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# Cooperation Between Universities and the Business Community as a form of Achieving Sustainable Development

## Abstract

With economic development, the role of education has changed. In addition to teaching and research, the relationship between universities and companies has also become important. This issue is particularly relevant given society's increasing focus on responsible development. The aim of this article is to identify sustainable development measures taken by selected higher education institutions in Poland, to identify good practices for cooperation with business and to formulate recommendations for the future.

First, a literature analysis was conducted of the mission of the universities and the idea of sustainable development. A case study of four universities showed that universities engage in such activities to varying degrees, and that these measures most often concern the quality of education and support for lifelong learning. Examples of activities supporting communities and the environment were given. The ways in which universities collaborate with business were determined, and recommendations were given. This study serves as a prelude to empirical research involving individual interviews with representatives of stakeholder groups regarding sustainable development initiatives at Polish universities.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, SDG, sustainable development goals, university, Poland

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## Introduction

The advancement of technology, new management methods, and stakeholder expectations are reshaping the traditional role of education. Universities' relationships with the community are expanding to include knowledge exchange with businesses and public administration. Initiatives for local communities and the natural environment are also gaining in importance. Universities are increasingly supporting the establishment of business incubators and special purpose vehicles, facilitating high-level research, and encouraging students to become involved in student organisations. The aim of this article is to examine the sustainable development activities of selected higher education institutions in Poland, identify good practices for cooperation with business, and formulate recommendations for the future.

To achieve this, an analysis of reports and documents containing information on the sustainable development activities of Polish higher education institutions published after 2018 was conducted. Additionally, the case study method was employed. The first part of this article contains a review of the literature on the third mission of universities and the idea of sustainable development, while the subsequent sections present the research findings and recommendations.

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## Sustainable Development at Universities – Literature Review

### University Mission

The higher education system has undergone transformations over the centuries, driven, among other factors, by new expectations from stakeholder groups (Guerrero & Menter, 2024). Other factors that have had a significant impact are new social challenges (Menter, 2023), technological advancements (Ignaciuk, 2022), economic crises (Lehmann et al., 2018), pandemics (Siegel & Guerrero, 2021), and armed conflicts

(Tverdokhliebova & Yevtushenko, 2023). The publication of *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015) and *The 17 Goals* (SDGs, n.d.) has prompted universities to revise their approach to sustainable development.

Various definitions of the third mission of universities can be found in the literature. Researchers suggest that it encompasses all activities not classified as teaching and research (Göransson et al., 2009). This concept is often replaced with terms like *technology transfer*, *university-business cooperation*, or *social engagement* (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2023). According to Gibbons et al. (1994, p. 54), the third mission of higher education institutions involves collaboration with the socio-economic environment, responding to emerging challenges. Traditional areas such as education and research, which form the first and second pillars of the university mission, are insufficient in the face of growing demands for quality education and research development (Wrona et al., 2019). Universities are also becoming more engaged in ethical, cultural, and civilisational dimensions (Kola & Leja, 2015). Activities in these areas contribute to societal and economic development. Examples include knowledge sharing and the development and commercialisation of inventions and technologies through academic spin-offs or through licensing and patents (Guerrero & Menter, 2024). Other forms of entrepreneurial activity undertaken by higher education institutions include collaboration with businesses through the establishment of start-ups, building science parks, and business incubators (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2023).

In this article, the third mission of universities is understood as collaboration with the community on multiple levels, involving knowledge and capital exchange and engagement in community development.

## Collaboration Between Universities and the Community

Collaboration between higher education institutions and the community can take various forms depending on the level of commitment of the entities involved. Eight types of relationships have been identified, as presented in table 1.

All of these types of relationships exist in Polish higher education institutions. The aforementioned definition of the third mission of universities is linked to the development of academic entrepreneurship through the support of innovative activities, the development of new curricula tailored to market needs, knowledge commercialisation, collaboration between units, and academic mobility. Co-governance, which involves involving staff in decision-making processes and considering their feedback regarding university activities, also helps to achieve this goal.

University-business collaboration is defined as a relationship or process involving knowledge exchange between entities, enabling achievement of goals and mutual benefits (Wrona et al., 2019). Companies gain:

- easy access to the latest knowledge,
- the opportunity to use technological infrastructure such as technology parks,
- more efficient problem-solving,
- increased productivity,
- a competitive advantage.

