecosystem

Özyeğin University (ÖzÜ) has developed a comprehensive internal funding architecture that operationalizes the institution's strategic vision as a "Globally Impactful Entrepreneurial Research University." In the 2024–2025 academic year, the university launched three complementary seed funding mechanisms, the Seed Research Program, the Societal Impact Seed Fund Program and Seed Transformative Education Grant Program designed to advance the translation of research from conceptual frameworks to real-world applications while addressing pressing global sustainability challenges. Seed Programs are coordinated by different units (TTO, SP, OLTE) in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Impact.

The university's seed funding framework comprises three integrated tracks:

Seed Research Grant Program: This program cultivates foundational research capacity and supports the development of early-stage, interdisciplinary scholarship. By providing critical start-up resources, the program strengthens institutional research infrastructure and enables faculty to develop preliminary findings that enhance competitiveness for external grant opportunities. In the first two terms of the program, a total of 65 applications were received, 44 and 21, respectively, of which 34 were supported through a comprehensive peer review process conducted by faculty deans and institute directors. Program administration is coordinated through the Technology Transfer Office.

Societal Impact Seed Grant Program: This program specifically supports research that addresses societal challenges in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensures cross-college integration and alignment with institutional sustainability commitments. Priority areas of the Societal Impact Seed Grant Program include climate change mitigation and adaptation, circular economy principles, disaster resilience, social sustainability, agricultural cooperative strengthening, local capacity building and artificial intelligence. The program emphasizes collaborative, evidence-based interventions developed in partnership with community stakeholders, civil society organizations, and industry partners. In the first two terms of the program, a total of 14 applications were received, 10 and 4, respectively, of which 10 were supported through a comprehensive peer-review process.

The seed funding programs demonstrate measurable contributions to environmental sustainability and social development. A prime example of this scaling pathway is the The "Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Farming" initiative in Yenişehir, Bursa facilitated by institutional seed support. This initiative subsequently secured €460,000 through the EU–Türkiye Climate Change Grant Programme. The initiative integrates indigenous agricultural knowledge with artificial intelligence-enabled decision support systems to enhance climate adaptation, reducing vulnerability to drought and extreme weather events while promoting sustainable land management practices.



Openfab: Advancing Sustainable Innovation Through Digital Fabrication

OpenFab is a multidisciplinary innovation environment where design, technology, and sustainability converge. Through a learning, making, and sharing-oriented approach, it supports sustainability projects, educational activities, and practice-based initiatives, providing both the physical infrastructure and the intellectual culture needed to translate sustainability commitments into tangible outcomes.

By promoting circular production approaches and hands-on learning models, OpenFab contributes to responsible resource use and material awareness. Rather than treating sustainability solely as a conceptual framework, OpenFab positions it as an applied and iterative making practice, offering access to digital fabrication technologies within an experimental production environment.

Since 2020, OpenFab has implemented a sustained range of sustainability-oriented activities reducing workshop-related material waste, upcycling materials generated within the university ecosystem, conducting biomaterial research, and supporting repair and reuse practices. Through the continuous development of both its physical space and its production capabilities, OpenFab has become an active disseminator of sustainable production culture across the university.

OpenFab primarily conducts activities aligned with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). In addition, through interdisciplinary production practices, material explorations, and socially oriented initiatives, OpenFab contributes to a broader sustainability framework, engaging with 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Beyond its role as a technical facility, OpenFab functions as a learning environment that builds critical awareness of materials, processes, and production systems making it a strategic asset for sustainability-oriented innovation at Özyeğin University.



Pillar 3: Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion

Sustainability Strategy: To anchor institutional policies and campus climate in gender equality, accessibility, psychological safety, and human rights, thereby positioning the University's inclusive culture as a benchmark for external stakeholders.



Over 2,600 white-collar workers across Turkey participated in OzU's #YükOlmasın research study, producing the first national dataset on care labor and mental workload — evidence that is now actively shaping corporate HR policy beyond the university.

Strategic Actions

1. Sustainability Platform (SP) & Gender Office as Institutional Change Agents

Özyeğin University positions the Sustainability Platform (SP) and the Gender Office as the primary catalysts for evidence-based institutional transformation, bridging the gap between academic research, campus policy, and the private sector. The Platform functions as a living lab for social innovation, producing high-impact research and guidelines on critical issues such as care labor and workplace equity, as demonstrated by the #YükOlmasın campaign.



A prime example is the "Social Sustainability Summer Camp," an annual initiative that brings together private sector experts, academics, and students to foster dialogue, share best practices, and build capacity for social impact. Through such collaborative platforms and the Social Impact Mapping project, the University ensures that social justice is not just a theoretical concept but an operational reality, embedded in every decision from recruitment to procurement, while the Gender Office rigorously implements the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to guarantee intersectional equity.

2. Wellbeing & Belonging for the Entire Campus Community

Fostering a thriving academic community demands a holistic ecosystem where every member, including students, faculty, and administrative staff, feels psychologically safe and valued. To this end, Özyeğin University advances a comprehensive support framework dedicated to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB). Driven by specialized units and supported by collaborative working groups, this structure ensures that policies addressing psychological safety, accessibility, and inclusivity are applied universally to foster a shared culture of respect and dignity.

Within this broad framework, tailored support mechanisms are deployed to meet specific needs while reinforcing a unified institutional culture. For students, the Psychological Development Unit and the Peer Counseling system provide a vital safety net that fosters resilience and peer-to-peer connection. For staff and faculty, HR's approach to inclusive employment architecture and procedural fairness emphasizes clarity in role definitions, transparent compensation frameworks, structured performance alignment, and consistent and ethical application of procedures. By integrating wellbeing-sensitive policies, care-aware practices, and data-informed

review mechanisms into core HR processes, the University aims to ensure that equity and belonging are reflected not only in campus initiatives but also in the institutional systems that shape employee experience.

For international members of the community, the Office of Intercultural Awareness and Support (OIAS) organizes intercultural dialogue sessions to support integration. Simultaneously, the Unit for the Prevention of Discrimination and Violence operates transparent reporting mechanisms to guarantee a harassment-free environment for all staff and students. Through this coordinated approach, the University ensures that belonging is a lived experience rather than an aspiration, creating a community where every individual can thrive.

3. Zero-Tolerance Policy on Violence & Harassment

Özyeğin University maintains an absolute zero-tolerance stance against all forms of violence, harassment, and discrimination. The policy is operationalized through the Unit for the Prevention of Discrimination and Violence, which provides transparent, confidential, and accessible reporting mechanisms for all members of the community. Prohibited conduct explicitly includes not only physical and sexual violence but also digital harassment, stalking, and psychological bullying. This commitment extends to the physical design of campus spaces, which are intentionally structured to support safety and accessibility.

4. Employability, Alumni Social Capital, and Partnership Ecosystems for Inclusive Growth

Sustained local development impact depends on the long-term pathways through which graduates translate competencies into meaningful work and social contribution. This initiative integrates sustainability into career services by aligning student development with sustainability competencies and by guiding graduates toward green jobs, social impact careers, and purpose-driven employment pathways. In parallel, it strengthens alumni engagement by mobilizing alumni as mentors, partners, and role models who expand students' social capital and reinforce long-term social and economic impact.

The initiative also deepens sustainability-focused industry and public-sector partnerships by prioritizing collaborations that promote inclusive growth, local value creation, and sustainability-oriented innovation. Such partnerships expand applied learning opportunities, improve graduate transition outcomes, and create channels through which research and engagement outputs can inform practice and policy.

5. Social Mobility and Opportunity Pathways Through Equitable Access and Development

Sustainable development requires not only economic growth but also vertical social mobility mechanisms that convert talent into long-term capability, particularly for underrepresented groups. Under this initiative, Özyeğin University advances social empowerment by enabling academically successful students from across Türkiye to access high-quality higher education through the Eğitimde Fırsat Eşitliği Burs Programı (Equal Opportunity in Education Scholarship Programme, EFEB), connecting financial support with mentoring and structured student development.

The strategic logic is to treat scholarships as an integrated mobility platform rather than a standalone financial instrument, strengthened when financial support is systematically complemented by mentoring, academic advising, peer networks, and employability-oriented development opportunities. In sustainability strategy terms, EFEB contributes to SDG localization by reducing structural inequality and expanding the pipeline of graduates who can contribute to sustainability transitions in their communities and professional fields.

