Akademia WSB

WSB University

SDG 1

Tracker Report

2025

1 NO POVERTY



No Poverty: WSB University's SDG 1 Report 2025

WSB University (Akademia WSB), Dąbrowa Górnicza · Reporting year 2025

Executive summary

WSB University contributes to SDG 1 by reducing financial and social barriers to higher education and by supporting the transition of students and graduates into stable employment. It also strengthens institutions that work with people at risk of poverty. The University operates in a region undergoing a structural transition away from coal mining, where access to education and qualifications is a key factor in preventing economic exclusion.

Key results for the reporting year:

- **Material support:** students had access to social scholarships, scholarships for students with disabilities, Rector's scholarships and one-off hardship grants of up to PLN 5,000, available twice per academic year.
- **Tuition support:** under a Ministry of Health development programme funded by the National Recovery Plan, 30 Nursing and Emergency Medical Services students received non-repayable tuition support.
- **Retention:** EduConnect, a PLN 2.5 million project to reduce student drop-out, was ranked among the three highest-rated proposals of 69 universities funded by the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR).
- **Wider access and employability:** projects worth PLN 43.9 million, financed from EU structural funds including the Just Transition Fund, widened access to education, improved retention and strengthened graduate employability.
- **Free disability support:** all services of the Centre for People with Special Needs remained free of charge.
- **Refugee education:** degree programmes taught in Ukrainian continued to provide access to higher education for students affected by the war in Ukraine.
- **Employment links:** the Job and Internship Fair connected students with 40 employers offering more than 1,000 positions, and the "3 days study, 2 days work" model enabled students to combine study with paid work.

Strategic and regional context

For a university, SDG 1 concerns two areas:

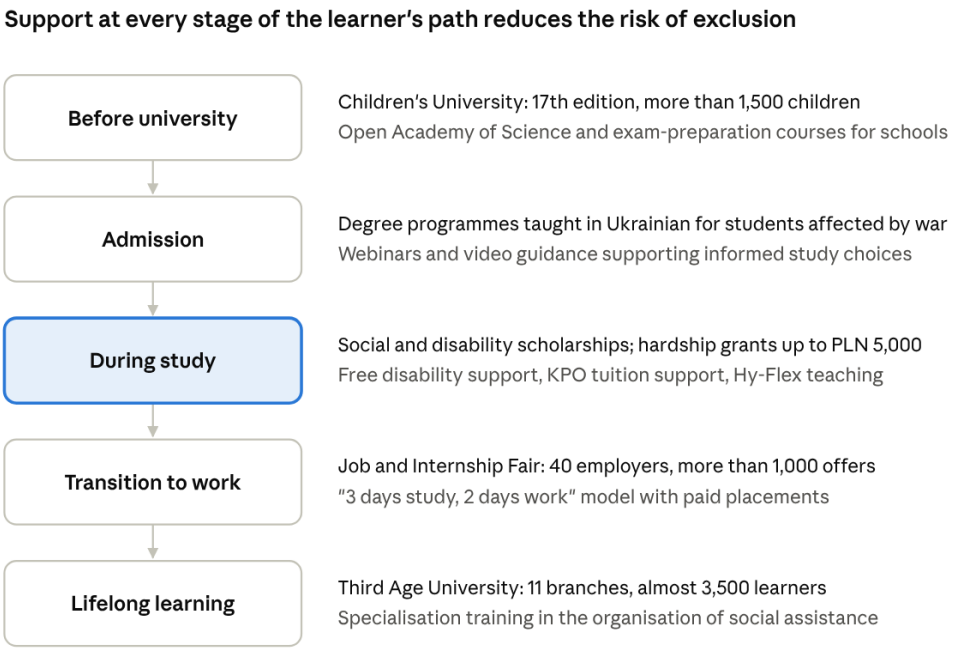
- **Within the institution:** ensuring that students from lower-income backgrounds can enter, continue and complete higher education.
- **Beyond the institution:** using education, research and partnerships to reduce the risk of poverty in the surrounding community.

WSB's Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030 addresses SDG 1 through two of its priority goals:

- **SDG 4:** equal access to education for people in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities.
- **SDG 8:** decent work and employment for young people.

The regional context gives these commitments particular weight. The Silesian and Zagłębie region is one of the European Union's coal regions undergoing a just transition. The White Paper on Transformation, to which WSB experts contribute, identifies the barriers this process creates for employment and regional development. The EU Just Transition Fund, which finances two of the University's projects, was established to mitigate the social and economic consequences of this shift. Education and requalification are central to that objective.

Support across the learner's path



WSBU's measures relevant to SDG 1 cover the entire educational path, from outreach to schoolchildren to lifelong learning for older adults. The highest concentration of financial support falls in the period of study itself, when the risk of discontinuation for economic reasons is greatest. The following sections describe each group of measures.

Financial support for students

WSBU maintains a comprehensive system of material support, defined in the University's internal quality procedure on student support.

