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## GOOD PRACTICES AND GLOBAL RANKING RESULTS OF POLISH UNIVERSITIES IN RELATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

DOI: 10.21008/j.0239-9415.2024.089.09

The aim of the article was to select benchmarking activities that universities will be able to use at each stage of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). At the same time, it should be emphasized that the education process is a priority for educational institutions, and the implementation of the principles of sustainable development is possible through intensive education processes combined with the application of knowledge in practice. This is a challenge for the university because it requires remodeling the current culture, changes in processes and the perception of certain cultural and social phenomena. This is likely to involve a change in the teacher-student relationship, a change in the traditional education process to practice-based education and will also require an interdisciplinary context in the content provided. This is precisely the challenge for outstanding educators.

Good practices published by universities often contain generalities. It is rare to find specific data indicating, for example, cost savings through the implementation of a specific good practice or a measurable social effect, and such a summary would be a better argument for followers than a description of the good practice itself. The effect of implementation is then impossible to verify and may prove to be very exaggerated.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, good practices, ESG, university social responsibility

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The sustainable development of universities is a process influencing the implementation of the concept of sustainable development at global level in two ways – universities not only shape the level of knowledge and solutions supporting this idea and educate staff for the economy, but also implement this concept in their activities. As research conducted in 2023 for the Polish Ministry of Funds for Regional Policy showed, the level of the development of universities' sustainability – including foreign ones – is unsatisfactory and is considered inadequate (Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, 2023). Comparing these results to the assessment of Polish universities in international rankings, e.g. The UI GreenMetric World University Rankings (Ranking by Country 2023 – Poland, 2023), the QS World University Rankings (especially in terms of sustainable development criteria), in which Polish universities are placed at most in the second hundred, and the THE (Times Higher Education) World University Rankings (Impact Rankings, 2023) (the best Polish universities are ranked in the fourth hundred), research issues have emerged: which elements, subject to evaluation, place Polish universities so far down the rankings? Can these elements help Polish universities improve their results in coming years?

## 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC COMPETENCES

Many definitions have been provided in the decades since work on sustainable development began. Their multiplicity and diversity result, among other things, from the fact that sustainable development is multidimensional. The literature on the subject presents over 100 interpretations of this concept, from those focusing on socio-economic issues to those emphasizing the environmental aspects of development. More on the analysis of the concept can be found in the works of: Misztal (2023), Zaląga (2016), Jeżowski (2012), Kistowski (2003), Borys (2005), and Kozłowski (2005). Broadly speaking, it can be assumed that sustainable development is socio-economic development in which the process of integrating political, economic, and social activities takes place, while a natural balance and the durability of basic natural processes are maintained. It aims to guarantee the possibility of meeting the basic needs of individual communities or citizens of both the modern generation as well as future generations (Act of April 27, 2001, Environmental Protection Law).

According to a report financed by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management (Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development in Poland, 2012), which was an analysis of the state of education for sustainable development in Poland in 2012, at tertiary level, only students of natural sciences, agriculture, forestry and veterinary professions acquired knowledge and skills in



the field of sustainable development (Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of November 2, 2011 on the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education). However, for third cycle (doctoral) students, until 2012 (the date of the issue of the above-mentioned report), there were no guidelines regarding education in sustainable development. In this aspect, universities had and still have full autonomy.

Based on the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), the Integrated Qualifications System (IQS) (Act of December 22, 2015, on the Integrated Qualifications System) was announced as a state policy tool enabling the development of high-quality human capital. This was done through program and strategic documents adopted after 2010 by the Council of Ministers, such as: “National Development Strategy 2020” (2012), “Lifelong learning perspective” (2013), and “Strategy for responsible development” (2017). The relevance of the challenges related to strengthening the quality of human capital in Poland in terms of competencies associated with sustainable development goals is indicated by the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030: “The new economy is based on new skills. [...] The quality of human capital is increasingly the basis for smart, sustainable development based on social cohesion” (Qualifications Framework, European Credit Transfer System – ECTS and European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training – ECVET for Lifelong Learning – LLL – Ramy kwalifikacji, ECTS i ECVET dla uczenia się przez całe życie).

An important event from the point of view of the implementation of the above-mentioned IQS was the Sustainable Development Summit in New York in 2015. At this event, a document was signed, which the Open Working Group established by the UN had been working on since 2012. As a result of the negotiation process, 17 goals were developed and included in the new agenda, Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015, Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), including Goal 4 on good quality education. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the success of all goals depends mainly on good quality education, because it has a significant impact on the level of knowledge and sensitivity of society towards sustainable activities. Importantly, the survey data from the report showed that, by 2012, only 29% of primary and middle school teachers and 33% of secondary school teachers believed that they were obliged to conduct lessons on ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) through the Core Curriculum. The NQF (National Qualifications Framework) obliged their employees to introduce issues related to sustainable development only in the case of higher education institutions, with an emphasis on natural sciences (61%). However, there were no guidelines on educating teachers about ESD.