The initiative's multiplier effect depends on closing the "access-to-outcome" gap. Ensuring that entry into higher education translates into retention, timely graduation, meaningful employment, and alumni engagement that can reinvest social capital back into the ecosystem. Through improved tracking and structured mentoring architectures, the University can shift from input reporting (number of scholarships) toward outcome reporting (retention, graduation, employability, and long-term contribution). This approach positions the University as a durable social infrastructure that strengthens opportunity structures across territories, enabling impact to extend well beyond campus boundaries through graduates' careers, community engagement, and leadership trajectories.

6.Accessible Campus Life and Learning

Özyeğin University's Disabled Students Unit (Engelsiz Birimi) supports students with disabilities and specific needs so they can participate in academic and campus life on an equal basis. The Unit's approach is practical and straightforward: barriers that make studying difficult are identified and removed, while learning outcomes and academic standards remain unchanged.

Students reach the Unit through several channels, including registration declarations, referrals from academic units, or direct contact. Once a student contacts the Unit, the process begins with a needs assessment. The guiding principle is clear: privacy comes first, and all actions are taken with the student's consent. When consent is provided, a short and practical accommodation note is shared with the student's academic advisor and course instructors. This helps instructors understand the student's needs early in the semester and prevents last-minute complications.

One important area of impact is accessible learning materials. When course materials are not accessible, students risk losing time and falling behind. For this reason, the Unit coordinates the preparation of accessible versions of essential course materials, particularly screen-reader compatible documents for students with visual impairments. Priority is given to materials that are critical for upcoming classes, assignments, or exams.

Another key practice is the student assistant model, through which part-time student assistants provide planned academic support throughout the semester. Their role is not to replace the student's own work but to support independent learning; for instance, by helping students organize notes, access materials that are not readily available in accessible formats, or maintain consistent study routines.

For examinations, the Unit coordinates reasonable and documented arrangements with the relevant faculties. Depending on the student's documented needs and applicable regulations, these may include extended time, reader or scribe support, accessible exam rooms, or computer-assisted examinations. These arrangements are designed to ensure that students are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge and skills rather than disability-related barriers.

In practice, the Unit's impact is built on doing a small number of important things consistently: clear communication grounded in consent, timely provision of accessible learning materials, practical academic support, and reliable follow-up. Over time, this consistent approach transforms accessibility from a one-time adjustment into a stable and predictable feature of academic life at Özyeğin University.

7.Building a Transparent and Sustainable People Experience Framework

Over the past few years, Human Resources has progressively strengthened its role in shaping a more sustainable and integrated people experience framework at Özyeğin University. Grounded in employee wellbeing, professional development, and institutional continuity, this evolving approach reflects a growing recognition that long-term resilience depends on clear, inclusive, and consistently applied people practices.

A significant area of development has been work-life integration and employee support. Benefit structures have been expanded to respond more attentively to diverse employee needs , including the extension of private health insurance coverage to spouses and children, summer school support for employees' children through ÖzÜ Çocuk, and an updated leave framework that incorporates menstrual leave, leave for a child's first day of school, and a dedicated caregiving leave that recognizes responsibilities toward loved ones, family members, and pets. From 2026, a collaboration with the digital wellness platform Heltia has broadened access to structured wellbeing resources, reinforcing a more holistic understanding of employee support.

At a structural level, efforts have focused on enhancing institutional clarity and alignment. A pilot OKR (Objectives and Key Results) process involving 60 staff



members has been initiated to strengthen shared goal setting and accountability, with the intention of informing wider institutional implementation for the following year. Complementing this, a comprehensive evaluation and organizational design study conducted with Korn Ferry has aimed to define scope of responsibilities, competency expectations, and grade structures in a more systematic manner. These steps contribute to clearer career pathways, greater accountability in compensation frameworks, and improved organizational coherence.

Together, these interconnected initiatives signal a more conscious and structured approach within Human Resources to aligning wellbeing, development, and governance practices, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and sustainable institutional culture.

Next Steps

Governance and Policy

- **Governance Structures:** Fully activate specialized units with clear mandates, resources, and workflows; improve cross-unit coordination to reduce fragmentation and duplication.
- **Policy Awareness Campaigns:** Launch a campus-wide communication drive to inform students and staff about the EDIB Policy and available support mechanisms.
- **Data-Driven Monitoring Framework:** Develop a centralized system to collect and analyze intersectional data (gender, disability, socio-economic status) across all units, enabling evidence-based decision-making.
- **Exit Interview Framework:** Redesign and standardize the exit interview process to increase participation rates and introduce structured thematic analysis reviewed at the institutional level.

Accessibility and Inclusion

- **Faculty Accessibility Checklist:** Create and distribute a practical one-page guide for instructors on providing accessible course materials, exam arrangements, and inclusive communication.
- **Quarterly Accessibility Walk-Throughs:** Institutionalize regular campus audits to identify and remediate physical accessibility barriers, prioritizing immediate, low-cost improvements.
- **Multilingual Communication Toolkits:** Develop accessible resources for wellbeing and equity mechanisms in multiple languages to support international students and staff.

Community Engagement

- **Student Club Engagement:** Collaborate with student clubs to co-organize events that promote dialogue on inclusion, leveraging bottom-up initiatives alongside institutional efforts.

Challenges

- **Data Granularity vs. Privacy:** Addressing equity gaps requires granular intersectional data (e.g., gender, disability, socio-economic status), yet collecting this information while adhering to GDPR/KVKK creates a tension between policy needs and individual privacy rights.
- **Cultural Internalization vs. Compliance Fatigue:** Moving beyond passive compliance with EDIB policies toward genuine behavioral change requires sustained engagement rather than one-off training to avoid the risk of being perceived as mere box-ticking
- **Intersectional Needs:** Students and staff often face overlapping barriers that span multiple administrative units (e.g., gender and disability), requiring coordinated rather than siloed support delivery.
- **Standardization of Inclusive Pedagogy:** Scaling accessible teaching practices university-wide requires balancing institutional standards with academic freedom, making uniform enforcement complex.
- **Tracking Long-term Outcomes:** Measuring the lasting impact of social mobility and employability initiatives requires longitudinal data systems that are still being developed.

KPIs (Target 2029)

Strategic Objective: Construct a campus ecosystem and institutional policies and campus climate on the foundations of gender equality, accessibility, psychological safety, and human rights, positioning this culture as a model for external stakeholders.

- **Percentage of Faculty and Staff having completed the EDIB training**

Baseline (2025): 0%

Target (2029): 100%

- **Student Satisfaction Survey Gender Equality and Inclusive Campus Climate Score**

Baseline (2025): 3.1/4 derived from "equal opportunities provided to different gender groups at OzU" and "gender-balanced representation in student decision-making mechanisms"

Target (2029): ≥ 3.5/4

- **Student Satisfaction Survey Reporting Confidence and Policy Awareness**

Baseline (2025): 2.8–2.9/4 — derived from "I know where to go when I encounter a problem" and "channels exist to communicate my complaints"

Target (2029): ≥ 3.3/4; EDIB Policy awareness ≥ 85% of respondents



#YükOlmasın: Addressing Care Labor and Advancing Workplace Equity

The unequal distribution of domestic care labor and the invisible mental workload remain significant barriers to women's career advancement in the corporate sector. Recognizing this challenge as a critical component of social sustainability, Özyeğin University focuses on developing practical, research-backed solutions to promote equity in professional environments.

The initiative's origins trace back to an international awareness campaign initiated by Fiba Group, focused on gender equality and employee wellbeing. As part of their human resources strategy, Fiba Group sought to make the impacts of care labor and mental workload visible among their employees. Özyeğin University provided academic consultancy to support the process, co-developing the "Equal Care and Equal Mental Load Awareness Guide". When shared publicly, the guide quickly became a national communication campaign that attracted significant attention from across the corporate sector and civil society.

The campaign's widespread reach revealed a critical gap: there was no focused, up-to-date national dataset on white-collar workers that could answer why companies should act on this issue and without that data, awareness could not reliably translate into policy. The collaboration evolved into a full academic partnership, with Özyeğin University leading a comprehensive national research study on the impact of care labor and mental workload on white-collar workers.

Involving over 2,600 participants across Turkey, this research produced the first statistically robust national picture of the problem. Among the findings: 31% of female employees reported having resigned from a job at some point in their lives due to care responsibilities and mental workload, a figure that reframed the conversation from personal choice to structural barrier.

