



Ministry of Development
Funds and Regional Policy

The Working Group
on University
Social Responsibility

Brochure of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility

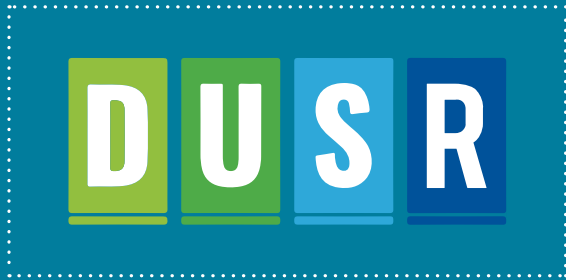
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D U S R

Table of Content

1. Introduction	5
2. Contents of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility	6
3. List of signatories of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility	8
4. History of the creation of the Working Group on USR.....	12
5. Development of a definition of the University Social Responsibility and the Declaration of USR.....	14
6. Key projects and outcomes of the Working Group on USR.....	18
7. University self-assessment form for the implementation of the Declaration of USR	24
8. Benefits of implementing the principles of the Declaration of USR	28
9. The Working Group on USR plans, lines of action, perspectives	32
10. Invitation to cooperation	34



1. Introduction

Dear Sir/Madam,

It is with great satisfaction that we place in your hands this brochure, which is the summary of many years of work by the Working Group on University Social Responsibility (USR). It is a publication that not only provides an overview of what has been done so far, but first and foremost inspires and encourages the further development of the idea of university social responsibility and sustainability in the academic community, both in Poland and abroad.

The Working Group on USR, since its establishment, has consistently strived to spread the idea of social responsibility among universities. Our aim is to build awareness, promote good practice and support initiatives that contribute to sustainability and build strong social capital through the academic community. We believe that universities, as centres of knowledge and innovation, play a key role in shaping the future of societies.

In this brochure, you will find an overview of the key activities, projects and initiatives we have implemented over the past years. We present both our successes and the challenges we have faced, sharing our experience and knowledge. I hope that the achievements of the Working Group on USR will become an inspiration for universities that want to actively engage in building a better world.

We also pay special attention to the international dimension of our activities. We are convinced that the exchange of experience and cooperation with universities from other countries is essential for the successful implementation of social responsibility and sustainability on a global scale. This is why we present the content of the brochure in Polish as well as in English, as we are very keen to promote these values and principles in the academic community worldwide.

I hope that this brochure will become a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for all those in the academic community who share the values implemented and promoted by the Working Group on Social Responsibility of Universities. I believe that it is only by working together that we can achieve lasting change and create a future where sustainability and social responsibility are the cornerstones of what we do, and universities become the centres for shaping the leaders of this change.

You are warmly invited to read!

Professor Piotr Wachowiak, PhD
Rector of SGH Warsaw School of Economics
Coordinator of the Working Group
on University Social Responsibility



2. Contents of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility



DECLARATION OF UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The particular role of universities, as a place for creating and transferring knowledge about the reality surrounding us, obligates them to take into account and apply the principles of social responsibility in all areas of their activity, as well as to promote these principles among stakeholders.

Taking into consideration the best interests of higher education in Poland, aware of our role in implementing the principles of sustainable development, ensuring high quality research and education, and caring for the comprehensive development of the academic community, we commit ourselves to:

- 1) *Fostering the ethical values listed, among others, in the "Code of Ethics for Research Staff", in particular: conscientiousness, objectivism, independence, openness, and transparency.*
- 2) *Shaping social and civic attitudes of future elites conducive to building community, creativity, openness, and communication, along with social sensitivity and work culture.*
- 3) *Promoting the idea of equality, diversity, tolerance, as well as respecting and protecting human rights in reference to the entire academic community and its environment.*
- 4) *Expanding curricula to include such issues as ethics and corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and social innovation.*
- 5) *Realizing projects that implement principles of social responsibility, in particular those concerning diversity management in the workplace, corporate volunteering, promotion of ethics principles, inter-sectoral cooperation, and cause-related marketing.*
- 6) *Undertaking scientific research and implementation work that, in the framework of partnership with other academic centers from around the world, enterprises, public administration, and non-governmental organizations, will be able to contribute towards resolving fundamental social problems.*
- 7) *Developing inter-institutional, national, and international cooperation, enabling the adaptation and strengthening of best practices in the range of university social responsibility.*
- 8) *Taking care for universities' governance, basing their management on the foundations of social responsibility, both in strategic documents as well as in resulting activities that serve the comprehensive development of the academic community and effective realization of universities' mission.*
- 9) *Ensuring transparency in the activities conducted by universities through, among others, measuring results, promoting and popularizing achievements, as well as designating a person or team for coordinating these activities.*
- 10) *Conducting actions/ Operating in such a manner as to minimize the negative impact of activities realized by the academic community and its stakeholders on the natural environment, in all its dimensions.*
- 11) *Conducting dialogue with stakeholders on the priorities of university social responsibility policy and reporting its results.*
- 12) *Following the principles of ethics and responsibility in the process of teaching and conducting scientific research, in order to provide stakeholders with optimal conditions for making use of knowledge, intellectual capital, and universities' achievements.*





3. List of Signatories of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility

Signatories of the Declaration of USR of 2017

No.	Name of university	No.	Name of university
1.	Kozminski University	13.	Medical University of Silesia in Katowice
2.	Humanitas University in Sosnowiec	14.	Cracow University of Economics
3.	WSB University	15.	Poznań University of Economics and Business
4.	Centre of Postgraduate Medical Education	16.	Wrocław University of Economics and Business
5.	Collegium Witelona	17.	University of Gdańsk
6.	Management Academy of Applied Sciences	18.	Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
7.	Gdańsk University of Technology	19.	University of Lodz
8.	Lodz University of Technology	20.	Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Krakow
9.	Wrocław University of Technology	21.	University of Silesia in Katowice
10.	Powiślański University	22.	University of Wroclaw
11.	SGH Warsaw School of Economics	23.	University of Bielsko-Biala
12.	Vistula School of Hospitality		