Form of support	Eligible students	Purpose
Social scholarship	Students in a difficult financial situation	Regular support for students from lower-income households
Scholarship for students with disabilities	Students with a certified degree of disability	Compensation for additional costs related to disability

Form of support	Eligible students	Purpose
Rector's scholarship	Students with outstanding academic, artistic or sporting achievements	Recognition of achievement, regardless of financial background
Hardship grant (zapomoga)	Students temporarily in a difficult situation due to random events	One-off support of up to PLN 5,000, available twice per academic year
Tuition support (National Recovery Plan)	Nursing and Emergency Medical Services students	Non-repayable subsidy towards tuition fees

The hardship grant serves as a safety net for students who find themselves in temporary difficulty due to unforeseen circumstances. Students may apply within six months of the event, supported by documentation. Scholarships are also available to international students and to students in medical programmes.

In health education, WSBU participates in a Ministry of Health development programme funded by the National Recovery Plan, edition 2, covering the academic years 2023/24 to 2025/26. Under the programme, 30 students, 20 in Nursing and 10 in Emergency Medical Services, receive non-repayable support that offsets their tuition fees. The programme reduces the financial barrier to entering professions in high demand in the public health system.

In the 2025/26 academic year the University introduced a digital scholarship process, simplifying applications and shortening the time needed to award support.

Retention and completion

Discontinuation of studies is one of the main mechanisms by which economic disadvantage turns into lasting exclusion. Students who leave higher education without a qualification often enter the labor market on weaker terms. WSBU has therefore made retention a strategic priority.

EduConnect: a systemic model for reducing drop-out. In 2025 WSB obtained PLN 2.5 million from the European Funds for Social Development programme for EduConnect, implemented from December 2025 to January 2029. The proposal received 98.5 points and was ranked among the three highest-rated of the 69 universities that obtained funding in the NCBR competition. The project responds to the main risk factors identified among WSB students: difficulty in combining study with employment and personal responsibilities, and uninformed choice of study programme. It comprises:

- an extended system for monitoring and diagnosing drop-out risk at an early stage;
- a Hy-Flex teaching model combining on-campus, online and hybrid learning, giving working students greater flexibility;
- e-services and a mobile application to help students organize their studies and balance academic and professional obligations;
- webinars, videos and video podcasts that help candidates make informed decisions about their choice of programme.

EduTrend: practice-oriented education. EduTrend (PLN 18.9 million, 2024–2029) modernizes six degree programmes in medicine, health sciences and national security to match labor-market needs. It includes measures to reduce premature discontinuation of studies in the programmes it covers.

Student-led initiatives. The WSB Student and Graduate Association built on this approach with the project "Student 4.0: preventing drop-out in the era of digital education", funded by the Ministry of Science in 2024. Its e-learning course on the early stages of study was completed by more than 5,000 participants and was complemented by Design Thinking workshops on preventing academic failure.

WSBU's work on retention also has a national dimension. At the LUMEN conference, Vice-Rector Dr Sabina Ratajczak presented the University's solutions for recruitment, retention and graduation in a panel on reducing drop-out in Polish higher education.

Access for groups at risk of exclusion

Students with disabilities and special needs

The Centre for People with Special Needs (COSP) provides all of its services free of charge. They include:

- individual adjustment of examination and assessment conditions;
- teaching materials in accessible formats;
- the assistance of an academic support person;
- psychological and advisory support.

Since January 2025 WSB has been implementing the project "Development, Education, Learning Without Barriers" (European Funds for Social Development, PLN 8.3 million, 2025–2028). Its aim is a permanent, institution-wide model of support for people with special needs. It covers eight areas of accessibility, including information and communication, architectural, digital and technological accessibility. As part of the project, the former Office for Persons with Disabilities was transformed into COSP. Its support now extends beyond students to staff, doctoral candidates, postgraduate participants and learners of the Third Age and Children's Universities. Disability scholarships complement this support with direct financial assistance.

Students affected by the war in Ukraine

WSBU offers degree programmes taught in Ukrainian, allowing students displaced by the war to obtain a recognised European qualification in their own language. On 12 July 2025 the University held a graduation ceremony in Kraków for graduates of first- and second-cycle programmes taught in English and Ukrainian.

WSBU's international projects also address the situation of young people affected by the war:

- **mentUwell** (Erasmus+, EUR 400,000, completed in December 2025) developed a methodology and a toolkit for educators, NGOs and volunteers working with young war migrants. The materials are published in eight languages.

- **SHORE** (Horizon Europe) involved 191 children and young people from Ukraine under temporary protection in its educational activities during the 2025/26 academic year.