Universities can tailor teaching methods to market needs and support research projects and new academic initiatives. This collaboration enables university staff to develop professionally and update their knowledge. Informal relationships between academics and business employees play a crucial role in organisational interactions. This cooperation benefits both parties,

**Table 1**  
*Types of Relationships Between Universities and Organisations*

Relationship type	Definition
Co-governance	A form of cooperation involving academics and university staff in the decision-making processes of organisations.
Academic entrepreneurship	Collaboration between universities and organisations in market analysis and the creation of new enterprises, as well as the development of innovative initiatives within universities.
Lifelong learning and continuous education	Courses and training programmes offered by universities for adults and employees of organisations.
Curriculum development and implementation	Enhancement of courses and teaching modules; collaboration with stakeholders in designing and delivering undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programmes
Commercialisation of R&D results	Establishment of spin-off companies, disclosure of innovations, and filing for patents and licences.
Academic mobility	Temporary or permanent movement of researchers or staff between universities and businesses.
R&D collaboration	R&D activities such as research contracts, supervision of dissertations, implementation of student projects in cooperation with businesses, sponsorship, and scholarships.

Source: own work based on: „Action research” w kształtowaniu współpracy uczelni z interesariuszami: korzyści, szanse i wyzwania (pp. 54–55), S. Wrona, E. Bogacz-Wojtanowska, A. Pluszyńska, & P. Jedynek, 2019, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego; „Academic engagement and commercialisation: A review of the literature on university–industry relations”, M. Perkmann, V. Tartari, M. McKelvey, E. Autio, A. Broström, P. D’Este, R. Fini, A. Geuna, R. Grimaldi, A. Hughes, S. Krabel, M. Kitson, P. Llerena, F. Lissoni, A. Salter, & M. Sobrero, 2013, *Research Policy*, 42(2), 427–429 (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2012.09.007>).

and facilitates further social and economic development (Wrona et al., 2019).

Based on the type of university collaboration with the community, Sánchez-Barrioluengo and Bennerworth (2019) identified three university models:

- entrepreneurial university, which focuses on commercialising results (Perkmann et al., 2013) by connecting academics with businesses and using various methods to promote innovation pathways, such as spin-offs, patents, or licences. Differences exist between the European and American models of the entrepreneurial university (Feola et al., 2021).
- engaged university, which combines knowledge creation with structural changes in knowledge exchange and management. Activities include industry training, aligning educational programmes with requirements, and applying for patents and licences
- regionally engaged university, which is associated with knowledge transfer to small and medium-sized enterprises in the region. It facilitates access to resources and fosters innovation, often through financial support from local partners.

The literature on university-community collaboration introduces the *triple helix* model of relationships. It considers knowledge and innovation transfer and highlights the growing interdependence between business, academia, and public authorities. Recently, this concept has been expanded to include the quadruple and quintuple helix. This expansion is due to the increasing role of higher education institutions in economic development and emergence of new interactions. The quadruple helix concept involves collaboration (Carayannis et al., 2012):

- the business sector,
- public administration,
- higher education institutions and research institutions,
- civil society, and the media.

In the fourth mission, universities can generate ties between research institutions worldwide, absorb knowledge and innovation, and collaborate with businesses and local communities as agents of change (Rinaldi et al., 2017).

The quintuple helix model adds the natural environment as the fifth element. This concept is based on the interaction between society and nature, their joint development and evolution. It forms the foundation for the idea of sustainable development.

### The Idea of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development appears in numerous scientific publications and legal acts, with the first mentions dating back to 1972 in the report *The Limits to Growth* prepared for the Club of Rome. It described the potential negative consequences of economic growth with limited resource supply. The best known definition comes from the 1987 report *Our Common Future* (United Nations, 1987)

developed by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. It emphasises current development while considering the needs of future generations.

In 2015, a key document on sustainable development, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015), was signed at the UN headquarters. It is an action plan aimed at strengthening peace, building partnerships, eliminating poverty and inequality, and caring for the natural environment. 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 tasks were set for the agenda's signatories, covering economic, social, and environmental areas. They focus on five transformational changes known as the 5Ps: People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity, and Partnership. The following sustainable development goals were highlighted:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education and Lifelong Learning
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequality
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Consumption and Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals.

