

## UNIVERSITY SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – GOOD PRACTICES OF POLISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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*Abstract.* All organizations, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), should be socially responsible. Therefore, the article aims to answer the following research questions: How are the principles of social responsibility implemented by Polish HEIs? Through what good practices are they manifested? What formal national regulations support these activities? To answer those questions, the principles of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility and of good practices implemented by 23 universities, the first signatories of this Declaration, were reviewed. The applied research method has incorporated the analysis of the literature on the subject, documents and websites of the above 23 universities. The study presents the essence of university social responsibility and the special role of universities in promoting and implementing the principles of sustainable development and social responsibility. The activities of the Polish public administration in partnership with the representatives of HEIs, businesses, NGOs which led to the creation of the Declaration of USR were outlined. Examples of good practices applied by the examined universities and the ensuing conclusions were briefly discussed.

*Keywords:* university social responsibility, higher education institutions, principles for responsible management education, declaration of university social responsibility

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### Introduction

All organizations (not just businesses) [1–3], including HEIs [4–5] should be socially responsible, and hence oriented to building relations with their stakeholders. HEIs are supposed to play a special social and civilizational role [6–8]. In their activities, they simultaneously focus on research, education and serving the society (building relations with stakeholders). Thus, they can promote sustainable development based on principles of social responsibility [9] not only in education, but also in management and operation. HEIs are increasingly involved in these activities [10–11], as is confirmed by reports of various international organizations [8]. For example, the world's best universities, such as the University of Cambridge, California Institute of Technology, Stanford University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and Princeton University, implement sustainable development (SD) strategies based on the 2015 United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs<sup>1</sup>) [13]. Principles for

Responsible Management Education (PRME) is another external initiative document supporting the activity of HEIs [14]. This platform popularizes issues of SD in university business programs around the world based on six principles of responsible managerial education developed in 2007 under the UN Global Compact program. These principles are as follows: purpose, values, method, research, partnership and dialogue [15]. PRME enables students to understand the issues of SD during their studies, so that in the future – as participants in economic life – they could balance its goals with the economic goals of businesses [16].

This article aims to answer the following research questions:

- How are the principles of social responsibility implemented by Polish HEIs;
- Through what good practices are they manifested?
- What formal national regulations support these practices?

<sup>1</sup> These principles involve a multi-dimensional approach to SD. They were included in the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and adopted for use in 2015 by UN Member States, including the EU

countries. These principles include: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, activity for climate and environmental protection, ensuring responsible consumption and production, and the quality of life and peaceful coexistence based on partnership and sustainable patterns [12].

To answer those questions, the principles of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility (USR) and of good practices implemented by 23 universities, the first signatories of this Declaration, were reviewed. The applied research method has incorporated the analysis of the literature on the subject, documents and websites of the above 23 universities.

The study also presents the definition and the essence of USR, and it introduces the special role of universities in promoting and implementing the principles of SD and SR. The activities of the Polish public administration in partnership with the representatives of HEIs, businesses, NGOs which led to the creation of the Declaration of University Social Responsibility were outlined. Examples of good practices applied by the examined universities, the first signatories of the Declaration, were briefly discussed. Based on these practices, benefits and conclusions for the future regarding the implementation of SR in Polish universities were identified.

### **Definition and Essence of University Social Responsibility**

The idea of social responsibility is most often called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and is associated with enterprises. Already P. Drucker stated that it is a relationship between subjects and the broadly understood society, a relationship for which these entities are responsible [17]. The European Commission is of a similar opinion [8]. CSR can be defined as responsible and ethical performance of economic, social, and environmental aspects that can improve the quality of life for different stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers, consumers, government, community, society, etc. Organizations that promote social and environmental initiatives have the power to evoke positive reactions between stakeholders [4]. SR is defined by Norm ISO 26000 as the «responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical organization that: contributes to sustainable development, including health and the welfare of society; takes into account the expectations of stakeholders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behavior; is integrated through the organization and practiced in its relationships» [18].