Signatories of the Declaration of USR of 2019

No.	Name of university	No.	Name of university
24.	John Paul II Academy of Biała Podlaska	54.	Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa
25.	Vistula University	55.	Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce
26.	AGH University of Science and Technology	56.	Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
27.	Wojciech Korfanty Upper Silesian Academy in Katowice	57.	Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
28.	Stefan Batory Academy of Applied Sciences	58.	Wroclaw Medical University
29.	Elbląg University of Applied Sciences	59.	Medical University of Białystok
30.	Mazovian Academy in Płock	60.	Medical University of Lodz
31.	Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz	61.	Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
32.	Polonia University in Częstochowa	62.	University of the National Education Commission, Krakow
33.	Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk	63.	Siedlce University
34.	Tarnów Academy	64.	Poznań University of Life Sciences
35.	Eugeniusz Piasecki University School of Physical Education in Poznań	65.	Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences
36.	University School of Physical Education in Wrocław	66.	University of Rzeszów
37.	Civitas University	67.	University of Białystok
38.	Medical University of Gdańsk	68.	University of Warsaw
39.	Ignacy Mościcki State Academy of Applied Sciences in Ciechanów	69.	WSB Merito University in Gdańsk

40.	State Academy of Applied Sciences in Włocławek	70.	WSB Merito University in Poznań
41.	Rev. Bronisław Markiewicz State Academy of Applied Sciences in Jarosław	71.	WSB Merito University in Wrocław
42.	State Academy of Applied Sciences in Przemyśl	72.	Medical University of Warsaw
43.	State Academy of Applied Sciences in Chełm	73.	Jarosław Dąbrowski Military University of Technology in Warsaw
44.	State Academy of Applied Sciences in Nysa	74.	Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski University of Administration and Business in Gdynia
45.	Białystok University of Technology	75.	Apeiron School of Public and Individual Security in Kraków
46.	Jan and Jędrzej Śniadecki University of Technology in Bydgoszcz	76.	University of Technology and Arts in Applied Sciences in Warsaw
47.	Tadeusz Kościuszko Cracow University of Technology	77.	Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Warsaw
48.	Silesian University of Technology	78.	Bydgoszcz University of Science and Technology
49.	Warsaw University of Technology	79.	University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów
50.	Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology	80.	University of Strategic Planning in Dąbrowa Górnicza
51.	Jan Wyżykowski University	81.	University of Occupational Safety Management in Katowice
52.	University of Lower Silesia	82.	West Pomeranian Business School – University of Applied Sciences
53.	University of Economics in Katowice	83.	West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin

Signatories of the Declaration of USR of 2022

No.	Name of university	No.	Name of university
84.	Ignatianum Academy in Kraków	123.	Paweł Włodkowic University College in Płock
85.	Jakub of Paradyz Academy	124.	Jański University in Łomża
86.	Kuyavian-Pomeranian Academy	125.	Korczak University - Academy of Applied Sciences in Warsaw
87.	Academy of Medical and Social Applied Sciences	126.	Lazarski University
88.	Maritime University of Szczecin	127.	Łukaszewski University
89.	Grazyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź	128.	University of Social Sciences
90.	Stanisław Moniuszko Academy of Music in Gdańsk	129.	Jagiellonian University
91.	Angelus Silesius Academy of Applied Sciences	130.	President Stanisław Wojciechowski Kalisz University
92.	Mazovia Academy of Applied Sciences	131.	Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz
93.	University of Applied Sciences of the Society for Universal Knowledge in Szczecin	132.	Medical University of Lublin

94.	University of Applied Sciences in Bielsko-Biała	133.	Gdynia Maritime University
95.	University of Applied Sciences in Racibórz	134.	University of Opole
96.	WSGE University of Applied Sciences in Józefów	135.	John Paul II Pontifical University in Krakow
97.	University of Applied Sciences in Wrocław	136.	University of Life Sciences in Lublin
98.	University of Applied Sciences in Walcz	137.	University of Szczecin
99.	University of Applied Sciences School of Management and Administration in Opole	138.	SWPS University
100.	Maria Grzegorzewska University	139.	University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn
101.	Fire University	140.	WSB Merito University in Toruń
102.	Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow	141.	University of Zielona Góra
103.	Strzeński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź	142.	Warsaw School of Computer Science
104.	Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice	143.	Wsztechnica Polska Academy of Applied Sciences in Warsaw
105.	Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw	144.	International Academy of Applied Sciences in Łomża
106.	Zamosc Academy	145.	College of Security in Poznań
107.	University of Business and Applied Sciences Varsovia	146.	University of Business and Health Sciences in Łódź
108.	European University in Radom	147.	College of Education in Sport
109.	John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	148.	Higher School of Economics in Białystok
110.	Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University	149.	Higher School of Economics and Humanities in Bielsko-Biała
111.	International University of Logistics and Transport in Wrocław	150.	University of Economics and Computer Science in Krakow
112.	Pedagogium Warsaw School of Social Sciences	151.	Lublin Academy of WSEI
113.	Częstochowa University of Technology	152.	Wrocław Business Academy of Applied Sciences
114.	Koszalin University of Technology	153.	University of Engineering and Health in Warsaw
115.	Lublin University of Technology	154.	College of Management
116.	Poznań University of Technology	155.	Medical University of Białystok
117.	Ignacy Łukasiewicz Rzeszów University of Technology	156.	University of Law
118.	Sopot Academy of Applied Sciences	157.	University of Law and Administration in Rzeszów
119.	Old Polish Academy of Applied Sciences in Kielce	158.	University of Entrepreneurship and Administration in Lublin
120.	Łódź Film School	159.	University of Social Skills named after Prof. Michał Iwaszkiewicz
121.	Warsaw University of Life Sciences	160.	University of Management and Banking in Krakow
122.	Bogdan Jański Academy in Warsaw		



4. History of the creation of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility

For years Polish administration has been actively promoting responsible business conduct (RBC) standards for years, recognising the need for extensive education in this area and the need to educate future business leaders.

The platform for dialogue between the public administration and stakeholders in this regard was the Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Board, operating since 2009 (then as an auxiliary body to the Prime Minister). Over the years, the form and scope of activities of the above-mentioned Advisory Board have changed, however, the basic task of the Advisory Board has been to create a space for dialogue and exchange of experiences between public administration bodies, social and economic partners, non-governmental organisations and academic community in the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR/RBC) practices. As part of its tasks, the Advisory Board developed recommendations for the implementation of CSR/RBC standards into public policies in line with the country's socio-economic development priorities.