By anchoring the campaign in rigorous evidence, Özyeğin University ensured that awareness translated into actionable insight. The partnership continues to equip the corporate sector with verifiable data — guiding businesses toward concrete policy changes that acknowledge invisible labor and redesign work environments to genuinely support work-life integration.



Gender Equality Office: Advancing SDG 5 Through Institutional Change

Özyeğin University approaches gender equality as a fundamental component of sustainable management and institutional culture. The University's systematic efforts began with its participation in the Horizon 2020 PLOTINA project, which led to the publication of its first Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in 2017, making it one of the first universities in Turkey to do so. To bring these growing initiatives under a single institutional roof, the ÖzÜ Gender Office was established in 2021. Today, the office acts as a central bridge that connects policy development, gender-focused research, awareness training, and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Building on the foundation of its first planning cycle, the University launched the second version of its Gender Equality Plan (GEP v2) covering the 2024-2028 period. Adapted to current social and economic needs, this new plan expands its focus across seven core areas: governing bodies and decision-makers, career development, recruitment and work-life integration, research, curriculum, students, and knowledge transfer. By embedding gender equality into these distinct operational and academic areas, the University actively translates Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) into concrete, everyday institutional practices.

A defining feature of this institutional change is its reliance on systematic, data-driven monitoring. In collaboration with the University's Planning and Analysis Office, the Gender Office regularly collects and processes gender-disaggregated quantitative data according to international standards. This continuous tracking, combined with qualitative assessments, forms the basis of the annual Gender Equality Reports (GER). Through transparent reporting and continuous evaluation, Özyeğin University ensures that its gender equality policies remain accountable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all its students and staff.



Pillar 4: Environment and Climate Action

Sustainability Strategy: Integrate campus operations, education, and research to achieve carbon neutrality, accelerate climate action, and position the university as a demonstrator of circular economy practices within higher education ecosystems.



In 2024, 100% of OzU's grid-supplied electricity was certified as renewable through IREC, and the University has maintained its position as the top-ranked foundation university in the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings for multiple consecutive years.

Strategic Actions

1. Environmental Footprint Management

Özyeğin University manages its environmental footprint through QHSE (Quality, Health, Safety, Environment) systems, applying internationally recognized management frameworks including ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 46001, and ISO 50001, alongside data-driven monitoring of energy, water, and resource use. Certified management systems define responsibilities, procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and performance review cycles across campus operations, with environmental aspects such as energy consumption, water use, waste generation, and emissions systematically identified, measured, and reviewed within their respective certification scopes.



In 2024–2025, the first-time certification of ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 46001 Water Efficiency Management Systems further embedded environmental performance into organizational processes, risk management, and continuous improvement cycles, with collected data forming the basis for corporate carbon and water footprint calculations prepared in accordance with ISO 14064 and ISO 14046 standards.

This structured system-based approach ensures traceability, auditability, and consistency of environmental data, while enabling informed decision-making and alignment between operational performance, regulatory compliance, and institutional sustainability targets.

2. Behavioral Change Through Campus-Wide Engagement Campaigns

Behavioral change is fostered through campus-wide engagement campaigns such as "We're Disposing of What We Consume!", which actively involve students, staff, and service providers in waste separation, responsible consumption, and resource conservation, reinforcing sustainability as a shared institutional responsibility.

These initiatives are implemented as structured awareness and participation activities aligned with the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System and the Zero Waste Management framework, designed to increase practical understanding of waste separation, material recovery, and responsible consumption through hands-on participation rather than passive communication.

Since its first implementation, the campaign has been organized periodically, reaching approximately 600 students through workshops, campus-wide clean-up

activities, and informational sessions on the University's waste management processes, while also strengthening students' empathy toward operational staff by enabling direct participation in waste collection activities alongside cleaning personnel.

Complementary communication tools, including digital screens, campus signage, QR-code-based messaging in shared spaces, and mandatory environmental awareness modules delivered via the LMS platform, reinforce behavioral change efforts by providing continuous, accessible, and measurable engagement across the university community.

3. Renewable Energy and Carbon Neutrality

Özyeğin University generates a portion of its electricity demand through on-campus solar energy systems and manages energy performance within the framework of the ISO 50001 Energy Management System. In 2024, IREC certification covered 100% of electricity consumed from the grid, formally verifying that purchased electricity originated from renewable sources and contributing directly to the reduction of Scope 2 emissions. Renewable energy initiatives are integrated into campus operations not only as infrastructure investments but also as learning assets, supporting student engagement, applied coursework, and awareness activities related to clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate action.

The University prepares and publishes institutional Carbon Footprint Reports in accordance with ISO 14064, ensuring consistent calculation, verification readiness, and year-on-year comparability of greenhouse gas emissions. The updated Carbon Footprint Report was published in 2025, providing an evidence-based baseline for climate action planning. Concrete steps toward net-zero ambitions include offsetting reported emissions for 2024 through certified carbon balancing projects; while offsetting is treated as a transitional measure, priority is given to direct emissions reduction through energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and operational improvements. The carbon neutrality roadmap is designed as a phased framework that aligns technical feasibility, financial planning, and governance capacity, enabling gradual expansion toward Scope 3 emissions coverage.

4. Circular Economy Principles in Campus Operations

Özyeğin University applies circular economy principles to campus operations by redesigning procurement, waste management, food services, and construction practices to prioritize reuse, recycling, upcycling, and life-cycle thinking, minimizing waste and maximizing resource efficiency.

Circular economy practices are embedded within the University's Zero Waste Management System, established in alignment with ISO 14001 and the national Zero Waste Regulation. Having become the first university in Türkiye to receive the Zero Waste Certificate in 2020, the University successfully renewed this certification in 2025 following external audits.

Operational measures implemented since July 2025 include the removal of single-use plastic and cardboard cups from kitchens, replacement of individual waste bins in offices and classrooms with dual-stream waste stations in shared areas, and the gradual conversion of outdoor waste bins into dual-compartment units.

These measures directly support the strategic target of reducing total campus waste generation over the next four years.

Recovered waste streams are also connected to innovation and education through collaboration with OpenFab, where selected materials are reused in student-led prototyping, design, and circular economy projects, closing the loop between operations and learning.

5. Sustainable Transportation and Low-Carbon Mobility

Özyeğin University promotes sustainable transportation through incentives for public transport, carpooling, electric vehicle infrastructure, and active mobility options, with the explicit aim of reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

Özyeğin University's campus is designed as a car-free environment, where internal vehicle traffic is not permitted for daily use and is limited to essential operational and emergency services.

As part of campus environmental planning, the University prioritizes public transport accessibility, shared mobility practices, and pedestrian-friendly design, with a focus on reducing emissions associated with commuting and on-campus transportation.

Awareness activities and campus communication campaigns complement infrastructural measures by promoting low-carbon travel behaviors among students and staff, while transportation-related emissions are gradually incorporated into broader carbon accounting efforts as data quality improves.

6. Campus Biodiversity and the ÖzÜ Bostan

Özyeğin University has established itself as a pioneer in sustainable campus management, integrating ecological restoration with hands-on agricultural education across a car-free, biodiversity-rich campus. The campus biodiversity strategy transcends traditional landscaping by prioritizing the preservation of the Nişantepe region's natural forest ecosystem. This commitment is evidenced by the university's focus on planting local and adapted species across more than half of its built environment, a move that significantly reduces the need for chemical fertilizers and optimizes water consumption. Central to this ecological framework is the Campus Stream Project, which serves as a vital corridor for local fauna and a living classroom where students monitor freshwater health and use the landscape as a medium for environmental storytelling. This holistic approach ensures that the university's infrastructure supports rather than disrupts the local water cycle and soil integrity, maintaining a functional bridge between the urban campus and the surrounding natural habitats.

The OzU Bostan project complements this broad biodiversity effort by localizing the food system through the "Seed to Table" philosophy. This campus garden acts as a multidisciplinary laboratory where the Department of Architecture and the Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Department collaborate to promote organic farming

and permaculture. By integrating the garden directly into the Le Cordon Bleu curriculum, the university ensures that future culinary professionals understand the labor and ecology behind food production. The project is deeply rooted in community engagement, maintained through partnerships with local producers like the Şile Earth Market to strengthen the regional sustainable agriculture network. By producing food on-site and emphasizing the "Slow Food" movement, the ÖzÜ Bostan not only reduces the carbon footprint associated with food logistics but also serves as a vital space for student and faculty wellbeing, fostering a culture of responsible consumption and production that is central to the university's sustainability mission.