The current qualifications framework leaves university institutions independent in this matter (the Polish Qualifications Framework). As indicated by research conducted on a group of 492 university employees and management staff in institutions of various specialties, public and non-public, by a team of experts (the Work-

ing Group on the Social Responsibility of universities in the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy) conducted training for employees of non-public universities in the field of ecological education indicated by 71% of respondents, public – 69%. As many as 72% of the teachers surveyed declared that they discussed social responsibility/sustainable development in their classes. However, in the same report, it is stated that the barriers to university activities consistent with the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which were most frequently identified by employees, included: insufficient knowledge about the implementation of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and University Social Responsibility (USR) – 53% of responses; lack of motivation among employees to participate in initiatives related to both CSR and Sustainable Development (SD; 44%); as well as insufficient communication in relation to USR (42%) (Lulewicz-Sas et al., 2023).

In response to global social changes, climate change, and economic problems in the world, universities themselves took up the challenge and jointly, at international level, established a strategy for implementing ESD (Education for Sustainable Development). Places of higher education have voluntarily, rather than due to legal regulations, adopted the “the university as a whole” principle, according to which the institution implements and promotes the principles of sustainable development throughout its entire structure. It not only educates in the field of SD, but also sets a good example in terms of infrastructure, planning, and the implementation of activities (including waste management, energy saving, transport, environmental management, and purchasing).

This approach is expressed in two declarations:

The first, developed in 2017 by the Working Group on the Social Responsibility of Universities in Poland is the Declaration of University Social Responsibility. Currently, 160 public and private universities have declared their voluntary promotion of sustainable development and social responsibility in educational programs, scientific research, and the management and organizational solutions of the universities. The 12 principles contained in the declaration indicate the direction of changes for the university authorities, based on the highest management standards, the effective management of resources, the development of academic staff, and an increase in the prestige of the universities by generating knowledge and creating new ideas (Declaration of University Social Responsibility, Catalogue of good universities’ practices relating to ESG criteria – Deklaracja Społecznej Odpowiedzialności Uczelni, Katalog dobrych praktyk uczelni w obszarach ESG);

The Valencia Declaration (Valencia Declaration – universities and society) is the result of discussions between almost 700 rectors of universities from around the world (including 30 rectors from Poland), as well as other representatives of academia, political and business figures from 14 countries and ministers of higher education from Spain, Poland, Portugal, Uruguay, and Argentina among others. The document recognizes that rectors and their teams have a key role to play in the process of transformation towards sustainable development. The discussions took

place from May 8–10, 2023, during the 5th International Meeting of Rectors of Universia in Valencia, entitled “Universities and Society”, and, after several days of discussions, the result was the formulation of seven resolutions. The meeting participants pledged to:

- 1) shape the university’s mission in line with sustainable development goals;
- 2) expand the educational provision to meet the needs of diverse groups of recipients;
- 3) provide students with comprehensive, interdisciplinary education and the ability to combine knowledge from three main fields that form the foundation of sustainable development: knowledge about the environment, economics, and society;
- 4) help students develop their skills and passions, as well as equip them with competencies that will enable them to function efficiently and successfully in the global market, as demonstrated by their flexibility;
- 5) ensure the interdisciplinarity of research, implementing research plans considering global challenges and local conditions, while engaging society and disseminating knowledge and research results for its benefit;
- 6) promote the exchange and cultural enrichment of students and academic staff geographically, virtually, and between industries;
- 7) promote broad cooperation between educational institutions and governments, industry, and society, and create a network of connections between them that will function for the common good.

The provision of education is included in the implementation of each of the Sustainable Development Goals, and, in particular, the wording of Goal 4: “The provision of high-quality, inclusive education and the promotion of lifelong education for all people” strongly emphasizes the importance of education for the success of all SDGs, which was also emphasized in 2017 by Kalinowska and Batorczak (2017), as well as at international level by other authors, e.g.: Rieckmann et al. (2022), and Ugglá and Soneryd (2023).

In this matter, a serious issue is the lack of preparation of teaching staff in terms of their knowledge of sustainable development, which should be elementary knowledge, and as indicated previously. A report commissioned by the Polish Ministry of the Environment in 2012 (the expertise concerned education for sustainable development in Poland) showed that adults’ awareness of sustainable development was at an “unsatisfactory” level. The report also emphasized that it is easier to provide knowledge to people who participate in the educational process of their own volition, i.e. also in the process of higher and postgraduate education. It also allows for the expansion of the offer and encouraging participation in the education process in the field of sustainable development within, for example, Universities of the Third Age or Universities for Children.