The Advisory Board consisted of representatives of the government administration, the society, employers' organisations, trade unions, industry and sector associations, NGOs and the scientific and academic community. In total, nearly 70 institutions and organisations have participated in the work of the Advisory Board in recent years. Advisory Board members met several times a year, and in the periods between Advisory Board meetings, work was carried out within the framework of working groups set up according to the needs.

In subsequent iterations of the Advisory Board, the following working groups were engaged in addressing the issues of education and dissemination of corporate social responsibility:

2009-2013

The CSR and education working group (within the Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Board, a subsidiary body of the Prime Minister)

2014-2015

The Working Group on CSR education and dissemination (within the Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Board, a subsidiary body of the Minister of the Economy)

2016-2018

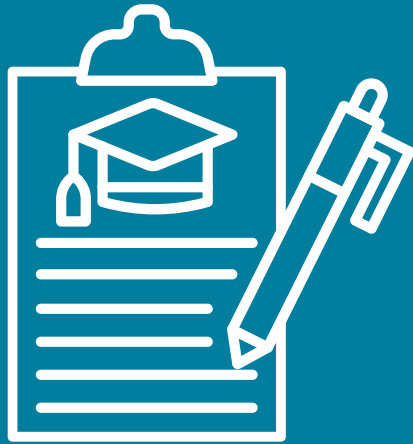
The Working Group on CSR education and popularisation (within the Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Board, a subsidiary body of the Minister of Development and Finance)

2018-2024

The Working Group on the social responsibility of universities (within the Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility Advisory Board, a subsidiary body of the Minister of Investment and Development; from 21 January 2020, a subsidiary body of the Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy)

From June 2024

The Working Group on University Social Responsibility (USR) (working group set up to support the Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy on issues of corporate social responsibility and responsible business conduct, in particular the dissemination of these issues and the conduct of research and development work)



5. Development of a definition of the University Social Responsibility and the Declaration of USR

Definition of University Social Responsibility

The result of many meetings and lively discussions by members of the Working Group on CSR education and dissemination and then the Working Group on CSR education and popularisation was the following definition of the university social responsibility:

Social responsibility of a university is a strategic and systemic approach to university management, building collaboration and dialogue with stakeholders that contributes to:

- 1. sustainable development,*
- 2. shaping the values and attitudes of civil society,*
- 3. supporting academic values and creating new ideas,*
- 4. sustaining and developing scientific and teaching competences that have an impact on efficiency of activities and innovation.*

The definition of USR, adopted by the members of the Working Group on CSR education and popularisation, set the course of action and area of activity for universities interested in having a positive impact on the surrounding reality. It also became the starting point for the academic community to develop a document aimed to disseminate the principles of social responsibility.

Declaration of University Social Responsibility

The initial idea for the Declaration of USR was born in 2016 and the final version was ready in November 2017.

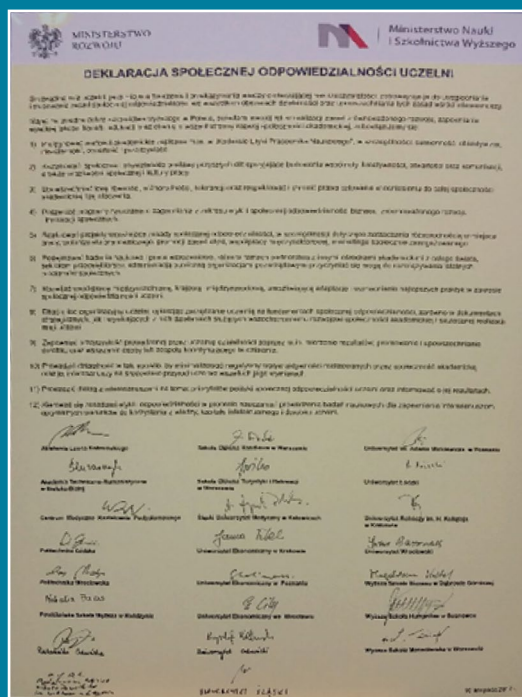
The development of the Declaration of USR was a bottom-up initiative. It was not imposed administratively but, from the beginning, was supported by the Ministry of Development (whose scope of activity included corporate social responsibility) and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

The main pillar of the Declaration of USR are the ethical values included in it, already mentioned in its section 1 (i.e. conscientiousness, objectivism, independence, openness and transparency)¹.

¹ Jacqueline Kacprzak (Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy) and Piotr Wachowiak (Warsaw School of Economics): recording of the conference of the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and the SOU Working Group entitled 'Experiences, practices and challenges of social responsibility of universities' (2 June 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TVWrTOWeoc>, accessed 3 March 2025 Invitation to join the Declaration of University Social Responsibility, <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/zaproszenie-do-przystapienia-do-deklaracji-spoecznej-odpowiedzialnosci-uczelnij>, accessed 3 March 2025.

The Declaration of USR was opened for signature for the first time and also presented to the academic community on 16 November 2017 during a conference in Warsaw entitled **‘Social Responsibility of Science – challenges for academic community and business’**.

The first signatories of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility of 2017 were 23 universities:



Kozminski University, Bielsko-Biala University of Technology and Humanities, WSB University, Centre of Postgraduate Medical Education, Witelton State Higher Vocational School in Legnica, Gdańsk University of Technology, Lodz University of Technology, Wrocław University of Technology, Powiślańska Higher Vocational School in Kwidzyn, Warsaw School of Economics, Vistula School of Hospitality (signed as the Warsaw School of Tourism and Leisure), Medical University of Silesia in Katowice, Cracow University of Economics, Poznań University of Economics and Business, Wrocław University of Economics and Business, University of Gdańsk, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Lodz, Hugo Kołłątaj University of Agriculture in Krakow, University of Silesia, University of Wrocław, Humanitas Higher School in Sosnowiec, Warsaw Higher School of Management².