KPIs (Target 2029)

Strategic Objective: Achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 through phased emissions reductions across Scope 1, 2, and 3, maintain Zero Waste certification, and position the campus as a nationally recognized model for circular economy practices and renewable energy adoption.

- **Energy consumption per capita**

Target (2029): 10.57% reduction, reaching 0.481 TEP/year

- **Water consumption per capita**

Target (2029): 7.76% reduction, reaching 36.9 m^3/person/year

- **Waste generation per capita**

Target (2029): 12.61% reduction, reaching 215.58 kg/person/year

- **Greenhouse gas emissions**

Target (2029): 17.49% reduction, reaching 7,425.6 tCO_2/year

Next Steps

Carbon and Climate Planning

- **Climate Action Plan:** Prepare a formal plan consolidating mitigation, adaptation, and governance measures into a single strategic framework.
- **Carbon Neutrality Roadmap:** Finalize a phased reduction plan toward net-zero emissions by 2040, with clear milestones and accountability mechanisms aligned with institutional governance cycles.
- **Scope 3 Emissions:** Expand carbon footprint accounting to include Scope 3 emissions in a phased manner, ensuring data quality, traceability, and regular monitoring.
- **ISO 14064 Training:** Enhance staff competencies in carbon accounting by providing targeted training for units responsible for emissions data provision.

Operations and Infrastructure

- **Renewable Energy Investment:** Address capital investment needs for renewable energy systems, building retrofits, and low-carbon infrastructure through phased planning and prioritization.
- **Sustainable Procurement:** Develop and implement supply chain practices aligned with the ISO 20400 guidance framework.
- **Business Continuity:** Establish processes in alignment with ISO 22301 to strengthen institutional resilience against climate- and disaster-related risks.
- **Blue Water Certificate:** Pursue compliance with the Water Efficiency Regulation and initiate the certification process.

Data, Innovation and Engagement

- **Open Data:** Release energy and water consumption data to enable students and researchers to use real campus metrics for coursework, research projects, and innovation challenges.
- **Circularity Loop:** Channel QHSE-collected waste streams (e.g., plastic caps) to OpenFab for use as raw material in student-led design and circular economy projects.
- **Behavioral Change:** Drive campus-wide engagement campaigns to complement technical solutions and ensure lasting environmental impact across all stakeholder groups.

Challenges

- **Capital Investment Constraints: E**xpanding renewable energy infrastructure and retrofitting buildings requires significant upfront investment that must be balanced against competing institutional priorities.
- **Scope 3 Data Quality:** Extending carbon accounting to Scope 3 emissions depends on data from suppliers, commuters, and supply chains that are difficult to verify and standardize.
- **Behavioral Change at Scale:** Shifting consumption and waste habits across a diverse campus community requires sustained engagement beyond awareness campaigns, and progress is difficult to measure.
- **Regulatory Complexity:** Keeping pace with evolving national environmental regulations (e.g., Zero Waste, water efficiency) and integrating compliance into operational workflows places continuous demands on QHSE resources.





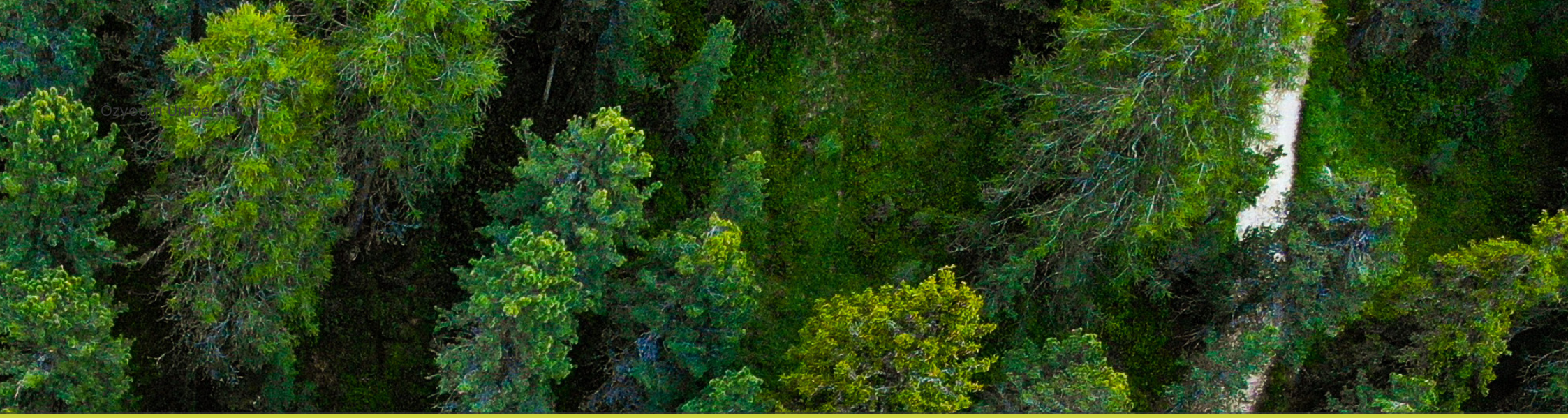
ISO 50001 Implementation

Özyeğin University’s implementation of the ISO 50001 Energy Management System (EnMS) constitutes a structural pillar of its climate governance framework. Rather than approaching energy efficiency through ad-hoc technical measures, the University has institutionalized energy performance management as a systematic, data-driven and continuously improving process embedded within corporate governance.

The Energy Management System is coordinated by the Sustainability & QHSE Directorate in close collaboration with Technical Services, ensuring cross-functional accountability and operational alignment. Within the ISO 50001 framework, significant energy uses are identified, baselines are defined, and energy performance indicators (EnPIs) are monitored through structured data collection and analysis mechanisms. This approach ensures traceability, comparability, and management review cycles that directly inform infrastructure planning and investment prioritization.

Campus infrastructure reflects this systemic approach. Two academic buildings and the Student Center have achieved internationally recognized LEED certification. The University's participation in European research and innovation projects , including NEED4B and LEGOFIT, led by the Center for Energy, Environment and Economy under Prof. Dr. Pınar Mengüç of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, has further strengthened institutional capacity in energy-efficient building systems, performance monitoring, and low-carbon technology integration. These projects have supported data-driven building optimization approaches, reinforcing alignment between academic research, campus operations, and the ISO 50001 continuous improvement framework. Energy performance is therefore embedded not only in operational management but also in capital investment decisions and long-term campus planning.

Energy generation and sourcing are also integrated into the ISO 50001 framework. A portion of electricity demand is met through on-campus solar energy installations, reducing dependence on fossil-based grid electricity. In 2024, the University's International Renewable Energy Certificate (IREC) certification



covered 100% of grid-supplied electricity consumption, formally verifying renewable sourcing and strengthening the credibility of Scope 2 emissions reporting.

ISO 50001 implementation operates in direct synergy with ISO 14064-based greenhouse gas accounting. Corporate emissions are calculated annually, enabling year-on-year comparability and evidence-based climate planning. The 2025 Carbon Footprint Report established an updated baseline and strengthened Scope 3 data expansion efforts. While Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions are addressed through efficiency measures and renewable sourcing, Scope 3 emissions are progressively integrated to enhance transparency and completeness of climate disclosure.

The system also extends beyond institutional control to stakeholder engagement. The web-based Carbon Meter application, launched in 2025, enables students and staff to calculate their individual carbon footprints, translating institutional climate targets into measurable personal accountability. Complementary initiatives such as the Campus Holiday energy-saving program and digital awareness campaigns reinforce behavioural change alongside technical performance improvements.

Importantly, ISO 50001 functions not merely as a certification mechanism but as a governance instrument. Energy data are embedded into decision-support processes, internal audits, and management reviews, enabling corrective actions and measurable improvement cycles. This ensures that energy transition efforts are structured, verifiable, and strategically aligned with long-term carbon neutrality objectives.

Through the integration of certified management systems, renewable energy sourcing, verified carbon accounting, and stakeholder engagement, Özyeğin University demonstrates a mature and transparent approach to energy governance, one in which ISO 50001 functions not as a certification end point but as a continuously evolving tool for measurable progress toward climate neutrality.