Most of the resolutions of the Valencia Declaration point to the role of the teacher not only as an educator, but also as an interdisciplinary coach: a guide and

a practitioner, which, therefore, indicates the need to prepare teaching staff for this role. Buchcic (2016) speaks in a similar tone, rightly claiming that the participation of universities in shaping ecological education should not be underestimated. He correctly notes that the process of change must refer to the actual situation in the country, but given the global climate crisis, this reality is reflected by accurate knowledge of the global situation and local actions. Here again, university plays the main role, as a guide in this reality, with its educational potential, cooperation with industry, and strong influence on all social groups centered around its activities.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article lists twelve Polish universities that took leading positions among Polish universities in the THE (Times Higher Education) classification (Impact Rankings, 2023); their activities and actions regarding sustainable development were checked: website, SR, CSR or USR reporting, good practices, etc.

In 2019, only the University of Warsaw was included in the THE (Times Higher Education) ranking, but in the following year, 5 Polish universities could be found in the general classification. In 2021, twelve Polish universities were included, while in 2022 – a total of 23 appeared in the ranking. This development of interest in reporting allows us to predict that in the coming year even more Polish universities will report their SD activities and the resources of catalogues of good university practices in the field of SD will also increase (considering that the first Polish university to sign the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities, Kozminski University, did so in 2017, but by 2022, 160 Polish universities had signed the declaration (Catalogue of good university practices relating to ESG criteria; Katalog dobrych praktyk uczelni w obszarach ESG).

Fulfilling sustainable development goals and the related financial and non-financial reporting, as well as posting good practices on databases (national and global), means that more and more universities will want to participate in rankings. This is due to the fact that high positions in rankings are a powerful marketing tool and attract stakeholders to the best centers: students, scientists, investors, employees and others, therefore guaranteeing development. The implementation of sustainable development in university activities draws attention to these centers as open, modern, friendly, and welcoming to everyone, making them attractive to interested parties and influencing the initiation and development of relationships with them (Fig. 1).

The entry into force on 5 January 2023 of EU Directive 2022/2464 on corporate sustainability reporting (Directive (EU) 2022/2464 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022), which extended reporting obligations, was a signal for higher education institutes that this was the last call to become active on the issue of SD, both as educators and as entities that actively teach how each of

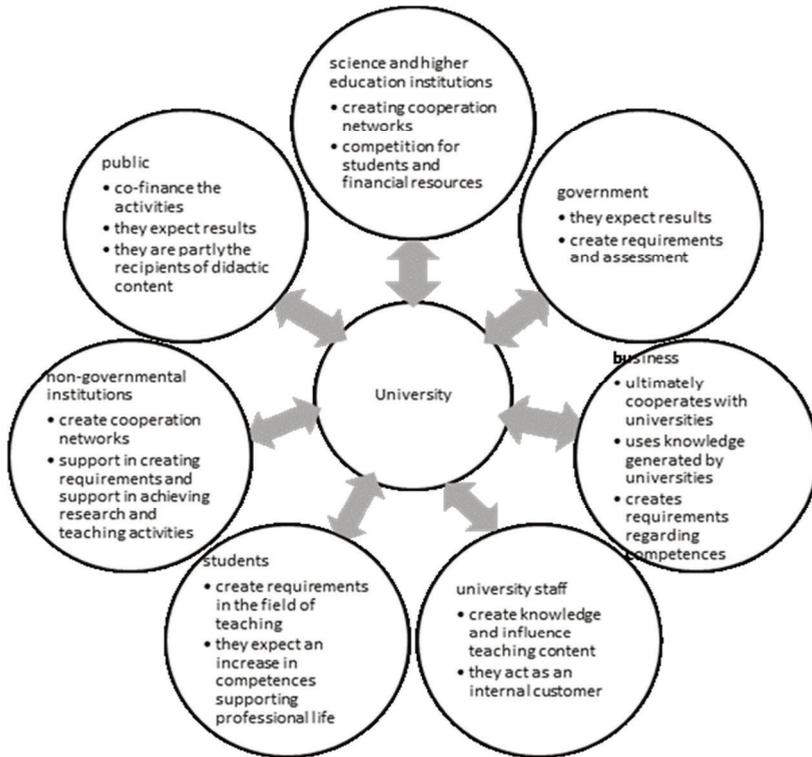


Fig. 1. University relations with stakeholders (authors' own study based on: Report: Social responsibility. Importance for universities and methods of implementation; Donaldson, Preston, 1995, pp. 65-91)

the 17 goals should be implemented. We are observing huge changes taking place in big steps. Universities, as providers of highly qualified employees, will have to cope with the difficult task of shaping potential employees (university graduates) so that, when entering the labor market, they are prepared to perform tasks relating to SD.