The Declaration of USR was intended to serve as a voluntary commitment by the university to promote sustainability and social responsibility in areas such as educational programmes, management and organisational solutions of the university. Its aim is to *‘create broad public awareness of the role of universities in shaping the conditions for sustainable socio-economic development in the country. The implementation of the commitments of the declaration contributes to a more effective adjustment of the educational offer for students to the current economic challenges, including above all the labour market, the inclusion in the subjects of study of topics related to business ethics, social responsibility, environmental impact or cooperation with the community’*.³

The Declaration of USR is the document through which one of the most important tasks of the Working Group is realised: the dissemination of the principles of social responsibility of universities.

² List of signatories of the SOU Declaration of 2017, <https://www.gov.pl/web/nauka/zaproszenie-do-przystapienia-do-deklaracji-spolecznej-odpowiedzialnosci-uczelni>, accessed 3 March 2025.

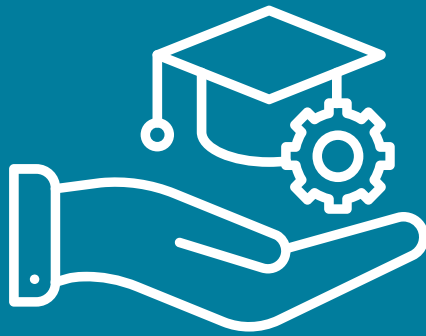
³ Working Group on University Social Responsibility, <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/grupa-robocza-do-spraw-spolecznej-odpowiedzialnosci-uczelni>, accessed 3 March 2025.

Joining the ranks of signatories of the Declaration of USR is a voluntary commitment by universities to promote sustainability and social responsibility in the educational programmes as well as management and organisational arrangements of the university. The aim of the document is to create broad public awareness of the role of universities in shaping the conditions for sustainable socio-economic development in the country. Implementing the principles of the Declaration of USR makes it possible to more effectively match the educational offer for students to current economic challenges, including, above all, the labour market. An example of the practical implementation of the Declaration of USR could be the inclusion in educational curricula of topics related to business ethics, social responsibility, the environmental impact of business activities and the importance of dialogue and cooperation with the community.

The Declaration of USR supports universities and academic centres looking for inspiration to improve their university development systems in order to meet the highest standards of management inherent in leading international university centres. It is therefore addressed to all public and private universities offering education in both the humanities and economics.

The motivation of the university to pursue its educational and pedagogical mission in the spirit of modern global education, taking into account trends related to sustainability and social responsibility, is also crucial in these activities. Currently, 160 Polish universities are signatories of the Declaration of USR.





6. Key projects and outcomes of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility

The ambition of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility (USR) is, among other things, to promote good practice in the responsible running of universities, as well as to spread knowledge and dialogue around sustainability issues. This is achieved, among other things, through a number of publications and events, details of which are presented in the following paragraphs.

1) The USR Working Group good practice catalogues

From 2019, the USR Working Group publishes catalogues of good practices of universities in the field of university social responsibility. So far, four such catalogues have been published, each with its own theme. Common to all publications is the understanding of the essence of the USR, which was developed by the Working Group. Issues presented in the catalogues include, but are not limited to: developing ethical attitudes, building academic values and social and academic engagement, managing diversity and countering discrimination, as well as ethics in research.

In one of the catalogues, good practices were assigned to the respective areas of sustainability (ESG: **E**nvironmental, **S**ocial and **G**overnance). An evaluation of practices carried out in earlier years was also conducted to assess which practices had the greatest social and environmental impact. The results of the analysis indicate that universities are undertaking activities in a number of areas, often related to their business profile. They are both self-initiated by universities and implemented in cross-sector partnerships, increasing the synergy of activities.

Good practice catalogues issued in the period 2018-2022



The first catalogue, entitled 'Catalogue of University Social Responsibility Practices in Poland', was published in 2019 as an appendix to the publication 'Social Responsibility: relevance for universities and ways of implementation'. The catalogue included 139 practices from 40 universities. Practices were analysed against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principles of the Declaration of USR. When analysing the practices in terms of the principles of the Declaration, it can be observed that the practices reported by the universities most often fell under principle 2 of the Declaration (44

practices), principle 3 (18 practices), principle 6 (16 practices) and principle 5 (12 practices). The other principles were implemented in fewer practices (from 8 to 2). The reported initiatives were also analysed in terms of the declared UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following were most frequently identified: SDG 4 (39 practices), SDG 3 (20 practices), SDG 10 (14 practices) and SDG 7 (13 practices).

Katalog dobrych praktyk

społecznej odpowiedzialności
uczelni w dobie pandemii COVID-19



In 2020, the 'Catalogue of good practices for the University Social Responsibility in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic' was published. The publication included 171 activities carried out by 57 universities. Equipment support and protection measures, scientific activities, psychological support, educational activities, volunteering, material assistance, communication and information activities, other initiatives were the categories according to which the submitted practices were analysed.

Katalog dobrych praktyk

społecznej odpowiedzialności uczelni
w wymiarze etycznym
i niedyskryminacyjnym



The 2021 edition is a 'Catalogue of good practices for the University Social Responsibility with an ethical and non-discriminatory dimension'. This edition of the Catalogue is dedicated to academic values, including the development of ethical attitudes, countering various manifestations of discrimination, as well as social engagement at the university. A total of 44 universities (including 33 signatories of the Declaration of USR) reported 140 good practices. Practices have been divided into five categories: (1) ethical infrastructure and activities that foster academic values; (2) academic community engagement; (3) diversity management and anti-discrimination; (4) ethics in research; and (5) other.

Katalog dobrych praktyk uczelni

w obszarach ESG

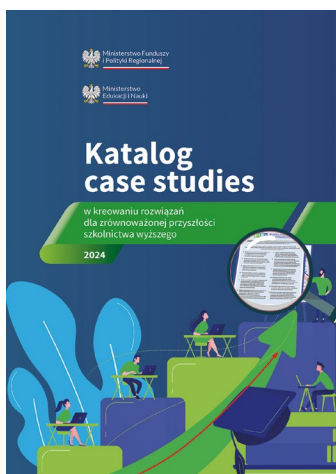


The 2022 edition is a 'Catalogue of good practices of universities in ESG areas'. The good practices implemented by the universities were assigned in the Catalogue to relevant areas. The publication contains a collection of 146 practices from 53 universities that demonstrate the academic community's commitment to social responsibility and human rights. The largest number of practices related to category two - social impact.