A socially responsible university is a higher education institution whose responsibility towards society concerns preparing graduates to act as knowledge workers and building close relations with the economic practice and local governments [19]. Universities

are organizations that create and transfer knowledge and competencies; therefore, being socially responsible, they should take into account their stakeholders' expectations by shaping economic, social and ethical relations with them; operate within the legal framework for higher education; strive to build organizational culture conducive to social innovation and to be a center of transmission and transformation of culture, good practices and civic attitudes [20, 7].

USR primarily means ensuring the appropriate quality of education, transfer of knowledge to the economy to stimulate its growth, education of future elites of society, active social policy towards students and employees, and elimination of social barriers [8]. It should be based on managing the university according to the code of good practices and on shaping socially desirable attitudes among stakeholders, especially students [21].

Therefore, USR is the ability to develop and promote a group of principles and values through responsible management, teaching, research, and community involvement (building relations with stakeholders). These four key areas do not work in isolation but as a whole [22].

### **Activities of Polish HEIs and the Declaration of University Social Responsibility**

Issues of social responsibility at HEIs in Poland are promoted, among others, by offering a subject related to CSR in study programs and by postgraduate studies in this field. Today, HEIs offering postgraduate studies in CSR include: Kozminski University, University of Ecology and Management (Warsaw), Management School of Silesian University (Chorzow), University of Opole, Wroclaw University of Economics, Gdansk University of Technology, Collegium Da Vinci (Poznan), University of Economics in Katowice, Poznan University of Economics, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW) [23–24].

The development of USR and shaping higher education goals in Poland according to the principles of sustainable development is also based on the PRME platform (universities of economics) and the Declaration of University Social Responsibility.

Among business schools in Poland only five decided to join the PRME initiative. These are Warsaw School of Economics, Poznan University of Economics, Kozminski University, Poznan University College of Business, and the Faculty of Management at University of Warsaw (only the first two – both are

public schools – have submitted the required Sharing Information on Progress Report) [23].

The Declaration is a result of grassroots activity of representatives of academic institutions and government administration supporting such initiatives. In 2009, the Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility Team was established at the then Ministry of Development. The team created a platform for dialogue, exchange of experience and good practices between public administration, business, trade unions, industry and sector associations, research and academic community as well as non-governmental organizations in the field of sustainable development and CSR [25]. The team is advised by a working group on USR. The Declaration is the result of the group’s work and a tool through which it accomplishes its tasks. The declaration was signed on November 16, 2017 by 23 HEIs: Kozminski University, University of Bielsko-Biala, the Center of Postgraduate Medical Education, the Witelon State University of Applied Sciences in Legnica, Gdansk University of Technology, Lodz University of Technology, Wroclaw University of Science and Technology, Powiślańska School in Kwidzyn, SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Vistula School of Hospitality, Medical University of Silesia in Katowice, University of Gdansk, Krakow University of Economics and Business, Poznan University of Economics and Business, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, University of Silesia in Katowice, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, University of Lodz, University of Agriculture in Krakow, University of Wrocław, WSB University, Humanitas University in Sosnowiec, Warsaw Management University.

The Declaration is based on the SDGs and explains how a socially responsible university can contribute to their achievement [24]. The Declaration is a voluntary commitment of HEIs to promote the idea of SD and SR in educational activities, scientific research, and management and organizational solutions at university in accordance with the twelve principles contained therein. Its purpose is to build broad social awareness of the role of universities in shaping

conditions for the countries’ sustainable socio-economic development. The Declaration is addressed to all public and private universities.