These sustainable development goals can be applied to activities undertaken by businesses, non-profit organisations, and higher education institutions. Reporting on the achievement of these goals is becoming increasingly common. The surrounding community has a significant influence on universities, expecting information on activities supporting environmental protection, local communities, and the development of scientific and research collaboration (Krasodomska & Godawska, 2020). Each of the 17 goals can be achieved to varying degrees, depending on the size of the university, research areas, funding, and collaboration with businesses.

Special indicators have been developed to measure these goals. *Voluntary National Reviews* are conducted to summarise sustainable development activities. Poland participated in the review in 2018 and 2023. The latest report presented conditions and challenges accompanying goal implementation and highlighted new priorities (*Realizacja Celów Zrównoważonego Rozwoju w Polsce*, 2023). Statistics Poland also monitors the extent to which these goals are achieved, according to the indicators described in the agenda, publishing results in the SDG Report. In 2023, the analysis focused on women's roles in social and economic life. In addition to equality, access to education and healthcare was also examined (GUS, 2023).

## Research Methodology

The aim of the research was to identify sustainable development measures taken by selected higher education institutions in Poland, to identify good practices for cooperation with business and to formulate recommendations for the future. The following research questions were posed:

1. What actions are universities taking to implement the idea of sustainable development?
2. Which sustainable development goals are being pursued by universities?
3. How is university-business cooperation in this area structured?

The study utilised a literature review on sustainable development in higher education institutions and a case study method. After an initial analysis of activities conducted by 53 universities that are signatories to the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities (Ministry of Science and Higher Education) (MNiSW, 2022), the author selected four universities for detailed examination: the AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków, the Krakow University of Economics, the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, and the University of Warsaw. The criteria for selection were as follows:

1. Signing the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities. This document, drawn up in 2017, outlines sustainable development premises for universities.
2. Implementation of the premises outlined in the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities, such as:
  - developing inter-university cooperation to strengthen sustainable development actions;
  - minimising the negative impact of the academic community on the natural environment;
  - cooperation with stakeholders.
3. Information regarding social, environmental, and economic activities in documents such as activity reports or social reports.

In January 2024, the author reviewed information contained in the social reports and statements prepared by the selected universities. The article lists the main activities of these universities and the sustainable development goals they are pursuing.

University-business collaboration in this area was also examined. This analysis enabled the research objectives to be attained and recommendations to be formulated.

## Research Results

One criterion for including universities in the study was being a signatory to the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities. This document pertains to four main areas of university activity: supporting academic values, conducting social responsibility projects, university management, and cooperation with the community (MNiSW, n.d.). Another source of materials for analysis was the *Catalogue of Good Practices of Universities in ESG Areas* (Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy) (MFIPR, 2023), which lists universities' social, environmental, and economic activities. A total of 146 new and improved practices were reported, with the majority concerning social impact. No less than 70 activities were related to education (SDG 4), and over 20 initiatives addressed reducing inequalities in the academic community (SDG 10). This catalogue serves as a source of information on the degree to which SDGs are attained.

The mentioned documents feature terms such as *corporate social responsibility* and *sustainable development*. In the literature, these are often used interchangeably due to their interdependencies (Sołek-Borowska, 2024). *Social responsibility* is considered at the micro level and involves voluntary social and environmental actions taken by organisations, as well as collaboration with stakeholders. In contrast, *sustainable development* at the macro level pertains to the entire economy and individual entities. The social responsibility model forms the basis for achieving SDGs (Sołek-Borowska, 2024). Given the social, environmental, and economic premises laid down in the Declaration, the author analyses this document in the context of sustainable development. Figure 1 presents examples of university activities with respect to sustainable development.

### AGH University of Krakow

The AGH University of Krakow is one of Poland's technical universities, offering education in 17 faculties and the opportunity to conduct research at the

**Figure 1**

*Activities of Universities regarding Social Responsibility and the Implementation of SDGs*

Social Area	Environmental Area	Economic Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the quality of education by expanding the range of postgraduate studies and study programmes on offer.</li><li>• Supporting international exchanges of academic staff and students.</li><li>• Organising events and workshops to integrate the community.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing environmental awareness among the academic community and business representatives.</li><li>• Conducting research and projects, including those related to circular economy practices.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborating with the business sector by conducting implementation research and developing innovations.</li><li>• Managing the university in a responsible manner and supporting the academic community.</li></ul>

Source: author's own work based on *Zaproszenie do przystąpienia do Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni*, MNiSW, 2022, May 25 (<https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/zaproszenie-do-przystapienia-do-deklaracji-spolecznej-odpowiedzialnosci-uczelni>).