The exchange of good practices is a key element in the implementation of the concept of university social responsibility. Universities can benefit from the experience of other institutions that have already introduced USR into their strategy and are successfully implementing social responsibility projects. Examples of the benefits of sharing good practices include:

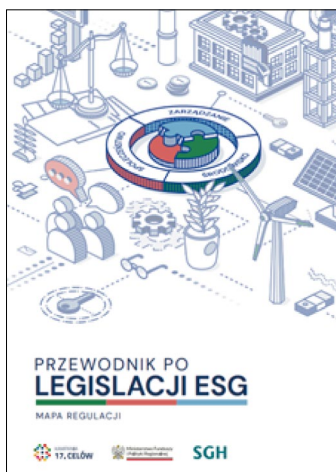
1. Access to good practice - universities can learn about and apply good practice that has proven successful in other institutions.
2. Sharing knowledge and experience - universities can benefit from the knowledge and experience of other institutions, as well as share their own, allowing for mutual enrichment.
3. Relationship building - the exchange of good practice allows relationships to be built between universities, which can lead to further collaboration in the future.
4. Promoting USR - universities can showcase their good practices and successes related to USR, which can help promote the institution and attract new students, staff and partners.

2) A catalogue of case studies in creating solutions for a sustainable future of higher education



The catalogue brings together 34 case studies from 34 universities with diverse profiles. These relate to five areas: Partnership for Purposes; Values - Equality, Diversity, Tolerance and Respect; Social Participation - Disability, Social Activation, Mental Health; Education of the Future and Care for the Natural Environment. The publication is enriched by expert articles summarising experiences in each of the above topics.

3) Guide to ESG legislation



As a result of a cooperation of the 17 Goals Campaign, the SGH Warsaw School of Economics and the Working Group on Social Responsibility of Universities and Ministry of Developments Funds and Regional Policy, which initiated the initiative, the 'Guide to ESG Legislation' was published. The aim of the publication is to support Polish companies in the process of sustainable transformation and effective implementation of ESG legislation. The guide maps 41 key pieces of European Union legislation in the environmental, social and governance areas that have an impact on doing business in Poland.

4) Events organised by the Working Group on USR

Since the start of operation of the Working Group on USR, 12 webinars, conferences and congresses have been held. **During more than 23 hours of talks, debates and discussions, the most topical issues were addressed, awareness was built, inspiring solutions were presented and important questions were asked about the sustainable future of universities.**

- The webinar entitled **‘Due diligence in responsible business conduct’**, held **on 27 May 2024**, discussed, among other things, the proper understanding of the concept of due diligence, the elements of its implementation process and its place in the EU regulatory regime. It also discussed the challenges and difficulties faced by entrepreneurs during its implementation phase.
- On **25 May 2023**, a webinar was held on **‘Good practices of foreign universities in terms of social responsibility’**. During the meeting, the results of the research project **‘Good practices of foreign universities in terms of social responsibility’** were presented, and international university rankings were discussed using the example of THE Impact ranking.
- On **21 March 2023**, the Working Group on USR organised a webinar entitled **‘Social responsibility of Polish universities through the eyes of internal stakeholders’**. A report presenting the results of the survey **‘Diagnosis of the implementation of the social responsibility of universities’** was premiered at the event. A panel discussion on the challenges faced by universities in implementing social responsibility was also part of the programme. Representatives of the university’s internal stakeholders participated in the meeting. The meeting concluded with a question and answer session.
- On **2 June 2022**, the conference **‘Experiences, practices and challenges of social responsibility of universities’** was organised. The purpose of the meeting was: to present the experiences of universities implementing the principles of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility in practice, to learn about the benefits of cooperation between business and academic community, to discuss the achievements of the Working Group on USR to date and to present the Catalogue of Good Practices of Universities for 2021.

During the conference, representatives from a further 77 universities from all over Poland signed the Declaration of USR on behalf of their universities. A total of 160 Polish universities are now signatories of the Declaration.

- On **24 May 2022**, the webinar **‘Organising university activities in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility’** took place. Its participants discussed, among other things, how to organise university activities in practice in the context of implementing twelve principles of the Declaration and the role of the Rectors’ Plenipotentiaries for USR. Another important highlight was the presentation of the research project **‘Diagnosis of the implementation of the social responsibility of universities’** carried out by the Working Group on USR. The meeting concluded with a question and answer session open to Group members.

- **‘Current trends in the development of responsible business standards’** was the topic of a webinar held **on 12 May 2022**. The then-current trends in responsible business and non-financial reporting issues in light of changing EU regulations were discussed. The OECD National Contact Point was also presented as an example of a remedial mechanism in situations of potential violations of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.
- **On 14 December 2021**, the webinar **‘Zero waste - best environmental practices of Polish universities’** was held. Measures to reduce waste generated by universities are part of the implementation of the principles of the Declaration of USR and also contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The model of a circular economy in the context of climate change, practical ways to implement **zero waste** principle in university activities, as well as the experiences, challenges and needs of universities in terms of environmental protection were discussed.
- On **8 November 2021**, the 26th Climate Change Summit (COP26) in Glasgow hosted a webinar on **‘Disseminating knowledge on climate change and sustainable development’**. Among other things, the aim of the meeting was to discuss the role of science in the context of climate challenges, as well as the specific mission of universities to shape responsible leaders for a sustainable future.
- An online conference, **‘Report on the implementation of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility as a self-assessment tool’**, was held on **9 March 2021**. The conference discussed the design of a new tool that supports universities in determining the level of implementation of the Declaration principles and diagnosing areas that need to be addressed. The meeting was an opportunity to consult the project with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as to discuss the experiences of Polish universities in social responsibility reporting.
- **‘University Social Responsibility after the Covid-19 pandemic’** was the topic of a webinar held on **20 November 2020**. The event focused on the role of social responsibility in countering the spread of the pandemic. The debate focused on: how universities can support their stakeholders who remain in home isolation, what the impact of the pandemic experience may be on the development of the concept of social responsibility, and what challenges the epidemic has brought to universities for the fulfilment of their educational and scientific tasks.
- On **30 June 2020**, a webinar was held on **‘University Social Responsibility and the coronavirus pandemic’**. The aim of the meeting was to share experiences around activities directed at combating the virus, to strengthen cooperation between experts implementing USR in universities, as well as to disseminate the principles of the Declaration of USR and to spread awareness of the USR Working Group’s activities.
- **On 16-17 April 2019**, the **Congress on the Social Responsibility of Science – Science for You** took place. One of the aims of the congress was to promote knowledge and build interest in technological innovations. An important highlight of the programme was the accession of a further 60 universities as signatories of the Declaration of USR.