Activities in the field of sustainable development, including the implementation of a University's Social Responsibility policy, go beyond the obligations arising from legal provisions, and taking them into account in university operations is voluntary. Despite this, universities will be willing to undertake tasks relating to SD because operating in a sustainable way brings many benefits for them. Firstly, they support students' preparation for functioning sustainably in the workplace, i.e. they reliably prepare candidates to be the type of employees that employers want; secondly, they enable the reduction of waste; and thirdly, they give satisfactory results, which acts as a strong motivator. The universities' implementation of SDG goals demonstrates greater responsibility for relations with external and internal stakeholders and the natural environment (Tab. 1).

Table 1. University tasks in the field of sustainable development

Area	Tasks
Scientific and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing high standards of teaching</li> <li>• conducting high-quality scientific research</li> <li>• shaping ethical and responsible business leaders</li> <li>• supporting and developing innovation</li> <li>• promoting mobility of students and researchers</li> <li>• promoting international and cross-sectoral exchange of experiences</li> </ul>
Social	<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paying attention to employee development</li> <li>• promoting the mobility of students and researchers</li> <li>• maintaining international relations</li> <li>• equalizing social opportunities for students</li> <li>• adapting infrastructure to the needs of disabled people</li> </ul> <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing specialists needed in the labor market</li> <li>• creating the political and economic reality</li> <li>• providing activities for children, seniors, and disabled people</li> <li>• supporting activities to protect health and promote sports</li> <li>• supporting culture and art</li> <li>• supporting the protection of monuments</li> <li>• holding charity events</li> </ul>
Ecological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offering curriculums related to environmental protection</li> <li>• creating and promoting pro-ecological attitudes</li> <li>• implementing and monitoring sustainable development goals</li> <li>• reducing the ecological footprint</li> <li>• conducting research responding to the problems and needs of the natural environment</li> </ul>
Economic	<p>Internal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining a sustainable supply chain</li> <li>• operating a management system ISO 9001:2015, 14001:2018, 26000:2012</li> <li>• engaging in non-financial reporting (e.g. by GRI)</li> </ul> <p>External:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considering impact on the local economy</li> <li>• creating new staff</li> <li>• recognition of the university as an employer</li> <li>• building new business partnerships</li> <li>• purchasing from local suppliers</li> <li>• providing consulting services</li> <li>• promoting opinion-forming</li> </ul>

Source: Jastrzębska, Przybysz, Wróbel, ed., 2019.

In terms of tasks assigned to universities, it is noted that, apart from standard elements relating to sustainable development (the ecological, economic, and social impact), these units primarily have an educational and scientific research mission to implement. These are important because of their effect on the previously mentioned areas.

#### 4. RESULTS

The THE (Times Higher Education) Impact Rankings are the only global scoreboards that assess universities against all 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The metrics used are carefully calibrated to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons across four broad areas: research, management, outreach, and teaching. In the overall ranking, for the second year in a row, Western Sydney University, Australia, is in first place, the University of Manchester, Great Britain, is in second place, and Queen's University, Canada, is in third place. In the top 100, the most represented country is Great Britain with 26 institutions, followed by Australia with 16 institutions, and Canada with 15. In the fourth hundred, Iraq, with 56 institutions, is in first place in terms of the number of reporting universities, and Poland is in second place with 23.

Table 2 lists 12 Polish universities that in 2023 took the highest positions out of Polish universities and in the general THE Impact Rankings (for example, the University of Gdansk – 1 / 401-600: first place among Polish universities, places from 401-600 in the general classification); the second column contains links to the reports of these universities as useful sources of good practices; the third column indicates whether a given university also reported to the QS Ranking and Green-Metric Rankings – 1 point was awarded for each reporting.

The fourth column in Table 2 contains the number of university activities in terms of publications, based on the list prepared in 2022 by P. Pietrzak (the Institute of Management of Warsaw University of Life Sciences), in which he compiled (in the report “The involvement of public universities in Poland in promoting the Goals of Sustainable Development”) the number of articles published in 2021 by academic teachers of public universities in Poland and others conducting classes and scientific activities, or participating in their conduct, corresponding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the report, the author categorized public universities in Poland in terms of their scientific productivity in promoting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2021 (measured by the number of publications per academic teacher and others conducting classes and scientific activities, or participating in their conduct). 1 point was awarded for each goal with the highest number of publications.