The Declaration [26] reads: «The special role of universities as places that create and transfer knowledge about the surrounding reality obliges them to include and apply the principles of SR in all areas of activity and to promote these principles among stakeholders. Bearing in mind the good of higher education in Poland, being aware of our role in implementing the principles of sustainable development, ensuring high quality research and education, and ensuring comprehensive development of the academic community, we commit ourselves» to comply with the twelve principles contained in the declaration (Tab. 1). These principles deal with various aspects of the university operation, including teaching and research, dialogue with stakeholders and internal organization. A university joining the initiative pledges to develop a selected area (or several ones) from among the listed in a spirit of social responsibility.

The growing popularity of the USR Declaration in Poland is evidenced by the fact that another sixty HEIs joined it in 2019<sup>2</sup>, both public and private ones [27].

### Analysis of good practices at selected Polish HEIs Research methodology

The study analyzed documents and websites of the universities – the first signatories to the SRU Declaration from 2017. Table 1 presents only examples of good practices implemented by those universities that are part of an individual principle of the

<sup>2</sup> Among others, these are the leading Polish universities, such as: AGH University of Science and Technology in Krakow, Medical University of Gdańsk, Warsaw University of Technology, University of Economics in Katowice, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Silesian University of Technology, Cracow University of Technology, but also other public and private universities of different profiles, e.g. the Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music in Bydgoszcz, Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław, Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Medical University of Lodz, WSB University in Gdansk [27].

Table 1

#### Examples of good practices of selected HEIs in Poland implemented on the basis of the principles of the Declaration of USR

Name of the university	Name of the practice	A brief description of the practice
<i>Principle 1. Cultivate academic values prescribed, among others, in the «Code of Researcher’s Ethics», in particular: diligence, objectivity, independence, openness and transparency</i>		
SGH Warsaw School of Economics	Code of Ethics of Employees of Warsaw School of Economics	Representatives of various groups of SGH employees were involved in the participatory development of the Code. It was adopted by the SGH Senate in December 2018 and published on the university’s website. It is complemented by a separate SGH Ethics Handbook. It contains examples of ways of conduct and good practices; it may be supplemented by employees.

Name of the university	Name of the practice	A brief description of the practice
University of Silesia in Katowice	Silesian Science Festival (SSF)	During the SSF, scientists share their knowledge, innovative research results, their application in industry and economy; they present inventions and the latest achievements to the public through workshops, lectures and shows adapted to different age groups.
<i>Principle 2. Shape social and civic attitudes of future elites conducive to building community, creativity, openness and communication, as well as social sensitivity and work culture</i>		
University of Bielsko-Biala	Sandals for Gambia	The goal of the Science Club 'Horizon' initiative is to collect and transport sandals for poor children in Gambia. In 2018, the campaign brought together over 320 representatives of education, culture, media, and administration. Over 22,000 sandals went to children in Gambia.
Humanitas University in Sosnowiec	Development of lifelong education	The University of the Third Age thrives at the university, and various projects to activate senior citizens are implemented, e.g. «the Sosnowiec Academy of Citizens' Activity». In various cities of the region, Children's Universities of the Humanitas University are set up to show the youngest (6–12-year-olds) the diversity of the world of science. There is also Youth University popularizing knowledge in the fields of engineering, marketing, management, PR, chemistry, physics, biology, mnemonics and psychology among teenagers (13–17-year-olds).
Medical University of Silesia in Katowice	Culinary and educational workshops «Colorful means healthy»	This is an initiative of Medical University of Silesia in Katowice (Operational Program Knowledge Education Development), in partnership with the municipality of Siemianowice Śląskie. The aim of educational, sensory, culinary workshops in molecular cuisine is to shape or change children's attitudes, beliefs, opinions and practical skills.
Wroclaw University of Economics and Business	Green Days 2019 Wroclaw University of Economics and Business (WUEB) for the Planet and Future Generations	On the occasion of the Earth Day, the Green Team, together with the ENAC-TUS scientific club, organized two days' (16–17 April 2019) activities devoted to the issues of university responsibility towards the planet and future generations. The program included: workshops, lectures, discussion with representatives of the university administration about the desired «green» and pro-social initiatives at WUEB
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan	Academic Days	The main goal of the Academic Days is to popularize knowledge in the field of natural sciences among secondary school students by participating in lectures and in labs, workshops and seminars conducted by the employees of the Faculty of Biology. Students acquire knowledge, skills and social competences in the field of research of the world of nature and biology
Warsaw Management University (WMU)	Academy of Managerial Competence	The key task of the project is to organize free cyclical trainings in responsible management for students and graduates of WMU and for the local community. The trainings are conducted by the top managerial staff of renowned national and international companies.
University of Wrocław (UWr)	Popularization of science	UWr is open to children, youth, and their parents. Faculties prepare lectures on natural and life sciences, STEM, law, social, and philosophical disciplines and humanities. Studium Generale aims to build bridges between specialist field areas in order to allow people to know and understand better the world around us. The University participates in The Lower Silesian Festival of Science. During lectures, workshops, laboratory, classes, researchers present the achievements of science in layman's terms.
<i>Principle 3. Disseminate the ideas of equality, diversity, tolerance and respect, and protect human rights in relation to the entire academic community and its environment</i>		
WSB University	Managing the diversity	About 1,000 students from 65 countries study at WSB University. Supporting diversity through respect for the values, traditions, norms, customs and culture of various countries has made WSB University unique in the region. During matriculation, foreign students appear in national costumes; they speak about traditions, culture and cuisine of their countries during specially organized days, exchange their experience by participating in educational and research projects at the university.



