

GERMANY, SLOVENIA, SPAIN AND TÜRKİYE

Article- International Collaboration | 15- 18 years

HITTING THE BREAKS ON FOSSIL FUELS



Image on heavy traffic (1)

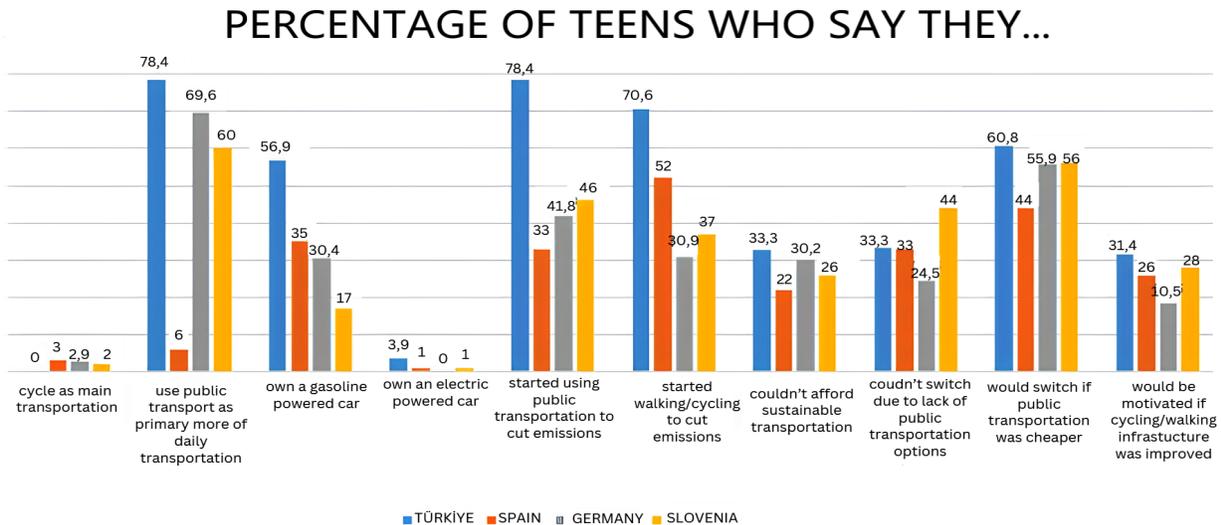
Transportation, by concept, is an irreplaceable part of ones daily life. While it's come a long way since the times in which the wheel was invented, so have the consequences and the workload it brings to the environment. Have you ever thought of your daily travel as a source of carbon pollution? Most vehicles run on fossil fuels, which makes the sector a leading contributor to climate change, responsible for nearly one-quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. (2)

As a team of students from Germany, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye, our focus was exploring the link between road transportation and climate change. Through surveys, interviews, and local investigations, we analyzed how transportation habits influence emissions and then explored solutions.

To better understand youths' perspective on the matter, we conducted a survey among 50 students each from each country. The results showed both common concerns and challenges in the adopting aspect of the sustainable transportation habits movement.

Young Perspectives on Sustainable Travel Choices

Gasoline and diesel-powered cars are the most preferred vehicles across our countries, while electric cars are still a rarity by comparison. Bicycle usage is on the lower side because of a lack of safe cycling infrastructure.



Survey answered by 50 German, Slovenian, Spanish and Turkish teens, aged 14-17, January 2025.

Many students think of public transportation, cycling and walking as the best ways to reduce emission. However, high costs and limited transit options make the change difficult. "Cheaper public transport fares would encourage more people to use it," one student suggested. To improve accessibility of green transport methods, students highlighted the need for more electric buses, safer cycling paths, expanded public transit routes and lower costs.

The Concerning Side of Fossil-Fueled Transport

During our Erasmus mobility in February 2025, as the students from 4 countries we attended the workshops led by Pablo Muñoz Nieto from Ecologistas en Acción and journalist Jorge Martín to understand the impact of transport. In light of these workshops, using the skills we developed as young eco-journalists, we explored the issue in our own countries.

Fossil fuels affect the climate crisis while harming human health. Air pollution causes 569,000 deaths in Europe, with transport as a major contributor (3). It's responsible for 24% of direct CO₂ with road vehicles being the main source of emissions (4). Moreover, it leads to noise, water pollution and affects ecosystem. For 45% of countries, transport is the largest source of energy related emissions. For the rest, it is the second largest (5).

In Türkiye, transport emissions rose from 12.8% of total greenhouse gases in 1990 to 16% in 2019(6).

Similarly, in Spain, petroleum-derived fuels make up over 90% of transport energy use.

Transport accounts for 29% of total emissions, the largest contributing sector (7).

Hydrocarbon emissions from transport amounted to 5,4 million tons, which represents 42.6% of all CO₂ emissions in Slovenia (8).

Meanwhile, in 2023, the transport sector in Germany was responsible for around 146 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, which represents around 22% of all national emissions (9).

These outcomes clearly indicate the graveness of the matter, stating fossil fuels are the majority regardless of the heavy outcomes. While electric vehicles are considered relatively greener, they aren't exactly zero-carbon as their batteries and manufacturing process produces emissions, not to mention the problems they may cause while getting disposed.

Stairway To Eco-Friendly Solutions

As soon as we faced the eye-opening facts, we directed our approach to our countries to understand their perspective. We were pleased to be informed of their current and future projects on greener methods, helping the battle towards emission and carbon footprint.

For on-site inspection, our team visited Madrid's transportation hub where we interviewed Fernando Sanz and Sara Luis and got informed of Madrid's strong public transport system with a total number of 15.8 million trips on a weekday, 66% are made by mechanized modes. Public transport owes most its popularity to its affordability. Hence, a low-cost travel card that offers unlimited rides for under-26s at just €8/month and free ride to older residents is the key to success.

Meanwhile in Eskişehir, Türkiye, public transport is being modernized and made more reachable with reduced fleet age. Furthermore, in foreseeable future, 20 more electric buses will be in use. In addition to the city's pre-existent bike paths, a 72 km bike path is also in progress (10). Transport Ministry invested €6M in eco-friendly ships and a Carbon-Free Airport Project, aiming for electric vehicles to take 50% of vehicles by 2035(11).

Slovenia is also committed to reducing emissions from transport, which makes 32.3% of Slovenian emissions (2019). Key measures until 2030 are cycle paths and low-emission zones, which are part of the National Energy and Climate Plan (12).

In Germany, DSW21 manages bus and train travel to Recklinghausen. In 2024, they invested €15 million to renew 5 km of rail. Future plans include e-buses in 2025(13). Dortmund has 1,200 km of cycle paths with improved cycling promotion since 2022. (14).

These promising acts are milestones for affordable and eco-friendly transport, while supporting sustainable mobility.



Image on sustainable methods (15)

Letting the Actions Speak...

Since mobility is essential in our everyday life, combatting this matter is comparatively harder, however, education on eco-friendly travel choices will lead to a society with developed habits which are the very essence of our future eco friendly world. Social media is a tailor-made outlet to distribute mindful solutions, considering its popularity. We have already started taking steps by launching a Car-Free Day Challenge at our schools which aims to encourage students and teachers to choose walking, cycling or using public transport instead of using their cars. Shifting from car to bike for just once a week cuts ones carbon footprint by 3.2kg of CO₂, equivalent to the emissions from driving a car for 10km(16).

This step encourages to show how small actions can collectively make a big difference.

Our long-term goal is to bring this challenge to more schools to make green transport a habit rather than a one-time effort. By working together and taking meaningful steps, we can help provide sustainability. Be a part of the future!

Webography and interviews

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