Academic Centre for Materials and Nanotechnology. According to its new strategy, AGH's goals include modern education, encouraging students from home and abroad to choose this university, further development as a research university and innovation leader, and national and international cooperation (AGH, 2022).

One of its auxiliary units is the AGH-UNESCO International Centre for Promotion of Technology and Education (<https://www.unesco.agh.edu.pl>). Established in 2010, it was the first unit in Poland supporting knowledge exchange and transfer. Its purpose is to promote, manage research, and provide university education on an international scale. The activities of the AGH UNESCO Centre align with the fourth sustainable development goal concerning quality education and lifelong learning. Each year, it announces a competition among university staff for young scientists, involving an internship at one of the AGH's units. The scholarship recipient obtains higher qualifications and the opportunity to conduct research in a chosen field. Other activities of the centre include visits to collaborating institutions, organising open days, and hosting scientific seminars (Centrum Międzynarodowej Promocji Technologii i Edukacji AGH-UNESCO, n.d.).

The Faculty of Management at the AGH offers postgraduate studies in sustainable enterprise development, facilitating the implementation of innovative solutions (Wydział Zarządzania, n.d.). The Department of Sustainable Energy Development (Katedra Zrównoważonego Rozwoju Energetycznego, n.d.) at the Faculty of Energy and Fuels conducts research related to sustainable energy development and offers courses in renewable energy and energy management. In Miękinia, the Centre for Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency conducts educational and practical classes for students, as well as workshops and conferences on renewable energy sources (Katedra Surowców Energetycznych, n.d.). These initiatives help to achieve SDGs 6 and 9.

The AGH collaborates with businesses, higher education institutions, and other entities. It provides professional research teams, equipment, and software necessary for conducting high-level research. To fos-

ter academic entrepreneurship and innovation, the INNOAGH Krakow Centre for Innovative Technologies (<https://www.innoagh.pl>) was established, with a mission to create academic, technological start-ups. This supports social and economic activities focused on innovation development (SDG 9) and strengthening partnerships between institutions (SDG 17).

Information about the AGH, its research activities, and collaborations can be found on the university's official website (<https://www.agh.edu.pl>) and in legal documents. The AGH Nauka channel ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWQK-C\\_twgtpV9yWEE-WSqZS3L49OMRREQ](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWQK-C_twgtpV9yWEE-WSqZS3L49OMRREQ)) and Bunkier Nauki (<https://www.youtube.com/c/bunkiernauki>) promote scientific research. The *AGH Social Responsibility Report 2019–2020 (Raport społecznej odpowiedzialności AGH 2019–2020, 2020)* highlights the university's contributions to the student community, educational initiatives, collaborations, and environmental protection. It outlines best economic, social, and environmental practices, as well as the university's principles of social responsibility. The report identifies several SDGs pursued by the university, including: SDG 3 (improving health and proper medical care), SDG 4 (related to fair, high-quality education and encouraging lifelong learning), SDG 5 (concerning gender equality), SDG 6 (responsible water management), SDG 9 (introducing innovation, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation), SDG 11 (supporting responsible cities), and SDG 17 (strengthening partnerships between institutions). The university's efforts to implement sustainable development are summarised in table 2.

### Krakow University of Economics (UEK)

The history of this university dates back to 1925. It offers studies in 30 fields with an economic profile, postgraduate studies, and MBA programmes (UEK, n.d.b). Units such as the Krakow School of Business (Krakowska Szkoła Biznesu, n.d.) and the Centre for Strategic and International Entrepreneurship (Centrum Przedsiębiorczości Strategicznej i Międzynarodowej, n.d.) also operate. The Centre's goals include conducting scientific research in entrepreneurship and innovation, organising conferences, and promoting entrepreneurial

**Table 2**

*The AGH's Measures to Implement SDGs*

Social Area	Environmental Area	Economic Area
Promoting science through the AGH Nauka and Bunkier Nauki channels, as well as on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This involves all members of the academic community and encourages knowledge sharing.	Expanding knowledge about the natural environment among the academic community and stakeholders by organising events on ecology and environmental protection, conducting educational activities, and researching ways to reduce the harmful impact on the environment.	Collaboration between the Faculty of Management and Danone to develop innovative solutions in the field of circular economy and build synergies between science and business.