The fifth column (Tab. 2) contains a summary of the number of good practices reported by universities in two registers: the previously cited “Catalogue of good

Table 2. Polish TOP 12

University/Top in THE Impact Rankings 2023 Polish Universities/Top in the general classification of Impact Rankings 2023*	Actions towards ZR, ZR, or CSR reports (link) [yes – 1, no – 0]	Actions towards ZR, ZR, or CSR reports (link) [yes – 1, no – 0]	Number of publications promoting SD activities for a given purpose as top]	Number of good SD practices total: 2019 and 2022** [number of revised practices]	TOTAL	Top
University of Gdansk / 1 / 401-600	<a href="https://czrug.ug.edu.pl/raport-razem-dla-ludzi-srodowiska-i-dobrobytu-spoleczne-zaangazowanie-universytetu-gdanskego-przez-pryzmat-celow-zrownowazonego-rozwoju/">https://czrug.ug.edu.pl/raport-razem-dla-ludzi-srodowiska-i-dobrobytu-spoleczne-zaangazowanie-universytetu-gdanskego-przez-pryzmat-celow-zrownowazonego-rozwoju/</a>	2	1	8	17	2
Jagiellonian University / 1 / 401-600	<a href="https://przelamuj.uj.edu.pl/">https://przelamuj.uj.edu.pl/</a>	1	3	3	13	3
Cracow University of Economics / 1 / 401-600	<a href="https://d30mzt1bxg5llt.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/PDFs/UEK_raport_26-10-2020.pdf">https://d30mzt1bxg5llt.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/PDFs/UEK_raport_26-10-2020.pdf</a>	–	–	–	6	9
Gdansk University of Technology / 2 / 601-800	<a href="https://pg.edu.pl/zrownowazon-y-rozwoj/2023-10/trzecia-edycja-raportu-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-pg-juz-dostepna">https://pg.edu.pl/zrownowazon-y-rozwoj/2023-10/trzecia-edycja-raportu-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-pg-juz-dostepna</a>	2	–	–	7	8
Lodz University of Technology / 2 / 601-800	<a href="https://p.lodz.pl/uczelnia/zrownowazon-y-rozwoj/politechnika-na-drodze-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-raporty-za-rok-akad-2021-i-202122">https://p.lodz.pl/uczelnia/zrownowazon-y-rozwoj/politechnika-na-drodze-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-raporty-za-rok-akad-2021-i-202122</a>	1	–	5	11	5
University of Warsaw / 2 / 601-800	<a href="https://www.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/agenda-na-rzecz-klimatu-i-zrownowazonego-rozwoju.pdf">https://www.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/agenda-na-rzecz-klimatu-i-zrownowazonego-rozwoju.pdf</a>	1	5	7	18	1

Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences / 2 / 601-800	<a href="https://upwr.edu.pl/aktualnosci/filtr.zrownowazony-rozwoj,21.html">https://upwr.edu.pl/aktualnosci/filtr.zrownowazony-rozwoj,21.html</a>	1	-	-	-	6	9
WSB Academy in Dąbrowa Górnicza / 2 / 601-800	<a href="https://wsb.edu.pl/uczelnia/strategia-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-akademii-wsb-do-roku-2030">https://wsb.edu.pl/uczelnia/strategia-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-akademii-wsb-do-roku-2030</a>	1	-	-	6	12	4
Koźmiński University / 3 / 801-1000	<a href="https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/o-uczelnizrownowazony-rozwoj">https://www.kozminski.edu.pl/o-uczelnizrownowazony-rozwoj</a>	-	-	-	1	5	10
Medical University of Gdansk / 3 / 801-1000	<a href="https://bip.gumed.edu.pl/attachment/90233/zal_nr_I_do_Uchwaly_Senatu_823_Strategia_GUMed_2019_2025_aktualizacja.pdf">https://bip.gumed.edu.pl/attachment/90233/zal_nr_I_do_Uchwaly_Senatu_823_Strategia_GUMed_2019_2025_aktualizacja.pdf</a>	-	-	-	5	9	7
Poznan University of Technology / 3 / 801-1000	<a href="https://www.put.poznan.pl/strategia">https://www.put.poznan.pl/strategia</a>	1	3		5	13	3
Silesian University of Technology / 3 / 801-1000	<a href="https://www.polisl.pl/uczelnia/wp-content/uploads/sites/880/2022/02/Strategia-rozwoju-Politechnika-Slaska-2022.pdf">https://www.polisl.pl/uczelnia/wp-content/uploads/sites/880/2022/02/Strategia-rozwoju-Politechnika-Slaska-2022.pdf</a>	1	2		3	10	6

## LEGEND:

First column: place in THE Impact Rankings: First Place – 5 points, Second – 4, Third – 3, Fourth – 2, Fifth – 1, above fifth place 0 points.

\* Based on data contained in the publication: Pietrzak, 2022.

\*\* According to the list included in the Catalogue of good university practices relating to ESG criteria, Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Ministry of Education and Science (2023), and the Report – Social Responsibility. Importance for universities and methods of implementation, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Investment and Development (2019) (Katalog dobrych praktyk uczelni w obszarach ESG, Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej, Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki oraz Raport – Społeczna odpowiedzialność. Znaczenie dla uczelni i sposoby wdrażania, Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, Ministerstwo Inwestycji i Rozwoju).