Reports and events of the Working Group on USR are available on the websites and social media channels of the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Warsaw School of Economics. We invite you to view the recordings of the events described above.



7. University self-assessment form on the implementation of the Declaration of USR

The Working group on USR has developed a self-assessment form on the implementation of the Declaration principles. The form is a tool to support the process of putting the principles of the Declaration into practice and evaluating actions taken in this regard. Questions/measures have been developed for each of the principles of the Declaration so that the university can assess whether it is taking the right actions to pursue a particular area of social responsibility.

University self-assessment form for the preparation of the Report on the Implementation of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility.

Please note: the QR code leads to the self-assessment form, which is available only in Polish. The image below demonstrates the first page of the form.



Formularz samooceny uczelni

do przygotowania
Raportu Wdrażania
Deklaracji Społecznej
Odpowiedzialności Uczelni

Wprowadzenie

Raport Wdrażania Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni ma charakter inicjujący działania w zakresie popularyzacji i wdrażania zasad Deklaracji SOU.

Do każdego zobowiązania (zasady) zawartego w Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni zostały przypisane kierunkowe propozycje oczekiwanych niezbędnych informacji, które powinny znaleźć się w Raporcie Wdrażania Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni (ROWD) i być oznakowane w sposób formalny.

Jeżeli uczelnia nie uwzględniła któregoś z wymienionych wskaźników, to informacja o tym wraz z uzasadnieniem powinna być zamieszczona w ROWD.

W ROWD przygotowywanym przez uczelnię po raz pierwszy powinny znaleźć się informacje dotyczące tego, jakie działania uczelnia już podjęła w zakresie SOU. Kolejne Raporty powinny ukazywać się nie rzadziej niż co dwa lata. Okresem sprawozdawczym jest rok akademicki [od 1 października do 30 września roku następnego].

Przykłady konkretnych działań lub dobrych praktyk powinny być opisywane w możliwie zwięzły sposób, z uwzględnieniem wymiernych danych. Formularz dopuszcza również możliwość prezentacji innych treści, które dana uczelnia uważa za istotne w kontekście SOU – zob. pkt 35.

Raport Wdrażania Deklaracji Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni powinien być dostępny dla wszystkich interesariuszy – poprzez umieszczenie na stronie internetowej uczelni.

ZASADA I

Pielegnować wartości akademickie zapisane m.in. w „Kodeksie Etyki Pracownika Naukowego”, w szczególności: sumienność, obiektywizm, niezależność, otwartość i przejrzystość.

1. Uczelnia przedstawia przyjęte wartości, podając jednocześnie informację o dokumencie na nie wskazującym (np. kodeks, zasady) oraz informuje o roku jego ogłoszenia, podając również link do niego.

ZASADA II

Kształtować społeczne i obywatelskie postawy przyszłych elit sprzyjające budowaniu wspólnoty, kreatywności, otwartości oraz komunikacji, a także wrażliwości społecznej i kultury pracy.

2. Uczelnia prezentuje przynajmniej 2-3 konkretne przykłady kształtowania postaw obywatelskich studentów, zrealizowane w danym okresie sprawozdawczym – do każdego z nich dołączając wskaźnik procentowego udziału studentów objętych w/w oddziaływaniem.
3. Uczelnia przedstawia informację o udziale w projektach, np. takich jak:
 - Karta Różnorodności, podając datę podpisania oraz podjęte działania w okresie sprawozdawczym
 - Logo HR Excellence, podając datę jego otrzymania oraz podjęte działania w okresie sprawozdawczym
4. Uczelnia podaje procentowy udział studentów zagranicznych.
5. Uczelnia podaje procentowy udział pracowników zagranicznych.

ZASADA III

Upowszechniać ideę równości, różnorodności, tolerancji oraz respektować i chronić prawa człowieka w odniesieniu do całej społeczności akademickiej i jej otoczenia.

6. Uczelnia prezentuje przynajmniej 2-3 konkretne przykłady upowszechniania tych idei, zrealizowane w danym okresie sprawozdawczym – do każdego z nich dołączając wskaźnik wielkości grupy (beneficjentów), do której każdorazowo udało się dotrzeć.

ZASADA IV

Poszerzać programy nauczania o zagadnienia z zakresu etyki i społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu, zrównoważonego rozwoju i innowacji społecznych.

7. Uczelnia podaje listę przedmiotów poświęconych w/w zagadnieniom (przynajmniej 75% treści, o których mowa w zasadzie), z uwzględnieniem liczby godzin oraz poziomu nauczania (licencjat, magisterskie, podyplomowe) w danym roku akademickim.
8. Uczelnia podaje procentowy wskaźnik udziału studentów objętych w/w nauczaniem w danym roku akademickim.

The following statements from Representatives of universities being the signatories of the Declaration of USR indicate the benefits of using the university self-assessment form:

“The form makes it possible to schedule data collection and other procedures to allow USR reporting.”

(University Sustainable Development Coordinator,
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)

“For the University, the preparation of a report on the implementation of the Declaration of USR demonstrates that the signed declaration is also followed by concrete actions, projects and commitments. The self-assessment was also an excellent opportunity to identify areas for improvement and further action.”

(Head of the Sustainability and ESG team,
SGH Warsaw School of Economics)

“The self-assessment of the implementation of the Declaration of USR allows for the systematic monitoring of progress and the identification of areas for further action, which supports the continuous improvement of the sustainability strategy. It also enables transparent communication with stakeholders, reinforcing the university’s credibility and reputation as a socially responsible institution. Additionally, analysing the effects of the implementation of the declaration helps to adapt activities to changing challenges and increases the chances of securing partnerships and funding for CSR and ESG projects.”