Name of the university	Name of the practice	A brief description of the practice
Medical University of Silesia in Katowice	The project «From kindergarten to senior» co-sponsored by the City of Katowice	Every year, MUSK organizes several free forms of sports (e. g. Nordic walking) and educational activities (workshops, lectures) for the residents of Katowice. The project assumes that health prophylaxis will definitely be more effective if its program reaches entire social structures, from the youngest to the seniors of the City of Katowice.
University of Gdańsk (UG)	Immigrant student at school and in the environment – improving intercultural competences	In May 2015, the President of Gdańsk inaugurated the work of the first Polish cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary team for the model of integration of immigrants. Its task was to create an inventory of resources and opportunities to support immigrants in Gdansk, and to identify their most important needs and problems. The Faculty of Social Sciences of the UG participated in the team's activities and developed a program and methods of training for teachers. Its purpose is to develop the knowledge and competences of educators and psychologists in the field of education and support of the development and integration of immigrant students at Polish schools.
<i>Principle 4. Expand curricula to include issues of ethics and CSR, sustainable development and social innovation</i>		
Kozminski University	CSR. Goals of Sustainable Development in the Company's Strategy – post-graduate studies	Postgraduate studies are specialized and are conducted in partnership with Deloitte. The curriculum aims to supplement knowledge about shaping ethical and responsible business strategies using the SDGs of the UN, as well as to equip the participants with skills and competences highly valued on the market for the effective use of various instruments of CSR in a modern organization.
SGH Warsaw School of Economics	Compulsory e-learning subject «Corporate Social Responsibility»	The subject developed as part of extending the SGH curriculum with issues of ethics and SR. Each module contains a theoretical introduction, a case study and opinions of practitioners from organizations who are leaders in a given topic.
<i>Principle 5. Run projects implementing the principles of SR, in particular regarding the management of diversity in the workplace, employee volunteering, promotion of ethics, cross-sectoral cooperation, and socially engaged marketing</i>		
Poznan University of Economics and Business	Volunteer WorkDay at UEP	The idea of the initiative is to introduce the notion of employee volunteer work and to present voluntary activities conducted by business and NGOs and by employees and students of PUEB
University of Gdansk	Academy of Animator – the Promoter of Science	The project implemented by the Faculty of Chemistry consisted of strengthening the dialogue between science and society in the field of experimental sciences, transferring knowledge based on scientific evidence and activity of employee volunteer work. It was associated with the Baltic Festival of Science.
<i>Principle 6. Undertake scientific research and implementation activities which, in partnership with other academic centers from around the world, the enterprise sector, public administration and NGOs, can contribute to solving important social problems</i>		
WSB University	Building long-term relations with the economic environment	WSB University develops effective cooperation and partnership relations with entities of the social and economic environment, among others, through the Experts' Council of WSB University. As one of the first in Poland, it introduced a dual education model ensuring graduates' better preparation to the needs of the labor market.
Gdansk University of Technology	Knowledge Bridge – a portal with knowledge for you	Bridge of Knowledge is a platform that aims to connect creative scientists with innovative businessmen. Bridge gathers science offers for commercial partnerships. This platform is filled with opportunities which give access to innovative scientists, their projects, laboratories and more. It provides new ways to bring business to the next level.
<i>Principle 7. Develop inter-university, national and international cooperation to enable adaptation and strengthening of the best practices in the field of CSR</i>		
Poznan University of Economics and Business	Conference «Problems of CSR in didactics and scientific research. PRME Prospects» 3–4 April 2017	The conference aimed to discuss the importance of CSR in the modern world. Universities' obligation to prepare students – future employees – to perform professional roles responsibly was discussed, the results of CSR research were presented, and contemporary interpretations of this idea and directions of its development were considered.