Source: author's own work based on *Centrum Zrównoważonego Rozwoju i Poszanowania Energii WGGiOŚ AGH w Miękinii*, Katedra Surowców Energetycznych, n.d. (<https://kse.agh.edu.pl/centrum-miekinia-agh/>); *Zrównoważony rozwój przedsiębiorstwa. 1 edycja studiów podyplomowych*, Wydział Zarządzania, n.d. (<https://www.csr.agh.edu.pl/>); Danone i Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza w Krakowie rozpoczynają współpracę, K. Walkowiak, 2023, *Poradnik Handlowca* (<https://poradnikhandlowca.com.pl/artykuly/danone-i-akademia-gorniczo-hutnicza-w-krakowie-rozpoczynaja-wspolprace/>).

## Cooperation Between Universities...

attitudes. An example is the Science Ninja programme, popularising science among stakeholders (Nauka. UEK, n.d.). These initiatives help to achieve SDGs 4 and 9.

As part of the university's third mission, UEK implements the Responsible UEK programme (UEK, n.d.c). The initiative involves activities in four areas:

- Art – supporting dialogue, creativity, and sensitivity to art and promoting the city's and region's cultural offerings. An example is the Ukrainian Art Festival (Odpowiedzialny UEK, n.d.).
- Helping – exchange of knowledge and experiences between stakeholders and developing social sensitivity, e.g., through a collection for an animal shelter.
- Ecology – strengthening ecological awareness and supporting social development. As part of this area, workshops for students titled *Picturebook for the Earth* were held (UEK, 2023).
- Civic Engagement – organising *Let's Talk about Kraków* meetings (Odpowiedzialny UEK, 2022) enabling discussion and knowledge exchange, and highlighting important topics for the community.

Information about activities is available on the university's and the Responsible UEK project's websites. Social media do not feature tags for sustainable development information. In 2020, a university social responsibility report titled *In Search of University Excellence* was produced, presenting the UEK's economic, social, and environmental activities (Sady, 2020). No further editions of the document were published, and activities are described in a general way. The document *Goals of the Krakow University of Economics for the Implementation of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals* (UEK, n.d.a) lists goals such as promoting well-being (SDG 3), ensuring quality education (SDG 4), achieving gender balance (SDG 5), fostering economic growth (SDG 8), developing innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), ensuring sustainable consumption (SDG 12), combating climate change (SDG 13), and strengthening partnerships (SDG 17). Table 3 presents the university's sustainable development activities.

The UEK collaborates with domestic and international universities and entrepreneurs. The Department of Knowledge Transfer and International Projects provides support for implementing

innovation and knowledge sharing (UEK, n.d.e). Additionally, projects such as the Capgemini Academy (Akademickie Centrum Kariery UEK, n.d.) and the Learning Academy (Shell, n.d.) support student knowledge development in areas like team management or social responsibility. This ensures the achievement of SDGs 4 and 9.

### SGH Warsaw School of Economics

The origins of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics date back to 1906. It offers bachelor's, master's, postgraduate, and MBA studies, as well as business training. The university implements projects such as the *Impact of Human Factors Research on Improving Management Efficiency in Healthcare* programme (SGH, n.d.c). The SGH Warsaw School of Economics Foundation for the Development of Managerial Education (Fundacja Rozwoju Edukacji Menedżerskiej SGH, n.d.) promotes and conducts activities to improve management quality and supports the development of entrepreneurship and innovation programmes. This helps to achieve two SDGs: ensuring quality education (4) and fostering innovation (9).

The university also supports entrepreneurial and innovative activities and cooperation with the business environment. The SGH Warsaw School of Economics Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology Transfer (Centrum Przedsiębiorczości i Transferu Technologii SGH, n.d.) provides initial project consultations and assists in developing business models. This aligns with SDG 9, which focuses on fostering innovation.

Information about the activities undertaken by SGH Warsaw School of Economics is available on the university's website (<https://www.sgh.waw.pl>) and in the SGH Warsaw School of Economics Gazette (<https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl>). In 2024, the university published the *Report on the Implementation of the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities* (Glen, 2024a). It outlines 12 principles and 35 indicators used to assess the achievement of SDGs. Examples of social, environmental, and economic activities are presented in table 4.