Özyeğin University Project Awarded EU–Türkiye Climate Change Grant

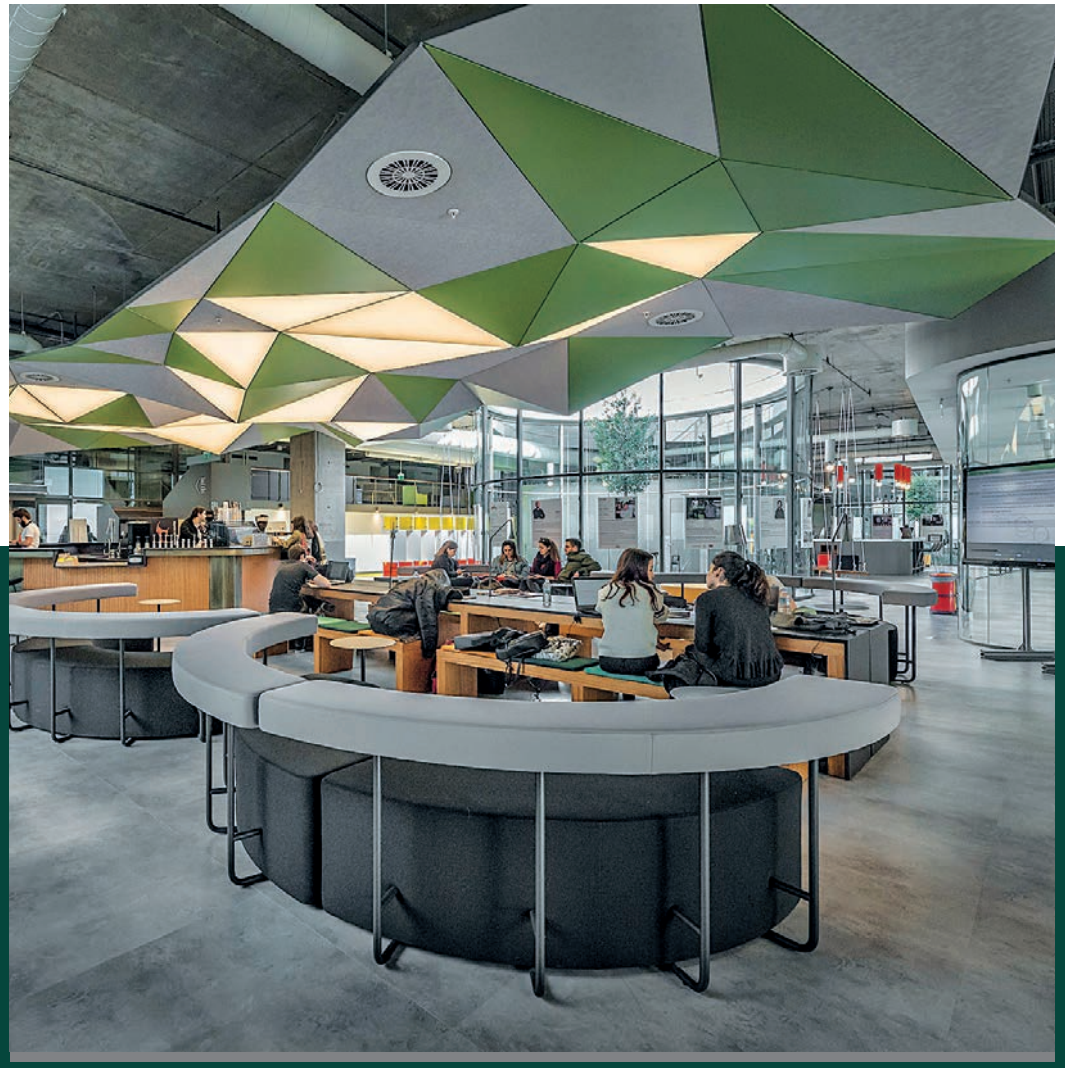
Özyeğin University has been awarded funding under the EU–Türkiye Climate Change Grant Programme for its project titled "Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Farming: Innovative and Cooperative Solutions in Yenişehir." Supported within the EU's IPA III framework under the Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity window, the project carries a total budget of approximately EUR 460,000 and will be implemented in Yenişehir, Bursa between 2026 and 2028.

The project integrates agroecological farming practices, traditional agricultural knowledge, and AI-based digital decision support systems; most notably a Digital Early Warning System designed to help farmers respond to drought, frost, and extreme weather events. Implementation follows a Living Lab model, fostering active collaboration among Özyeğin University's Sustainability Platform and academics, Yenişehir Municipality, cooperatives, farmers, and technical experts in a co-design and co-learning process.

The project also supports the establishment of an Agroecology and Digital Agriculture Center within Yenişehir Municipality. Upon completion, it aims to strengthen farmers' climate resilience, promote sustainable use of water and agricultural inputs, and contribute to participatory local agricultural governance, translating Özyeğin University's research capacity into measurable social impact.

Pillar 5: Social Empowerment and Local Development

Sustainability Strategy: Özyeğin University positions itself as an Anchor Institution that accelerates inclusive local and regional development by converting academic knowledge into durable, place-based solutions. This pillar advances SDG localization through long-term partnerships, evidence-informed policy engagement, and capacity-building that strengthen community agency, cooperative ecosystems, and equitable opportunity pathways. By combining local knowledge with scientific expertise and embedding co-creation across education, research, and engagement, the University acts as a multiplier, scaling effective models through sustained collaboration with municipalities, public institutions, civil society, and cooperatives, while building measurable and reportable social impact through 2029.



Since 2014, the Local and Rural Development Certificate Program has trained more than 500 practitioners across Türkiye, while the University's cooperative support work now extends across 45 women's cooperatives in the Eastern Black Sea region.

Strategic Actions

1. Long-term Capacity Building for Local and Regional Development

Özyeğin University operationalizes its anchor role by sustaining long-term, field-based capacity development that equips practitioners to diagnose local problems, design viable interventions, and manage multi-actor development processes. Through the Sustainability Platform's Community Engagement Program (CEP), the University delivers applied education and certification programs that create a common language across municipalities, public institutions, civil society, cooperatives, and international organizations. The Local and Rural Development Specialization Training Certificate Program, implemented continuously since 2014 and reaching 500+ participants, exemplifies this approach by building a learning ecosystem that bridges academic frameworks with field practice.



The initiative's multiplier effect stems from its practice-oriented pedagogy: annually updated curricula informed by stakeholders; case-based learning and policy discussions; and structured field visits that allow participants to observe and compare local development models in situ. Graduates are positioned to apply analytical tools directly within their institutions, improving project design quality, strengthening participatory processes, and increasing implementation capacity. Beyond individual learning outcomes, the program consolidates a professional network that supports cross-institutional collaboration and enables durable partnerships that can be replicated across regions and policy contexts, positioning the University as not only a training provider but also a platform for sustained convening.

2. Women's Cooperative Ecosystems Through Research-to-Mentoring Pathways

Women's cooperatives constitute a strategic leverage point for combining gender equality, local value creation, and social solidarity. Under this initiative, the University positions cooperatives not as passive beneficiaries but as transformative agents of inclusive local development whose sustainability depends on governance quality, cost and production management, market integration, and institutional resilience. The Social Empowerment Program (TGP) model therefore links evidence generation to tailored capacity development, building a structured pathway from field research to mentoring and scalable policy intelligence.

A key application is the Eastern Black Sea Women's Cooperatives Current Situation Analysis, implemented across multiple provinces and covering 45 cooperatives. Fieldwork outcomes are translated into cooperative-specific development plans and used to design a region-wide mentoring system. The approach is explicitly

differentiated: cooperative typologies are developed, mentoring modalities are matched to needs, and governance and monitoring frameworks are defined to ensure continuity beyond one-off training. Phase 1 focuses on methodology and system design, while Phase 2 is planned as structured mentor–mentee engagements to operationalize learning-by-doing and embed tools in everyday cooperative practice.

The intended multiplier effect is threefold: (i) building a replicable mentoring model for cooperative strengthening; (ii) generating comparative datasets that support evidence-based regional and national policy dialogue; and (iii) expanding women's economic participation through stronger cooperative performance, value proposition clarity, and improved market access strategies. This initiative thus integrates SDG localization with institutional learning, creating an implementable pipeline from research to field-level change and policy relevance.