Name of the university	Name of the practice	A brief description of the practice
University of Silesia in Katowice	14th Youth Climate Summit before COP24, Conference of Youth (COY)	This project preceded the climate summit in Katowice (December 2–14, 2018) During the meeting, issues of the climate policy in the regional and global dimensions as well as environmental changes were raised. The program included thematic workshops, sessions and panels.
<i>Principle 8. Ensure the organizational order at university, building university management on the foundation of SR, both in strategic documents and the resulting activities in order to comprehensively develop the academic community and to effectively implement the university mission.</i>		
Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	IDEA BOX – scientists and students’ ideas for the development of the LUT	This is a regular activity implemented under the LUT task budget aimed at improving conditions of work and study. Employees and students can submit their ideas how to develop the university via a special website. The projects to be implemented are selected by the university authorities after consultation with the academic community.
SGH Warsaw School of Economics	Employee budget at the SGH	The employee budget is a separate amount of financial resources whose allocation is co-decided by employees. A project can be submitted individually or together with other employees. Ideas for implementation are selected by universal voting via the Internet. Ideas cover improving the university infrastructure, improving social conditions and other initiatives supporting professional development, health or increasing the comfort of work.
Gdansk University of Technology (GUT)	Citizens’ Budget (CB)	CB is part of the GUT budget allocated in a given calendar year from the reserve available to the rector. Its purpose may be decided by employees, students and doctoral students of the GUT in an open online competition. CB relates to investment and renovation projects that fall within the competence of the university authorities.
<i>Principle 9. Ensure transparency of the university’s activities, among others, by evaluating the results, promoting and disseminating the output, and identifying the person or team coordinating these activities</i>		
Lodz University of Technology	Promoting and disseminating research results via the Internet and through the YouTube Channel	The activity aims to popularize science in society by presenting scientific issues in an attractive form, via the Internet and You Tube, and in a way understandable to a wide audience. The cycle is mainly addressed to secondary school students and people interested in scientific explanation of everyday life phenomena.
University of Gdansk	Implementation of the Open Access Policy (OAP) at the University of Gdańsk	The strategic goal of the project is to increase the number of publications of UG employees and doctoral students made available on the basis of free licenses and indexed in research databases as Open Access documents. The activities, initiated in 2017, include: creation of internal legal acts and procedures regulating the issues of depositing and sharing scientific work; preparation of technical facilities; support of faculty research journals (applications to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education)
<i>Principle 10. Minimize the negative impact of the activities of the academic community and its stakeholders on the natural environment in all its dimensions</i>		
Wroclaw University of Science and Technology (WUST)	Monitoring the air quality at the WUST campus	The initiative is implemented by employees and students under the project entitled «The Use of Innovative Sensor Systems to Assess Air Quality at the Wrocław University of Technology Campus.» The impact of the type of building development, transport and the green areas in shaping air quality in this part of Wrocław is studied. Measurements are made in selected parts of the campus, at short intervals, and their results are updated on the project website every 15 minutes.
University of Wrocław	Climate and environmental emergency	The Council of the Faculty of Biological UWr asked the University authorities to immediately proclaim «a climatic and environmental state of emergency» at the University and to set up an interdisciplinary team of scientists who would engage in a social dialogue, audit the environmental costs of the University’s operation, and prepare substantive grounds to involve the university in a public debate on the climate and ecological crisis.