### University of Warsaw (UW)

The university's origins date back to 1816. UW offers undergraduate and graduate studies in 25 faculties and postgraduate studies. It has over 30 scientific and

**Table 3**

*The UEK's Measures to Implement SDGs*

Social Area	Environmental Area	Economic Area
Promoting the city's and region's cultural offerings and integrating the community, e.g., the Ukrainian Art Festival. Organising <i>Let's Talk about Kraków</i> meetings.	Organising workshops for students titled <i>Picturebook for the Earth</i> .	Collaboration on various levels: academic exchange, knowledge sharing, or innovation creation.  Learning Academy project aimed at students.

Source: author's own work based on: *Learning Academy*, Shell, n.d. (<https://www.shell.com/business-customers/aviation/aviation-consultancy-services/technical-products-and-services/operating-systems/learning-academy.html>); *Warsztaty „Picturebook dla Ziemi”*, UEK, 2023 (<https://uek.krakow.pl/artikuly/studenci/warsztaty-picturebook-dla-ziemi>); *Porozmawiaj-MY o Krakowie – nowy cykl debat obywatelskich*, Odpowiedzialny UEK, 2022 (<https://odpowiedzialny.uek.krakow.pl/2022/09/19/porozmawiaj-my-o-krakowie-nowy-cykl-debat-obywatelskich/>); *Festiwal Sztuki Ukrainiejskiej*, Odpowiedzialny UEK, n.d. (<https://odpowiedzialny.uek.krakow.pl/sztuka/category/sztuka-na-uek/>); *Współpraca*, UEK, n.d.d (<https://uek.krakow.pl/wspolpraca>).

**Table 4**

SGH Warsaw School of Economics Measures to Implement SDGs

Social Area	Environmental Area	Economic Area
<p>The SGH Warsaw School of Economics Thursday Forum, where economic topics are discussed, expanding stakeholder knowledge.</p> <p>Scientific conference <i>Sustainable Human Resources Management – an International Perspective</i> conducted under the <i>Excellence in Science</i> programme, raising awareness of human resource management challenges and threats.</p> <p>Collaboration with the Foundation for the Campaign of 17 Goals and promoting knowledge in sustainable development.</p>	<p>The Greencoin project promoting pro-ecological behaviours among citizens, rewarding ecological attitudes and actions.</p>	<p>Activities of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics Partners Club, which brings together the university and international enterprises.</p>

Source: author's own work based on *Czwartkowe Forum SGH*, n.d. (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLED2KqSSukbZRApCzL0tytR8wKjCYu>); *Raport wdrażania Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni w SGH*, P. Glen, 2024a, *Gazeta SGH* (<https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/meritum/raport-wdrazania-deklaracji-spolecznej-odpowiedzialnosci-uczelni-w-sgh>); *Porozumienie SGH z Fundacją Kampania 17 Celów*, P. Glen, 2024b, *Gazeta SGH* (<https://gazeta.sgh.waw.pl/wspolpraca-z-otoczeniem/porozumienie-sgh-z-fundacja-kampania-17-celow>); SGH, n.b.d (<https://www.sgh.waw.pl/en/events/sustainable-human-resources-management-international-perspective>); *Greencoin*, SGH, n.d.a (<https://www.sgh.waw.pl/projekty-i-granty-naukowe/greencoin>); *Klub Partnerów SGH*, SGH, n.d.b (<https://www.sgh.waw.pl/klub-partnerow-sgh>); *Sustainable Human Resources Management – an International Perspective*, SGH, n.d.d (<https://www.sgh.waw.pl/en/events/sustainable-human-resources-management-international-perspective>).

educational units and numerous research centres in Poland and abroad. The university has received numerous awards and distinctions, such as the HR Excellence in Research, awarded for good working conditions and anti-discrimination efforts (UW, 2022). This helps to achieve SDG 5. The integrated actions programme for UW's development has been implemented since 2018, with activities in educational programmes, doctoral studies, skill enhancement, and university management.