3. Place-Based Community Engagement and Reciprocal University–Neighborhood Partnerships

As an anchor institution, the University's social legitimacy and local development contribution are strengthened when engagement is reciprocal, long-term, and embedded in local priorities. This initiative sustains neighborhood-level social contribution through structured programs such as "Nişantepe Yaklaş", which mobilize students, volunteers, and institutional resources to support education, youth development, sports, and school-based engagement in surrounding communities.

The distinctive feature is the shift from episodic volunteering to place-based partnership infrastructure. By maintaining continuity, aligning activities with local needs, and enabling mutual learning between community actors and the University, the initiative reinforces trust and improves the effectiveness of interventions. It also supports student learning by expanding experiential and civic competencies — strengthening the University's broader sustainability methodology of turning evidence into action and translating institutional capacity into public value.

4. Sustainability-Oriented Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation-to-Impact Pathways

Local development challenges increasingly require solution pathways that combine innovation capacity with social purpose and implementability. Under this initiative, the University expands sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship by leveraging innovation platforms such as OPENFAB to support start-ups, social enterprises, and community-focused innovation projects that address local needs through applied, prototype-driven approaches.

The strategic intent is to strengthen the "innovation-to-impact" pipeline: enabling early-stage solutions to be designed in collaboration with users and stakeholders, tested in real contexts, and improved through iterative learning. This approach complements conventional research outputs by producing demonstrable, adaptable solutions, particularly where local actors face constraints in technology access, design capacity, or financing. In sustainability strategy terms, it supports SDG localization by translating global sustainability agendas into locally implementable tools, services, and models.

The multiplier effect stems from three mechanisms: (i) interdisciplinary collaboration that blends engineering, design, business, and social sciences; (ii) partnerships

that connect innovators with municipalities, CSOs, cooperatives, and industry; and (iii) engagement formats (workshops, prototyping sprints, circular economy practices) that accelerate diffusion of sustainable practices beyond campus. By anchoring entrepreneurship within public value creation, the University ensures that innovation is measured not only by economic potential but also by its capacity to strengthen local ecosystems, reduce vulnerabilities, and create inclusive development opportunities.

5. Community-Based Partnerships and Programs

The University's community engagement strategy is grounded in long-term, reciprocal partnerships rather than short-term philanthropy, aiming to co-produce solutions for local challenges by aligning academic resources with community needs. Operationalized through the Duyarlı ÖzÜ platform, the University coordinates student volunteerism and social responsibility projects to ensure that interventions are systematic and measurable.

A primary application of this strategy is the Nişantepe Yaklaş initiative, which addresses socio-economic disparities in the University's immediate vicinity through educational workshops, sports activities, and mentorship for local youth. Collaborations are formalized through protocols with key stakeholders, including relevant municipalities, transforming community service into a durable mechanism for local development and mutual learning.

KPIs (Target 2029)

KPI 1 - The total number of individuals who complete structured capacity-building programs designed and delivered by the Community Engagement Program (TGP) in a given year

Baseline (2025): 30

Target (2029): ≥40 participants per year,

KPI 2 - The number of formally documented, operationally active partnerships maintained by the TGP with external institutions

Baseline (2025): 8

Target (2029): ≥15, with at least 2 involving international organizations and at least 5 involving local/regional government entities.

KPI 3 - The number of applied knowledge products — including research reports, diagnostic analyses, policy briefs, methodological toolkits, training curricula, and application dossiers — produced by TGP that are formally received, used, or referenced by external stakeholders.

Baseline (2025): 4 knowledge products

Target (2029): ≥8 applied knowledge products with documented stakeholder uptake per year.

KPI 4 - The number of active externally funded projects managed or co-managed by TGP in a given year.

Baseline (2025): 3

Target (2029): ≥5 active projects per year, with at least 2 funded by international sources (EU, UN agencies, bilateral donors).

Next Steps

- National Cooperative Database: Institutionalize a national cooperative database and indicator framework to convert localized research outputs into scalable policy intelligence for regional development programming.
- Policy Dialogue Mechanisms: Formalize structured engagement with ministries, municipalities, and regional development agencies (roundtables, policy briefs, thematic working groups) to strengthen evidence-to-policy pathways.
- Grand Challenges Research: Consolidate place-based work into mission-driven research clusters and international consortia to increase visibility, funding leverage, and global learning exchange for post-2030 agendas.

Challenges

- Impact Data Fragmentation: Social empowerment contributions are distributed across units, limiting comparability and decision-usefulness without a shared taxonomy and reporting workflow.
- Outcome Attribution: Measuring indirect local development and ecosystem-level spillovers requires mixed-method designs that are credible yet feasible for annual reporting cycles.
- Graduate Tracking Limitations: Incomplete longitudinal data constrains evidence on employability, mobility, and long-term contribution outcomes.
- Scaling Cooperative Support: Moving from project-based support to a sustained mentoring system requires stable resources, mentor capacity, and governance mechanisms.
- Policy Engagement Continuity: Institutional silos and changing public-sector priorities can reduce the continuity needed for evidence to influence policy and regional strategies.
- Financing and Continuity of Innovation Pathways: Early-stage social innovation often faces gaps in mentorship, prototyping resources, and bridge financing to scale beyond pilots.



Local and Rural Development Specialization Training Certificate Program

Since 2014, the Local and Rural Development Specialization Training Certificate Program has been one of the longest-running and most institutionalized capacity-building programs in its field in Türkiye. Implemented continuously by the Özyeğin University Sustainability Platform's Social Empowerment Program, it strengthens the knowledge, skills, and analytical capacities of professionals working in sustainable local and rural development , building a lasting bridge between field practice and academic knowledge production.

Having reached more than 500 participants to date, the program has created a learning ecosystem that spans public institutions, local governments, civil society organizations, cooperatives, social enterprises, international organizations, and academia. The breadth of this participant profile, from field practitioners to policymakers, from project managers to researchers, is itself a pedagogical asset. Different institutional and disciplinary perspectives are brought to bear on shared problem areas, generating peer learning that no single-sector training could replicate.

The curriculum is updated annually through a participatory process drawing on input from public institutions, civil society representatives, and academics, shaped by emerging needs from the field rather than fixed by a predetermined syllabus. Over the years it has encompassed a broad range of thematic areas, including gastronomy, women's empowerment, smallholder cooperative development, youth employment, the ecology–development nexus, and rural tourism.

Applied components complement the theoretical curriculum throughout. Technical field visits enable participants to observe good practices on site, engage directly with diverse local development initiatives, and deepen practical understanding through firsthand experience, grounding classroom learning in the realities of implementation. Delivery methods also include case analyses, field examples, policy discussions, and practice-oriented tools, equipping



participants with analytical frameworks they can apply directly within their own institutions and fieldwork.

Another distinguishing feature of the program is the quality and diversity of its trainer profile. The trainings are delivered by academics from universities, practitioners with long-standing field experience in local and rural development, representatives of public institutions, and professionals who have worked with international organizations. This multi-actor trainer composition strengthens both the program's theoretical depth and its grounding in practice.

The impact of the Certificate Program extends well beyond individual capacity development. A significant proportion of alumni go on to assume decision-making, implementation, or facilitation roles in local development projects. The networks formed among participants nurture inter-institutional collaboration and joint initiatives that continue long after the program ends. Over more than a decade of continuous implementation, the program has become one of the few platforms in Türkiye that actively contributes to the formation of a shared professional language, common conceptual frameworks, and a durable practitioner community in local and rural development.

Capacity Development Programmes for Women Cooperatives and Women Entrepreneurship

Women's cooperatives have gained renewed prominence in Türkiye in recent years as both key instruments of gender equality policies and critical actors in local development, with their impact shaped by factors including the visibility of women's labor, collective production models, value-added market access, and social solidarity networks. However, their ability to generate lasting and sustainable impact depends not only on their establishment but also on their governance capacities, production and cost management, market integration, institutional resilience, and linkages with learning ecosystems.

Building on these needs, the Social Development Program adopts a holistic approach that recognizes women's cooperatives not merely as "beneficiaries," but as transformative agents of local development. The Program's core objective is to strengthen the organizational, managerial, and economic capacities of women's cooperatives so that they can evolve into resilient, learning-oriented, and collaborative structures capable of standing on their own in the long term. This approach is built on an integrated model that combines field-based research outputs with practice-oriented capacity development and mentoring mechanisms.