Source: based on THE Impact Rankings, 2023, activities visible on the internet, participation in QS and GreenMetric Rankings in 2023, leadership in a number of publications relating to a given goal (Report for 2022), and the number of submitted reports of practices (Reports 2019 and 2022).

practices relating to ESG criteria” (Katalog dobrych praktyk uczelni w obszarach ESG), prepared in 2023 by both the Ministry of Regional Funds and Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science for 2022, and the report by both the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of Investment and Development, as well as the Working Group for the Social Responsibility of Universities, which had, three years earlier, developed a similar document (also containing a collection of good university practices): “Social responsibility. Importance for universities and methods of implementation” (Jastrzębska et al., 2019). This latter report not only presented the importance of sustainable development for universities, but also identified good practices in this area. One point was awarded for each practice recorded in these two reports.

In the last two columns, the points were added up, allowing for the preparation of a ranking of the twelve best Polish universities: in first place: the University of Warsaw; in second place: the University of Gdansk; in third place ex aequo: Jagiellonian University and Poznan University of Technology; in fourth place: WSB Academy based in Dąbrowa Górnicza; in fifth place: Lodz University of Technology; in sixth: the Silesian University of Technology; in seventh: the Medical University of Gdansk; in eighth: Gdansk University of Technology; in ninth: the University of Economics in Kraków and Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences; and in tenth place: Kozminski University.

In the next step, 9 Top Polish good practices were compiled (those universities that did not report good practices to the analyzed lists from 2019 and 2023). The starting point was the search for an answer to the research question: “Which elements, subject to evaluation, place Polish universities so far down the rankings?” and: “Can finding these elements help other Polish universities improve their results in coming years?”; reported good practices were recorded and specific effects were highlighted in the form of cost savings, carbon footprint reduction, measurable impact on society, improved knowledge of employees and students, motivation to participate, and improvement in communication in the SOU area. Points were awarded to confirm the high ranking of the analyzed universities (Tab. 2) in world rankings.

Unfortunately, it is confirmed that good practices published by universities often contain generalities. Specific data in this case was found only in the case of the practice reported by the University of Gdansk: Production of electricity for its own needs from a photovoltaic installation, where the percentage reduction of the carbon footprint was given (3.7%), which is a specific indication (the same percentage also corresponded to reduced consumption of electricity from the network. However, it is noted that the amount that the university saved as a result of this was not specified). The implementation of an EDMS (Electronic Document Management System) by the Lodz University of Technology also had an impact on reducing costs and reducing the carbon footprint. The only tip given regarding the implementation of this good practice was related to the reduction of paper consumption – 6,000 fewer sheets of paper and envelopes.

Table 3. List of good practices based on 9 Polish universities from the author’s Polish Top 12 ranking (Tab. 2) with an indication of measurable effects, expressed numerically – 1 point, as well as those obvious, but not expressed numerically – 0.5 points, and included in catalogues of good university practices published in 2019 and 2023\*; (USR – University Social Responsibility)

University	Good Practice	Reduction		Improvement after implementing USR relating to:				Points here	** here
		Costs	CO <sub>2</sub>	Social	Knowledge	Motivation	Communi- cation		
University of Warsaw (UW)	1. Climate competence development model – Project “Drought...”	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	**1
	2. Network of women’s PhD students at UW (Excellence Initiative – Research University)	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	3. Leaders Academy	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	4. University Center Volunteering	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	5. UW’s Participatory budget	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	6. University nursery “University Babies”	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	7. Creation of the position of Ombudsman	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
		TOTAL:						3.5	3
University of Gdansk (UG)	1. Production of electricity for own needs from photovoltaic installations	Yes, not measured	yes	no	no	no	no	1.5	**2
	2. Project: Pioneer women. Researchers. Women leaders. “Women of Gdansk science”	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	3. A unified reporting system for the implementation of SDG goals at UG	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	yes	2	



cont. tab. 2

University	Good Practice	Reduction		Improvement after implementing USR relating to:				Points	** here
		Costs	CO <sub>2</sub>	Social	Knowledge	Motivation	Communi- cation		
	4. Gender Equality Implementation Program at UG	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	Yes, not measured	no	1	
	5. Immigrant students at school and in the community – improving intercultural competences	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	6. Academy – Popularizer of science	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	7. UG's Fair Trade in the Faculty of Economics	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
	8. Introduction of Open Access Policy (POA) at UG	no	no	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	0.5	
							<b>TOTAL:</b>	7	1
Jagiellonian University (JU)	1. Establishment of an interdisciplinary and inter-unit UJ's Climate Council	no	no	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	2	**3
	2. Creation of the Regional Education Expert Center of SDG Goals for Southern Poland	no	no	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	2	
	3. Development of a coherent accessibility policy at the JU and creation of the JU Accessibility Center	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	
							<b>TOTAL:</b>	4.5	2
Poznan University of Technology (PUT)	1. Taming diversity. Training: Invisible Street, a series of training courses on the mental health crisis for employees of PUT	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	**3