(Rector’s Plenipotentiary for University Social Responsibility,
Poznań University of Economics and Business)

“The report that has been prepared brings together activities from different areas of the university, and is a tool to support the control of the chosen direction of development.”

(Head of Development,
Maritime University of Szczecin)

“The self-assessment of the implementation of the Declaration of USR results in a systematic, substantive assessment of the implementation of the highest standards of conduct vis-à-vis internal and external stakeholders of Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski University. The principles set out in the Self-Assessment Form help to structure and standardise the above process.”

(Vice-Rector for Science and Teaching,
Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University)

“The preparation of Self-Assessment (USR) report of the university social responsibility allows for a thorough analysis of the university social responsibility and sustainability activities, which helps to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The report enables transparency and communication with stakeholders, which strengthens trust in the university and its commitment to responsible and ethical action. In addition, the self-assessment provides a tool to monitor progress towards social responsibility goals, allowing for long-term planning of the university’s development in line with global trends and societal expectations.”

(Vice-Rector for Personnel and Financial Policy,
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn)

“Monitoring the implementation of USR can answer many questions, e.g.: which practices have the largest number of recipients; which category they fall into; how wide their territorial coverage is; how many of the practices are funded by EU funds. Such transparent self-assessment builds credibility in relations with business and the local community, and within the University it strengthens the integration of the entire academic community.”

(Vice-Rector for Development and Cooperation with the Economy,
Poznan University of Technology)

“The self-assessment report is, in our opinion, a very helpful tool to both structure the generation of useful data necessary for reporting and to give structure to the report in terms of the university social responsibility. Constant monitoring of our impact on the internal community and external stakeholders allows us to improve as a University.”

(Vice-Rector for Promotion and Cooperation with the Social and Economic Environment,
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)

“Carrying out self-assessment in the implementation of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility allows the progress and effectiveness of the measures taken to be monitored on an ongoing basis. It enables identification of areas for improvement. As a result, the Medical University of Silesia may pursue its sustainability goals more effectively and strengthen its position as a socially responsible institution.”

(acting as Deputy Head of Department for Didactics,
Medical University of Silesia in Katowice)





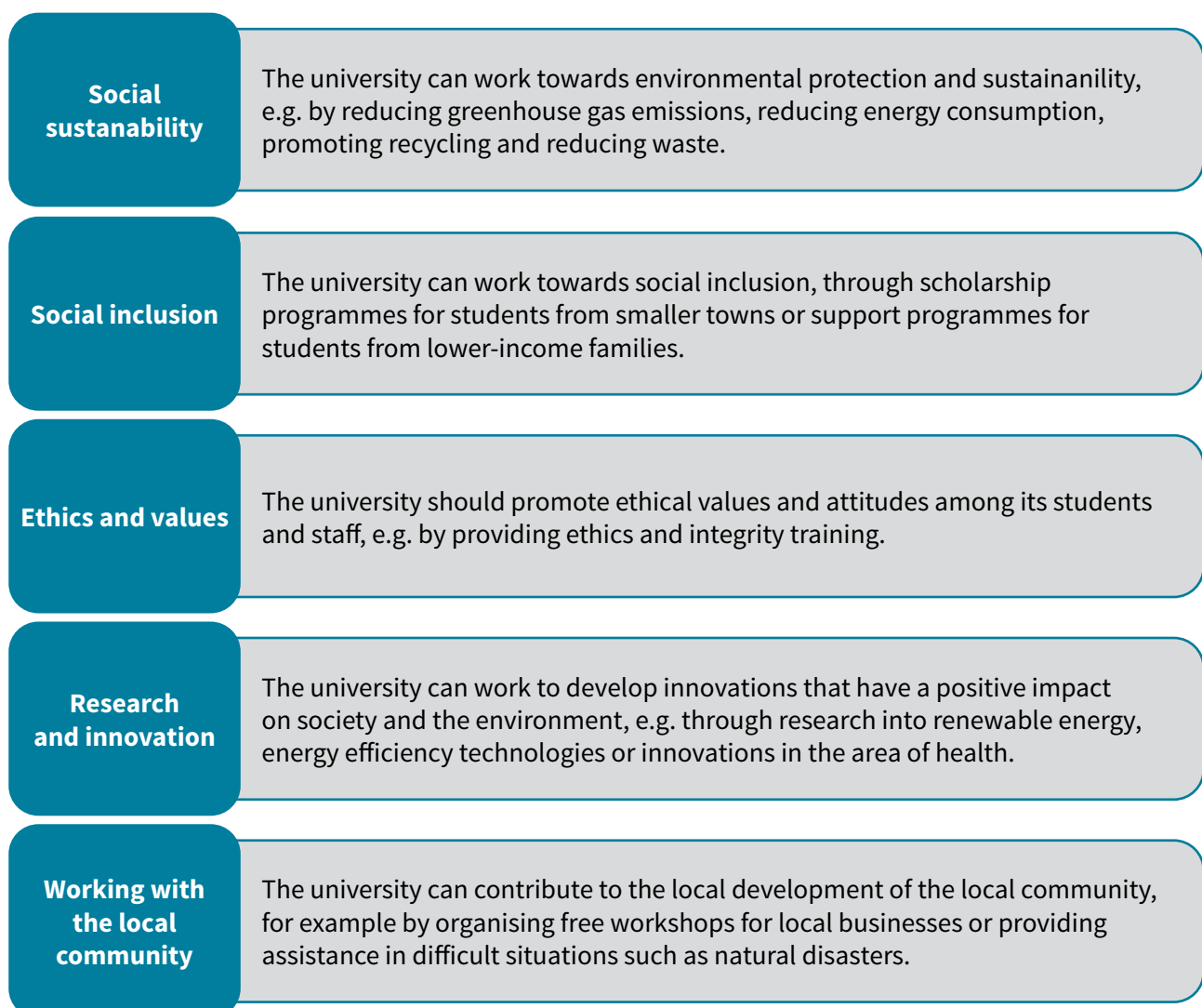
7. Benefits of implementing the principles of the Declaration of USR

Social responsibility is becoming increasingly important as a concept that organises the interdependence of an organisation and the environment, given that in the modern world, the functioning of all the actors of socio-economic life has a diverse impact on the surrounding reality, generating interconnections, the nature of which is of vital importance for the quality of social life.