Name of the university	Name of the practice	A brief description of the practice
<i>Principle 11 Conduct a dialogue with stakeholders on the priorities of the university social responsibility policy and inform about its results</i>		
WSB University	Involvement in the local development	Being aware of the importance of regional identity and local development, WSB University actively cooperates with local government, associations, and cultural and educational organizations. WSB University employees participate in developing the voivodship development strategy, cities' development strategies, revitalization policies and urban policies; they prepare expert opinions on behalf of public administration bodies.
Poznan University of Economics and Business	Gala of the «Ace of Responsible Business 2018» poll	The goal of the poll was to select and promote socially responsible practices used by large and smaller Greater Poland companies operating only locally. The awards were granted in the categories: fair market practices, labor relations, environmental protection and social involvement.
<i>Principle 12 Be guided by the principles of ethics and responsibility in the process of teaching and conducting scientific research to ensure optimal conditions for stakeholders to use knowledge, intellectual capital and university achievements</i>		
Kozminski University (KU)	Survey among academic teachers related to the HR Excellence in Research Award*	In 2016, KU conducted a survey among academic teachers related to applying for the HR Excellence in Research Award and developed a strategy for Human Resources Management for KU teachers in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct in recruiting researchers.
Other universities that have the HR Excellence in Research Award and HRM strategy and conducted research among their own academic staff are: SGH Warsaw School of Economics, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Medical University of Lodz, University of Gdansk, Lodz University of Technology, Gdansk University of Technology, Medical University of Silesia in Katowice, Poznan University of Economics and Business, University of Lodz, University of Silesia in Katowice, Vistula University, Wroclaw University of Science and Technology, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business		

Source: own study based on: [24,28–34].

\* The distinction of HR Excellence in Research is awarded by the European Commission to the institutions that implement The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers – HRS4R, observing the rules and guidelines contained in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>).

Declaration. Due to the limited volume of the article, an exhaustive review of all activities undertaken by the studied universities cannot be conducted.

### Conclusion

Research goals were achieved through the conducted analysis. It was found that Polish HEIs voluntarily and increasingly more often implement the principles of SR mainly based on the Declaration of USR, less often applying the PRME principles. For HEIs, the Declaration is the basic set of formal national regulations regarding the USR. It is based on the principles of SDGs, adapting them to the specificity of higher education institutions and invoking some of these principles in particular points.

In particular, it refers to principle 4 (quality education) aiming to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education, including education on sustainable development and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. It refers to principles aiming to strengthen and develop scientific research supporting technological advances, developing innovation and

entrepreneurship (principle 9), to principles promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work (principle 8), to principles counteracting all forms of discrimination in different types of organizations (principle 5), to principles conducive to involving and integrating all social groups, including immigrants (principle 10). It encourages the development of universities themselves as institutions where there is a participatory style of management (principle 16). It invokes rules promoting partnership of different institutions – including HEIs – for the sake of implementing the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development (principle 17) as well as encouraging activities for the benefit of the natural environment and to counteract climate changes (principle 13) [35].