The Digital Economy Lab is an interdisciplinary platform for university-business collaboration, where scientific projects are conducted and specialist papers on technology development are produced (DELab, n.d.). This realises the goal related to economic growth, high-quality education, and innovation development. The *Smart Green University* programme (UW, 2024a) declared a reduction in the carbon footprint and the realisation of other goals: responsible transport (SDGs 12 and

13), nutrition (SDGs 2 and 8), consumption (SDG 12), and the use of natural resources (SDGs 13, 14, and 15).

The Open University (Uniwersytet Otwarty, n.d.) is responsible for popularising science, offering academic courses for everyone. The development of science is also supported through organising events. The Science for Business – Business for Science conference, addressing challenges and conditions for university collaboration with the business and institutional environment, facilitates the creation of a cooperation model between the academic environment and the business community (Konfederacja Lewiatan, n.d.). This enables the implementation of SDG 4 – improving the quality of education. The University of Warsaw operates the Centre for Technology and Knowledge Transfer (UW, n.d.), supporting student entrepreneurial initiatives and mediating in business contacts. Social, environmental, and economic activities are listed in table 5.

**Table 5**

UW's Measures to Implement SDGs

Social Area	Environmental Area	Economic Area
<p>Educational programmes including courses on sustainable development, postgraduate studies on sustainable logistics, and responsible and sustainable university management.</p>	<p>Green Day at UW, featuring lectures on environmental care, e.g., unused thermal energy issues.</p>	<p>Membership in consortia and councils supporting scientific development and environmental protection, such as the ACTRIS-ERIC consortium.</p> <p>Organising the Entrepreneur of the Year competition at the University of Warsaw and recognising companies that create innovations, engage in social activities, or operate as start-ups.</p>

Source: author's own work based on *UW członkiem konsorcjum ACTRIS-ERIC*, UW, 2023a (<https://www.uw.edu.pl/uw-czlonkiem-konsorcjum-actris-eric/>); *Zielony Dzień na UW*, UW, 2023b (<https://www.uw.edu.pl/zielony-dzien-na-uw/>); *Zwycięzcy konkursu Przedsiębiorca Roku UW*, UW, 2024b (<https://www.uw.edu.pl/zwyciezcy-konkursu-przedsiębiorca-roku-uw/>).



## Sustainable Development – Information on University Activities

Table 6 presents the main sources of information on university activities related to sustainable development. Environmental and social initiatives are reported in university activity reports. Universities such as the SGH Warsaw School of Economics and the Krakow University of Economics (UEK) publish additional documents, such as *Inspirownik dla uczelni* (Inspirational Guide for Universities) (Glen, 2023). Two of these universities post information on social activities on their social media platforms.

**Table 6**  
Sources of Information on University Sustainable Development Activities

	University Website	Social Reports	Activity Reports	Other Documents	Social Media
AGH	X	X	X		X
UE	X	X		X	X
SGH Warsaw School of Economics	X	X	X	X	
UW	X	X	X		

Source: author's own work.

## Conclusion

Social, environmental, and economic measures are taken by universities due to the expectations of the community: the academic community, scientific institutions, state authorities, and businesses (Krasodomska & Godawska, 2020).

Universities take sustainable development measures such as:

- Green Day at UW – An initiative that raises awareness in the academic community through lectures on environmental care and the issue of unused thermal energy.
- *Excellence in Science* programme – A programme aimed at raising awareness of challenges and risks relating to human resource management.
- Dissemination of scientific content – Posting content on social media, as well as on the AGH Nauka and Bunkier Nauki channels, to popularise scientific research and facilitate knowledge exchange among users.
- Collaboration with the business community – Supporting initiatives related to scientific development and environmental protection, such as the ACTRIS-ERIC consortium.

These activities enable the achievement of sustainable development goals such as improving education quality (SDG 4), gender equality in recruiting, including academic staff (SDG 5), conducting research on the circular economy (SDGs 6 and 9), using renewable energy at universities (SDG 7), and collaborating with businesses to create innovative solutions (SDGs 9 and 17).

The role of pro-environmental actions, such as workshops and training for the academic community,

which increase knowledge of environmental protection, nature care, and consumer awareness, should be emphasised. An example is the *Picturebook for the Earth* initiative by the Krakow University of Economics.

Equally noteworthy are the academic programmes offered by the universities discussed, as well as student workshops on topics such as sustainable development, the circular economy, and the use of renewable energy sources. These initiatives help introduce young people to the latest developments in these areas, ultimately influencing the operations of businesses that employ university graduates.