	2. Taming diversity – films about accessibility and social engagement	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	3. Promotion of ecology: Scientists' Night, Science for Hydrogen Festival at Poznan International Fair for high school students	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	1		
	4. Taming Diversity Events: 2022 Equality Days: May 9-13, 2022 Kindness Day: November 21, 2023 National Anti-Depression Day: February 23	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	5. Support in counteracting discrimination: lecture by Anna Dymna, workshops entitled "Discrimination and hate, disability and gender equality", discussion panel. Equality Unit and Equality Ombudsman	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	0.5		
		TOTAL:									3.0	4
Lodz University of Technology (LUT)	1. Promotion and dissemination results of scientific research on the internet and through YouTube channel	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	0.5	**5	
	2. IDEA BOX – ideas scientists and students on for the development of LUofT	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	3. Implementation of EZM (Electronic Document Management)	Yes, not measured	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	no	no	1		
	4. Kindergarten	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	no	0.5		

cont. tab. 2

University	Good Practice	Reduction		Improvement after implementing USR relating to:				Points here	**	
		Costs	CO <sub>2</sub>	Social	Knowledge	Motivation	Communi- cation			
	5. Measuring your carbon footprint	no	no	no	no	no	no	0		
		TOTAL: 2.5							5	
WSB Academy in Dąbrowa Górnicza (WSB)	1. A practical program for educating staff: developing a low-emission economy on the Polish-Czech border	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	**4	
	2. Birthouses – an initiative of seniors from the University of the Third Age AWSB	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5		
	3. Introduction of the subject “Universal Design” to the educational program for the fields of Physiotherapy, Transport and Computer Science	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5		
	4. Development of Continuing Education	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5		
	5. Diversity management	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5		
	6. Building long-lasting relations with the economic environment	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5		
		TOTAL: 3.0							4	
Silesian University of Technology	1. Implementing the rules: European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct in the Recruitment of Employees Scientific framework for Human Resources Development Strategy for the World Cup in 2017-2020	no	no	Yes, not measured	no	no	no	0.5	**6	

	2. Establishment and operation of Center for the Popularization of Science SUofT	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	3. Functioning at SUofT Association of “Silesian Center Business and Sustainable “Development”	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
		TOTAL:								1.5	6
Medical University of Gdansk	1. Stay healthy without the queue	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5	**7	
	2. Secrets from the museum shelf	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	3. Porridge for a Malagasy	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	4. Youth Meetings with Medicine	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
	5. Health Picnic	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	0.5		
		TOTAL:								2.5	5
Kozminski University	1. CSR: SDG goals in the company’s strategy – postgraduate studies	no	no	no	no	no	no	Yes, not measured	0.5	**10	
		TOTAL:								0.5	7

\* According to data contained in publications: Catalogue of good university practices relating to ESG criteria. Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, 2023, and Social Responsibility Report. Importance for universities and methods of implementation, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Investment and Development, 2019.

\*\* Place in the ranking, according to the list prepared by the authors in Table 2.

Source: authors’ own study.



Out of 43 good practices listed in Table 3, as many as 37 have a social dimension. Unfortunately, no indicators were provided in any of the cases, only descriptions resulting from the characteristics of a given practice. In almost every case, the number of participants involved in each practice was provided, but unfortunately, the effect of the evaluation was not assessed – the impact of the good practice on the group concerned, its durability, and repeatability were not confirmed. In no case was it stated what savings resulted from the implemented practice. The authors know from their observations and interviews that these activities are often measured at various universities, but universities do not boast about specific indicators.

Improving employees' and students' knowledge of the implementation of University Social Responsibility, motivating them to participate in the implementation (USR – University Social Responsibility), and improving communication in terms of USR undoubtedly take place, as demonstrated in good practices such as: the implementation of a unified reporting system for the pursuit of sustainable development goals, the Gender Equality Implementation Program and the introduction of an Open Access Policy (OAP) – all three at the University of Gdansk; the establishment of an interdisciplinary and inter-unit Climate Council and the creation of a Regional Expert Center of Education for Sustainable Development in Southern Poland – both at the Jagiellonian University; the promotion of ecology: Scientists' Night, and the Science for Hydrogen Festival at Poznan International Fair for high school students – a good practice adopted by Poznan University of Technology; and postgraduate studies offered by the Kozminski Academy: CSR: Sustainable Development Goals in company strategy. Unfortunately, in none of the cases mentioned were quantifiable data provided that would allow the use of good practice on a benchmark basis. Examples are sought that demonstrate the highest efficiency in each area, and such information allows us to imitate the best.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Organizations, including universities, show a growing demand for competencies in the areas of sustainable development and for experts who have a good understanding of the connection between Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and company strategy and operations, as well as the relationship between financial and non-financial data. The recently published (January 2022) European Competence Framework (GreenComp. European Competence Framework for Sustainable Development) in the field of sustainable development distinguished 12 competencies within four competence areas, the development of which is necessary from the point of view of green transformation.