Polish universities implement Declaration's principles in various fields of their activity, i. e. in didactics, science, relations with stakeholders (the environment) and in managing the university. Some of the examined universities – the first signatories of the Declaration – undertake activity related to several principles of the Declaration (e. g. University of Silesia

in Katowice, SGH Warsaw School of Economics, WSB University), others only a selected one (e.g. University of Bielsko-Biala, Warsaw Management University, Humanitas University in Sosnowiec). Some signatories (e.g. the Center of Postgraduate Medical Education, the Witelon State University of Applied Sciences in Legnica) do not report such activity at all (despite signing the Declaration).

As follows from the conducted analysis (Table 1), good practices of the examined HEIs most often refer to principle 2 of the Declaration, i.e. shaping social and civic attitudes as well as building a broadly understood community, communication, and social sensitivity.

The socially responsible activities undertaken by universities concern internal stakeholders, i.e. employees (e.g. codes of ethics, HRM strategies, civic budgets) and students (e.g. competitions, lectures, workshops, training in SR issues and effective implementation of its principles in organizations and events integrating foreign students with the Polish ones). They also address external stakeholders, mainly the local community, but also immigrants, foundations, children in Africa. They are closely related to the popularization of science as well as climate policy and environmental protection. They also mean offering subjects and postgraduate studies familiarizing future graduates with the issues of social responsibility and sustainable development as well as the principles of their implementation in enterprises and other types of organizations.

It should be emphasized that students are also involved in promoting the SR idea and undertaking the related activities at universities, e.g. through thriving scientific circles (e.g. ENAKTUS).

Implementation of the university social responsibility principles in accordance with the Declaration of USR increases HEIs' openness to cooperation with the business community and develops their didactic offer in terms of shaping competences, pro-social and pro-environmental attitudes of future staff. The implementation of the Declaration additionally strengthens the organizational and management capabilities of the university through more effective management of resources, development of the academic staff and building the university's prestige as a generator of knowledge and a creator of new ideas (Społeczna odpowiedzialność, 2019).

The activities undertaken by the studied universities have brought and continue to bring a number of tangible benefits to their addressees (Table 1). They become a permanent part of the public space promoting the ideas of social responsibility. First of all, they shape students' awareness and commitment to the

topical problems of the world, the local community, and the natural environment on the basis of universal values that are the foundation of social responsibility. They thus shape future elites of society, citizens of a globalized world aware of the existing opportunities and threats. They integrate the local community through activities popularizing knowledge and results of scientific research (children, youth, third-age universities, science festivals, conferences), health programs (sports, culinary) targeted at the inhabitants. They shape civil society by developing volunteering among students, programs integrating immigrants with the local and the academic community, or directly addressed to groups in need of support. They promote their own region by popularizing science, but also by cooperation between a university and local authorities and enterprises with a view to its development. They make society and students aware of issues associated with social responsibility by introducing subjects on social responsibility and sustainable development to study programs, by offering postgraduate studies, organizing conferences and workshops on this subject. Through employees, students and doctoral students' participation in participatory budgets and offering them a chance to submit various proposals, HEIs involve them in managing the university. They build their involvement through implementing ethical codes or human resources management strategies.

According to the author, this activity would be much more effective if it were also associated with including socially responsible activities in the mission and development strategy of the university [19]. It is especially vital and justified because the SR activities support HEIs in building their competitive position in the environment and also contribute to deepening loyalty and involvement of the university's employees and students in the affairs of their *Alma Mater*.

The development of SR at HEIs can contribute to the further development of cooperation with the government administration in the process of creating the public policy for sustainable development and practices of university social responsibility, to strengthen cooperation of the academic community in Poland, to promote the SR idea in the broadly understood social awareness and to popularize this idea further. This activity is absolutely necessary and should be continued by Polish universities.

The growing importance and development of social responsibility at Polish universities is manifested by an increasing number of activities they have taken over the past years, as well as an increasing number of universities signing the SOU Declaration, thus by their responsible commitment to engage in popularizing its demands in their own activity.



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