One key component of this model is the Women's Cooperatives Current Situation Analysis Project implemented in the Eastern Black Sea Region. Funded by DOKA, the project involved comprehensive fieldwork with women's cooperatives operating in Trabzon, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane, Ordu, and Giresun. Through online and face-to-face interviews, the organizational structures, governance practices, financial and production capacities, needs, and expectations of cooperatives were analyzed. The outputs inform tailor-made development plans for each cooperative and lay the groundwork for the design of a regional mentoring system to be rolled out in the medium term.

Building on this analytical groundwork, the Program has launched the design phase (Phase 1) of a regional mentoring program for strengthening women's cooperatives. This phase focuses on developing the mentoring methodology, defining cooperative typologies, matching mentoring approaches to differentiated needs, and establishing governance and monitoring frameworks for the program. The mentoring implementation phase (Phase 2), which will translate this design into practice through structured mentor–mentee engagements with selected cooperatives, is planned to be launched in autumn 2026. Together, these two phases aim to establish a sustainable, region-wide mentoring system that can be institutionalized and scaled beyond the pilot phase.

To date, direct support has been provided to a diverse group of women's cooperatives and related grassroots organizations across different regions of

Türkiye. The support goes beyond one-off trainings and follows an applied mentoring model focusing on product development, market access, cost and production management, cooperative governance, and institutional identity. Unlike conventional classroom-based trainings, this approach enables cooperatives to learn through their own concrete challenges and to embed newly developed tools into everyday practice.

Across these engagements, the applied mentoring approach has generated tangible improvements in cooperatives' organizational and operational capacities, including clearer value propositions, strengthened cost and pricing practices, improved market access strategies, more systematic stock and income–expense tracking, more transparent governance practices, and more coherent institutional identities. Pre- and post-engagement assessments consistently indicate meaningful capacity gains, demonstrating the effectiveness of practice-oriented mentoring compared to one-off training formats.

In this context, the Program has worked with and provided tailored support to cooperatives and grassroots organizations such as Kavar Agricultural Development Cooperative; Ravandalı Women's Association; Çayeli Entrepreneurial Women's Cooperative; Iğdır Entrepreneurial Women's Production and Enterprise Cooperative; Ayyıldız Women's Enterprise Production and Operating Cooperative; Tuzluca Çalışkan Women's Enterprise Production and Operating Cooperative; Yeşil Iğdır Producing Women's Enterprise Production and Operating Cooperative; and Bünyan Hanımeli Women's Enterprise and Production Cooperative. These organizations have benefited from different components of the Program's research, capacity development, and mentoring offer, reflecting the adaptability of the approach to diverse local contexts and cooperative typologies.

The Özyeğin University Sustainability Platform's Social Empowerment Program provides a holistic and scalable model that integrates research, capacity development, mentoring, and policy engagement into a continuous and mutually reinforcing process. In doing so, it treats women's cooperatives not only as economic actors but as drivers of a more egalitarian, participatory, and solidarity-based approach to local development generating contributions that are practical, evidence-based, and designed to endure.



Yaklaş Nişantepe: From Physical Proximity to Social Reciprocity

While the Nişantepe neighborhood sits in immediate physical proximity to Özyeğin University, it has historically represented a significant socio-economic threshold, characterized by deep urban poverty and the social exclusion of its approximately 2,000 Romani residents. To address this gap, the University launched the Yaklaş (Approach) initiative in 2018, specifically designed to challenge the traditional "campusification" model—where a university exists as a gated community disconnected from its functional and social surroundings. By moving beyond mere "looking" to a deeper practice of "seeing," the project utilized interdisciplinary tools, such as 3D-printed pinhole cameras developed with OpenFab, to encourage faculty and students to pause, connect, and document the local reality from a renewed perspective. This initial phase of themed walks, panels, and collective thinking workshops served as a foundational exercise in place-making, transforming the neighborhood from an abstract space into a shared site of mutual recognition and empathy.

This early engagement matured into the Nişantepe Social Empowerment Project (2020–2023), which shifted the University's role toward that of an Anchor Institution dedicated to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Recognizing that poverty is often passed down due to structural inequalities, the University's transdisciplinary working group prioritized rights-based interventions focusing on women and children. This strategic focus led to the institutionalization of the Nişantepe Educational Support (NES) program and research initiatives within the Faculty of Architecture that used cognitive mapping to understand how local children perceive their physical and social environments. These academic efforts were complemented by direct support programs like the "Box of Hope" for basic necessities and the "Cooking for Someone" project, where Gastronomy students prepared and delivered meals, fostering a sense of civic responsibility through direct contact.

Central to the success of Yaklaş Nişantepe is the fundamental principle of reciprocity, ensuring that every project is designed to provide ethical, mutual benefit rather than exploiting the neighborhood's disadvantages for academic gain. By aligning student volunteerism under the Duyarlı ÖzÜ platform with the needs identified by local stakeholders, the University has successfully transformed a localized project into a durable social infrastructure. Today, Nişantepe serves as a "Living Lab" where the University's entrepreneurial identity is operationalized—turning evidence-based research into implementable solutions that reduce inequalities and strengthen community agency.

Cross-cutting Governance Dimension

Sustainability Strategy: Embed sustainability, ethics, and social impact into institutional governance, decision-making, and organizational culture through transparent, accountable, and data-driven management systems that support long-term value creation and public accountability.

Strategic Actions

1. Integrated Social Impact Governance Framework

Özyeğin University is evolving from a project-based approach toward an institution-wide, systematic model of social impact governance. This transformation is rooted in a cumulative analysis of existing strengths, resulting in five core thematic pillars: Transformative Education; Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Digital Transformation; Social Justice, Equity, Wellbeing, and Inclusion; Environment and Climate Action; and Social Empowerment and Local Development. These pillars are strategically aligned with international frameworks such as the SDGs, AACSB, and PRME and ensure that the University's social impact is both measurable and globally comparable. By formalizing these structures, the University clarifies oversight and strengthens coordination across all institutional levels, reinforcing sustainability as a core component of its organizational culture.



Responsibility for sustainability is embedded within senior leadership's strategic planning and performance monitoring processes. At the operational level, coordination is facilitated through designated Theme Leaders, including the Office for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (OLTE), which is responsible for strengthening the techno-pedagogical foundations of all academic activities at ÖzÜ and serves as the lead coordinator for the Transformative Education pillar; the Entrepreneurship Office for Innovation; and QHSE for Environment and Climate Action. These leaders act as focal points to bridge academic units, research centers, and administrative functions. Accountability is further strengthened through defined roles and the integration of ISO-certified management systems (including ISO 9001), ensuring that data-driven evidence from every unit is consolidated for internal evaluation and external transparency.

2. Sustainability KPIs in Executive Dashboards and External Sustainability Reporting

The University is committed to moving beyond manual reporting by integrating sustainability, climate, equity, and social impact indicators into centralized executive dashboards. This data-driven approach supports evidence-based decision-making by providing leadership with real-time visibility into institutional performance. By tracking specific metrics such as carbon and water footprints — areas where Özyeğin University has already demonstrated national leadership — the University can conduct longitudinal analyses to identify gaps and drive continuous improvement in its sustainability mission.

To enhance credibility and comparability, Özyeğin University systematically aligns its institutional reporting with premier international ESG and sustainability frameworks. This includes maintaining rigorous disclosure standards through the GRI Standards, the UN Global Compact Communication on Progress, and the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). By participating in global benchmarks like the UI GreenMetric and THE Impact Rankings, the University subjects its governance and impact data to external validation, reinforcing its status as a transparent and accountable institution.

3. Sustainable Procurement and Responsible Supply Management

Özyeğin University embeds sustainability into its procurement and supply chain governance as part of its broader institutional responsibility framework. The University manages purchasing processes in alignment with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, aiming to reduce environmental impacts, increase social value, and strengthen institutional resilience. The policy applies to all procurement activities, suppliers, and stakeholders, covering direct and indirect purchases, services, construction, and long-term contracts. Lifecycle thinking guides decision-making so that environmental and social effects are considered from sourcing through use and disposal.

Environmental stewardship and ethical responsibility are central to implementation. The University prioritizes efficient use of energy, water, and natural resources, promotes waste reduction and circular economy practices, and integrates climate considerations such as monitoring and reducing Scope 3 emissions into purchasing decisions. Procurement categories are assessed using a risk-based approach, while suppliers are expected to comply with legal, ethical, and sustainability standards and are encouraged to improve performance through collaboration and guidance. Progress is tracked through defined indicators and data analysis, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in line with institutional sustainability reporting.