Supporting local communities remains a relatively underdeveloped area for universities, and the author suggests that such activities should be expanded. Companies frequently engage in initiatives such as employee volunteering, supporting charitable campaigns, and organising events for employees and their families. These forms of community engagement should also be implemented by universities. Furthermore, collaboration with businesses should be expanded to facilitate faster transfer of knowledge and scientific research results. Currently, there are concerns about intellectual property rights and funding.

## Recommendations and Future Development Directions

The case study demonstrated that university-business collaboration supports the implementation of sustainable development. Projects like the Capgemini Academy and the Learning Academy with the Krakow University of Economics facilitate knowledge sharing. Organising competitions such as the Entrepreneur of the Year at UW strengthens business relationships. Various forms of academic community collaboration with the community not only achieve sustainable development goals but also create new initiatives.

Based on the case study, the following recommendations have been developed to enhance the implementation of SDGs:

1. Supporting academic values as outlined in university codes and regulations.
2. Upholding principles of tolerance, equality, and human rights.
3. Fostering a strong academic community and promoting inclusivity.

4. Engaging in partnerships with national and international research institutions to facilitate knowledge sharing.
5. Adhering to ethical principles in teaching, research, and external collaborations.
6. Raising awareness among the academic community regarding sustainable development.
7. Minimising activities that are harmful to the natural environment.
8. Encouraging creativity and entrepreneurship among all members of the academic community.
9. Strengthening relationships with the business sector and engaging in ongoing dialogue about sustainable development initiatives.
10. Developing and implementing official documents related to the realisation of sustainable development goals, such as a sustainability code, and regularly reporting on progress.

Potential future development directions for universities in the area of sustainable development include developing social initiatives such as supporting minorities or excluded groups and furthering research related to sustainable development and the circular economy. Additionally, membership in councils and associations can improve collaboration with businesses and facilitate new projects.

### Summary

Climate change, increased globalisation, and technological development are just some of the new challenges facing higher education institutions (Kola & Leja, 2015). Needs of stakeholders, including local communities, are becoming increasingly important. Measures are being taken to support the natural environment and reduce the harmful effect on the climate (Guerrero & Menter, 2024).

The study achieved its goal of identifying sustainable development activities conducted by selected universities in Poland. Examples of good practices were identified and described, including collaboration with businesses. Recommendations for the future were formulated in the form of ten points, partially referring to the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities.

In conclusion, universities implement a sustainable development strategy through numerous activities related to the 17 SDGs. The four universities analysed pursue the goals of providing the highest quality education, enhancing academic community competence, ensuring equality, conducting research to reduce the negative impact of universities on the natural environment, and supporting innovation. Information on achieving these goals is published on websites, in social reports, or activity statements and is not systematically organised. This complicates data retrieval and comparison of sustainable development goal achievement.

The presented study is a pilot and serves as a starting point for research on stakeholder perceptions of sustainable development activities by universities: students, doctoral candidates, staff, entrepreneurs,

or other cooperating entities. The results would help universities understand market needs regarding social and environmental engagement and gather community opinions on past actions.

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## WE RECOMMEND

**Małgorzata Adamska-Chudzińska, Justyna Pawlak (Eds.)**

***Work Engagement and Employee Well-being. Psychosocial Support to Build Engaged Human Capital***

*Work Engagement and Employee Well-being* highlights the vital role of psychosocial support in building and stimulating work engagement. It is a response to the growing phenomenon of weakened employee attachment and engagement instability. The authors underscore the importance of creating a friendly work environment, which accommodates a variety of employee needs and elicits positive emotions, thus fostering the well-being and complete engagement of employees. An in-depth literature review and empirical research conducted using combined qualitative and quantitative methods enabled the authors to present the issue from a wide range of theoretical perspectives. With a model acknowledging the multifaceted nature of work engagement and its association with well-being, the book introduces a selection of psychosocial means to enhance it. The analysis focuses on both systemic measures, that is, promoting a supportive organizational culture and protecting work-life balance, as well as a more individualized approach that not only facilitates the recognition and respect of employee needs but also helps cultivate their development. The book places emphasis on a transformational leadership style and a high level of emotional intelligence among managers, particularly their empathy. Further attention was paid to the various ways to support specific employee groups, such as remote workers and neurodivergent members of the workforce.

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