It is often included in university strategies, as educational institutions play a key role in shaping future leaders, innovators and experts who will have an impact on society.

Universities that undertake community activities can increase their value to society, enhance their reputation and attract better students, staff and business partners.

Figure. Dimensions of university social responsibility



Source: own study based on: E. L. Ramos-Monge, X. Llinàs Audet, J. Barrena-Martínez, *Universities as Corporate Entities: The Role of Social Responsibility in Their Strategic Management*, <https://www.intechopen.com/books/corporate-governance-and-strategic-decision-making/universities-as-corporate-entities-the-role-of-social-responsibility-in-their-strategic-management> (accessed: 7.02.2025).

Introducing socially responsible activities into the university's strategy can contribute to the development of the institution. In this context, adherence to and implementation of the Declaration of USR is proving particularly valuable. Universities report a number of benefits from this engagement.

„With the signing of the Declaration of USR, the University is participating in the key activities of the Working Group on USR. In addition, it is active in creating activities in this area. The Declaration of USR is also an important element presented at international rankings and accreditations.”

(Head of the Sustainability and ESG team,
SGH Warsaw School of Economics)

„Being a signatory to the Declaration of USR reinforces the reputation of the Poznań University of Economics and Business as an institution committed to sustainability and ethical management, which attracts socially conscious students, staff and partners. The university gains the opportunity to collaborate with other academic centres, public administration and business in the implementation of good CSR and ESG practices. In addition, signing the Declaration facilitates access to initiatives and projects in the areas of education, research and innovation related to social responsibility.”

(Rector's Plenipotentiary for University Social Responsibility,
Poznań University of Economics and Business)

„Signing the Declaration of USR has the benefit of increasing the prestige of the university, which demonstrates its commitment to social responsibility, ethics and sustainability. The university becomes more credible, building trust among students, staff and business partners, which can lead to better cooperation with the socio-economic environment. Engaging in environmental initiatives and promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities not only supports students and staff, but also improves the quality of life in the local community.”

(Vice-Rector for Personnel and Financial Policy,
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn)

„The promotion of activities related to sustainability and social responsibility positively influences the functioning of the University, including the integration of the academic community, the strengthening of social relations in the local community and the scientific, teaching and business cooperation of the University, both nationally and internationally.”

(Vice-Rector for Development and Cooperation with the Economy,
Poznań University of Technology)

„The benefits of joining the Declaration include the networking under the USR banner, getting to know people involved in USR implementation at other universities, mutual inspiration, being able to participate in working teams dedicated to specific topics.”

(Head of the Office of Social Innovation and Sustainability,
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

„The Declaration of USR has prompted us to organise our existing activities in terms of social responsibility and sustainability. To organise and work on aspects that still needed to be improved, systematised or enhanced. It is a signpost, the aforementioned commitment and a kind of guideline on how to act, bearing in mind the welfare of the academic community and the entire environment, i.e. those affected by the community.”

(Rector's Plenipotentiary for University Social Responsibility,
Warsaw University of Technology)

„Being among the prestigious universities that are signatories of the Declaration of USR strengthened the image of the Medical University of Silesia in Katowice as a socially responsible university committed to sustainable development. The university has gained greater visibility and the opportunity to collaborate with other entities pursuing similar values. Additionally, this affects the creation of a welcoming and ethical academic environment, conducive to the education of informed and responsible graduates.”

(acting as Deputy Head of Department for Didactics,
Medical University of Silesia in Katowice)

„Being a signatory to the Declaration of University Social Responsibility reinforces the prestige of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University as an institution committed to sustainable development and ethical education. The university gains the opportunity to intensify its cooperation with the public sector, business and community organisations, which fosters innovative scientific and educational projects. In addition, promoting the principles of social responsibility increases the attractiveness of our University for students and employees, emphasising its role as a modern university open to the challenges of the modern world.”

(Director of the Centre for Education and Student Services,
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin)





8. The Working Group on USR plans, lines of action, perspectives

We are confident that the Working Group on University Social Responsibility will continue its existing commitment to promoting and implementing the principles of social responsibility and sustainability in academic community, both in Poland and internationally. Our plans for the future are based on continuation of existing activities, but also on development of new initiatives that respond to the dynamically changing challenges of the modern world.

One of our key objectives is to further strengthen cooperation with universities in Poland and abroad. We want to create a dynamic, international platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience that will enable us to jointly seek innovative solutions and good practices in the field of social responsibility. We plan to organise international conferences, workshops and seminars that will provide a space for dialogue and inspiration for universities from all over the world. We are committed to making the principles of the Declaration of USR a real compass of action for both Polish and foreign universities.

We intend to pay particular attention to the integration of the principles of social responsibility into student education, both in the national and international context. We are committed to ensuring that graduates of Polish universities are not only highly qualified specialists and leaders of change, but also conscious global citizens, ready to actively engage in building sustainable development on a global scale. We will actively support universities in implementing ethical, social and environmental considerations in their day-to-day operations at national level as well as in a global context.

We are also not forgetting the role of universities in building strong social capital. It is important to us that Polish universities gathered in the Working Group on USR become international centres of social activism that inspire action and build responsible partnerships of scientific cooperation.

We believe that sustainable change can only be achieved through joint efforts and in cooperation towards a vision of the future in which sustainability and corporate social responsibility are the cornerstones of socio-economic development.

We are open to working with all stakeholders who share our values and want to be actively involved in building a better and sustainable world. We look to the future with hope, ready to take on new challenges and realise ambitious plans, both in Poland and internationally.



9. Contact details, invitation to cooperation

You can join the Working Group on USR at any stage of the ongoing activities by sending a message to:
sou@mfipr.gov.pl

We would like to point out, however, that the Group meetings are held in Polish. However, we are open to exchanging experiences and may consider meetings in a smaller group in English.

We also invite you to share your experiences of the process of implementing social responsibility in your universities.

The Brochure of the Working Group on University Social Responsibility was developed by:
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