Next Steps

Data and Reporting Infrastructure

- Centralized Impact Data Infrastructure: Establish an institution-wide data architecture consolidating sustainability, social impact, and ESG metrics to enable consistent collection, quality assurance, and longitudinal analysis.
- Impact Data Commons: Standardize a shared taxonomy, data dictionary, and data-governance rules (privacy, ethics, interoperability) to reduce fragmentation and enable scalable, auditable impact reporting.

Governance and Operations

- Organizational Change Management: Support the genuine integration of sustainability into administrative, financial, and operational processes, moving beyond policy adoption toward cultural internalization at all levels.
- Sustainable Procurement Guidelines: Develop and implement guidelines supported by targeted training, ongoing monitoring, and clear compliance mechanisms across all procurement activities and supplier relationships.
- Operations–Social Impact Alignment: Review administrative processes, including procurement and HR, to integrate social impact criteria (e.g., supplier diversity, bias-mitigating hiring) that reflect institutional values.

Visibility and Collaboration

- Sustainability Research Collaboration: Formalize active engagement, knowledge exchange, and joint initiatives among sustainability research groups to create a mutually reinforcing research ecosystem.
- External Communication: Proactively communicate the University's

KPIs (Target 2029)

Strategic Objective: By 2029, embed sustainability, ethics, and social impact into all core institutional processes, with year-on-year increases in sustainability budget allocation, a fully operational ESG dashboard, and consistently high performance in THE Impact Rankings and UI GreenMetric.

Number of ESG indicators across academic, operational, and governance domains. tracked institution-wide

Baseline (2025): 17

Target (2029): 30 or more ESG indicators systematically tracked and integrated into executive dashboards

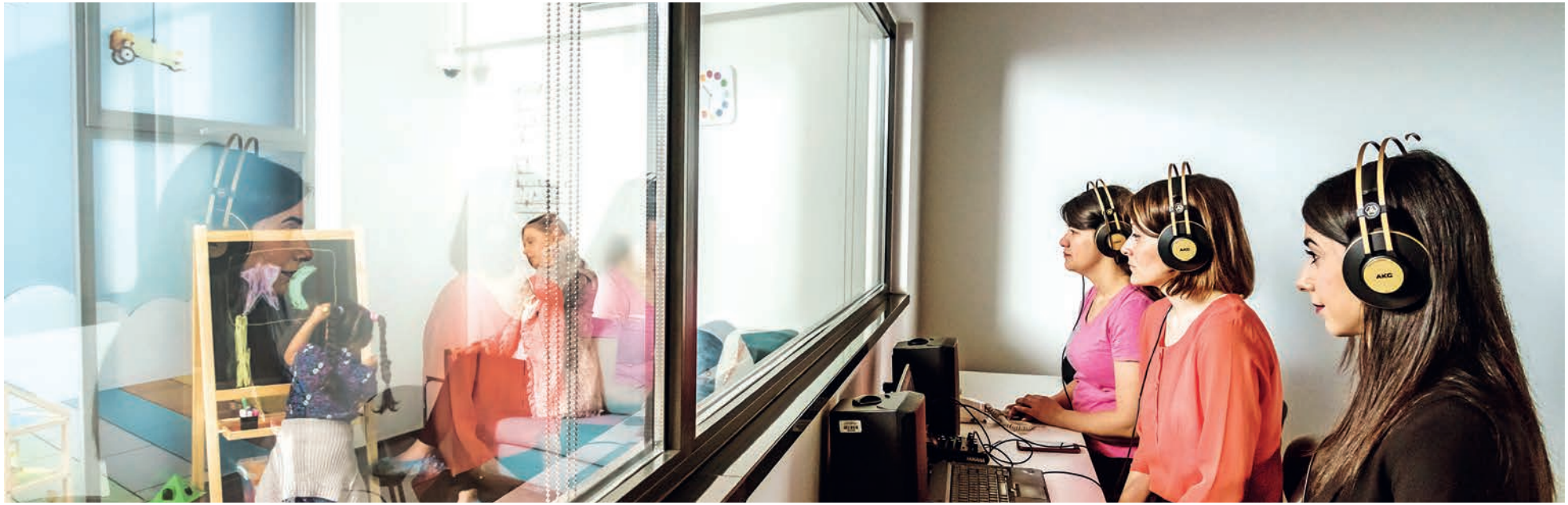
A Note on KPI Maturity

The University acknowledges that the indicators presented in this report represent a first-generation framework rather than a fully mature measurement system. Some areas, particularly in social impact, inclusion, and governance, currently rely on proxy measures that will be strengthened over time as dedicated data collection mechanisms are established. This is a deliberate and transparent starting point. A core institutional commitment accompanying this framework is the annual review and progressive refinement of KPIs: each reporting cycle will be used not only to track performance against existing targets, but to strengthen the quality, precision, and coverage of the indicators themselves. As data infrastructure matures and institutional capacity grows, the University expects to replace provisional measures with more robust ones, add new indicators where gaps are identified, and retire or consolidate metrics that no longer serve their purpose. The transition to annual impact reporting from 2026 onward is designed precisely to support this iterative improvement process.

measurable sustainability contributions to ranking bodies, funders, and the wider public through compelling, evidence-based reporting.

Challenges

- Operational Integration of Non-Traditional Metrics: Integrating qualitative and social-impact metrics into legacy administrative systems requires a fundamental redesign of workflows, as existing platforms were built for financial efficiency rather than equity tracking.
- Cultural Internalization at the Institutional Level: Ensuring sustainability is genuinely embedded in governance culture rather than remaining a reporting exercise requires sustained leadership commitment and change management capacity.
- Cross-Pillar Coordination: Maintaining coherent oversight across five strategic pillars and one cross-cutting governance dimension, thematic pillars with different theme leaders, timelines, and data systems creates coordination complexity that grows as the framework matures.
- Standardization of Impact Reporting: Aligning diverse units around a common impact taxonomy and reporting cycle requires ongoing negotiation and capacity building across academic and administrative functions.



4. Conclusion: From Commitment to Continuity

Sustainability at Özyeğin University is not defined as a fixed destination but as a continuous institutional learning process. This report demonstrates that the University has moved beyond isolated initiatives toward an integrated governance model in which sustainability functions as a strategic decision framework shaping education, research, operations, and societal engagement. The progress achieved between 2020 and 2025 , including training more than 500 practitioners through the Local and Rural Development Program, reaching carbon footprint reporting milestones, and receiving the 2025 International Safety Award as the only university in Türkiye, confirms that when sustainability is embedded into institutional architecture, it becomes measurable, accountable, and scalable.

At the same time, the transition from foundational capacity to systemic transformation presents a new generation of challenges. These include the need to further standardize sustainability learning outcomes across programs, strengthen data integration and KPI monitoring systems, expand interdisciplinary research collaboration, deepen stakeholder participation, and ensure that digital transformation processes remain ethical, inclusive, and aligned with public interest. Like all institutions navigating complex global transitions, the University must also continuously adapt to evolving regulatory environments, climate risks, technological disruptions, and shifting societal expectations. Addressing these challenges will require sustained institutional coordination, long-term investment, and an ongoing commitment to evidence-based decision-making.

Crucially, the University recognizes that sustainability leadership is not achieved through declarations but through demonstrable progress over time. The framework established in this report is intentionally designed as a living system, one that will be refined annually through transparent monitoring, stakeholder dialogue, and iterative improvement. The 2026 annual report will be the first test of that commitment: tracking progress against the targets set here, documenting what has been achieved, and being transparent about where further work is needed.

Looking ahead to 2029, Özyeğin University's ambition is to consolidate its role as a reference institution for sustainable higher education regionally, nationally, and globally. This means expanding the real-world impact of research, equipping graduates with the competencies required to lead systemic change, transforming the campus into a replicable model of operational sustainability, and deepening partnerships that translate knowledge into societal value.

Ultimately, the University's sustainability journey is grounded in a simple but powerful principle: knowledge gains its highest meaning when it contributes to a more just, resilient, and livable world. Guided by this principle, Özyeğin University will continue to align its entrepreneurial spirit with collective responsibility, ensuring that sustainability is not merely reported, but practiced, strengthened, and shared.