Companies covered by reporting, as well as companies included in the value chain of such reporting companies, will need employees or consultants prepared to evaluate the organization concerning sustainable development goals and interna-



tional, national, and regional policies in this area, as well as shape and implement the organization's sustainable development strategy and report the organization's sustainability performance. Therefore, in addition to people responsible for reporting, some employees will be involved in data collection and the operational implementation of the reported provisions of the sustainable development strategy.

According to the Global Green Skills Report 2022 (The 2022 Global Green Skills Report) developed by LinkedIn, among the fastest growing green jobs in 2016-2021 in terms of annual growth, the leader is the Sustainability Manager with 30% growth per year. Polish research also shows an increase in demand for business and management managers with competencies relating to sustainable development. In general, it is expected that there will be an increase of approximately 26,000 in the number of employees, including approximately 2.6 thousand people working in areas connected to green transformation (expected changes in the number of employees in 2021-2030 were projected based on historical changes in the period 1995-2020 analyzed as part of the research project entitled "Forecasting system of the Polish labor market" (Integrated Qualification Systems)).

Apart from implementing the content of ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) in the education program, universities, as entities cooperating with business and, above all, educating for business, see the need to implement elements of ESG reporting (Catalogue of Good University Practices relating to ESG criteria).

At the environmental level, in connection with the above, analyses are being undertaken on the impact on climate change, pollution, water and marine resources, biodiversity and ecosystems, resource use, and the circular economy. In the social area, the following are being analyzed: employment – at university level, the structure according to age and gender is being considered, as well as professional promotions, the appropriate replacement of staff and continuity of scientific and research work and teaching; employees in the supply chain – at university level, they may be university employees, including administrative and technical ones. The social environment of consumers and end users – in the case of universities, these may be students, their satisfaction with the level of education, as well as economic entities cooperating directly with scientists and indirectly using the achievements of universities. At corporate governance level, how business is done is being verified – within the scope of analysis, i.e. the way the university is managed, as well as activities actions against exclusions, including mobbing, nepotism, etc.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Better results are achieved by organizations that have units dealing with sustainable development built into their structure, especially if these are units subordinated to the highest university authorities, which in Poland means directly reporting to university rectors. This makes it easier to collect data, but also to supervise



and develop activities already performed. As noted in university strategy documents, but also when undertaking reviews of organizations' websites, universities collect a lot of data, but they are not always presented appropriately.

The University of Gdansk, Jagiellonian University, and Poznan University of Technology have launched activities connected to communicating sustainable development goals, expanding knowledge, commitment, and motivation to take action, which earned them 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place, properly, in the Top 12 ranking created by the authors, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place, respectively, in the THE Impact Rankings 2023. The University of Warsaw won the rankings (1<sup>st</sup> place in the Top 12 and 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the THE Impact Rankings 2023) due to the number of publications and projects related to sustainable development, confirmed by the ranking prepared by Pietrzak (2022). However, many activities of all universities are often not reported at all and therefore are not included in various types of rankings.

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## **DOBRE PRAKTYKI I REZULTATY POLSKICH UCZELNI W ŚWIATOWYCH RANKINGACH W OBSZARZE ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU – WSTĘPNA ANALIZA WYNIKÓW**

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu było wytypowanie działań na zasadzie benchmarkingu, które szkoły wyższe będą mogły zastosować na każdym etapie wdrażania celów zrównoważonego rozwoju (ZR). Równocześnie należy podkreślić, że dla placówek edukacyjnych priorytetem jest proces edukowania, a wdrażanie zasad zrównoważonego rozwoju jest możliwe dzięki intensywnym procesom edukacyjnym połączonym z zastosowaniem wiedzy w praktyce. Jest to dla uczelni wyzwanie, bo wymaga przemodelowania dotychczasowej kultury, zmian w procesach i w postrzeganiu pewnych zjawisk, szczególnie kulturowych i społecznych, będzie wiązało się ze zmianą relacji nauczyciel – student, zmianą w tradycyjnym procesie kształcenia na kształcenie oparte na praktyce, będzie wymagało również interdyscyplinarnego kontekstu w przekazywanych treściach. Jest to właśnie wyzwanie dla wybitnych edukatorów.

Publikowane przez uczelnie dobre praktyki często zawierają ogólniki. Rzadko spotyka się konkretne dane wskazujące np. redukcję kosztów poprzez wdrożenie danej dobrej praktyki albo mierzalny efekt społeczny, a takie podsumowanie byłoby lepszym argumentem dla naśladowców niż sam opis dobrej praktyki. Efekt wdrożenia nie jest wówczas możliwy do zweryfikowania i może okazać się w rzeczywistości bardzo podkoloryzowany.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój, dobre praktyki, ESG, SOU społeczna odpowiedzialność uczelni