Young people from post-industrial areas

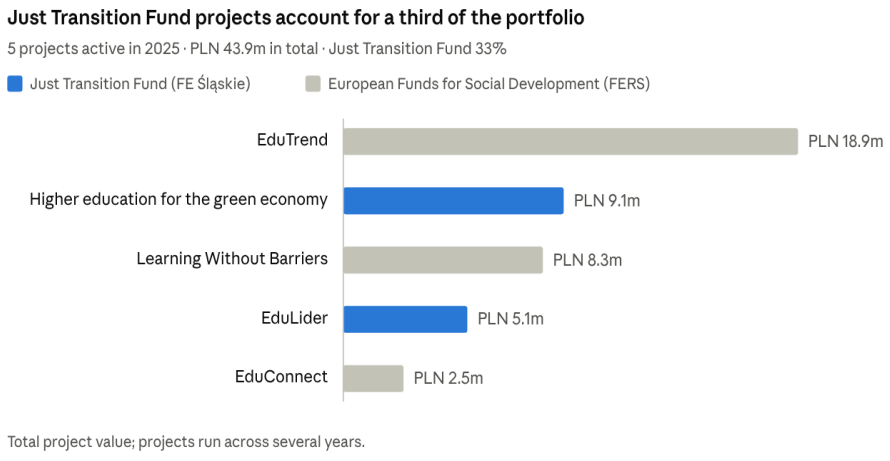
Two projects address young people from areas affected by economic restructuring:

- **Network competences for young women:** an Erasmus+ youth project (EUR 120,000, December 2024 – November 2026) develops the digital and social competences of young women from small towns and post-industrial areas, preparing them for positions traditionally held less often by women.
- **Teachers' digital competences:** a project funded by the GZM Metropolitan Science Fund (PLN 39,933) assessed the digital competences of secondary-school teachers in Bytom, Zabrze, Sosnowiec and Świętochłowice, cities undergoing socio-economic transformation. Its research report sets out recommendations for training that will prepare schools and pupils for the digital transformation of the region.

Pathways into decent work

Stable employment is the most effective protection against poverty. WSB therefore connects education closely with the labour market:

- **Study combined with work:** under the "3 days study, 2 days work" model, students undertake paid internships and career programmes alongside their studies.
- **Job and Internship Fair:** the 16th edition (31 March – 6 April 2025) brought together 40 employers offering more than 1,000 positions, traineeships and internships, together with 17 training sessions and workshops, individual CV consultations and professional CV photographs.
- **Regional career services:** EduLider, financed by the Just Transition Fund, extends the Academic Career Office to WSB's branch faculties and funds career counselling and mentoring for students.



The five projects form the financial basis of the University's work on access, retention and employability. The two projects financed by the Just Transition Fund are directly linked to the economic restructuring

of the region. They align teaching with the needs of the green and digital economy, equip laboratories for practical training and fund preparatory courses for secondary-school pupils.

Community engagement and solidarity

WSBU's contribution to SDG 1 extends beyond its own students to the wider community.

Children and young people.

- The Dąbrowa Children's University, run jointly with the City of Dąbrowa Górnicza, completed its seventeenth edition in 2024/25. More than 1,500 children took part in its workshops, and a conference for pupils in grades 4–7 was held in March 2025.
- The Open Academy of Science offers free lectures and workshops for schools.
- Courses preparing secondary-school pupils for the matura examination give young people from the region equal opportunities in applying to higher education.

Older people. The Third Age University network, comprising eleven branches and almost 3,500 learners in 2024/25, is one of the largest in Poland. It reduces the social isolation of older people, a group particularly exposed to poverty. Learners run community projects that benefit other residents of Dąbrowa Górnicza, and the network received the "Senior-Friendly Place" certificate from the Mayor and the City Seniors' Council.

Charitable activity.

- The AWSB Running Team took part in the sixth "Tauron Biegnij dla Aniołów" charity run, in support of children from disadvantaged backgrounds cared for by the Dom Aniołów Stróżów centre in Katowice.
- Students organised gift collections for children in need.

International volunteering for inclusion. The European Solidarity Corps project "United in Action" (EUR 23,458, 2025) engaged international volunteers with students, staff, children and older people. It addressed discrimination, social exclusion and educational, cultural and geographical barriers. From July 2025 the project EKSPonad (EUR 9,554) has supported AWeSomeBand, an intergenerational band that brings together children, students, older people and people with disabilities.

Professional capacity in social assistance. WSBU is authorized to provide specialization training in the organization of social assistance, in line with the regulation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy. This supports the qualifications of professionals working directly with people at risk of poverty. In the 2025/26 academic year the University also concluded a partnership agreement with the Regional Social Policy Centre of the Silesian Voivodeship, covering joint education and research and student placements in social policy.

Research and expertise

Several areas of WSBU's research and expert activity bear directly on the economic security of households and communities:

- **Family sciences.** In the national evaluation of research for 2022–2025, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education awarded WSB the highest category, A+, in family sciences. This discipline

addresses family functioning, family support systems and social policy towards families, all closely linked to the prevention of poverty.

- **Just energy transition.** The Institute of Energy Transformation researches low-carbon heating, transport and renewable energy for Polish municipalities. WSBU experts contribute to the White Paper on Transformation, which formulates recommendations on EU cohesion and energy policy for coal regions. On 11 April 2025 WSBU was content partner of the conference "Energy challenges of cities" in Tychy, which discussed the energy self-sufficiency of local governments.
- **Education in regions under transformation.** The research on teachers' digital competences in post-industrial GZM cities produced a report with recommendations for supporting the digital transformation of schools in the region.
- **Skills and lifelong learning policy.** Vice-Rector Prof. Marcin Lis was appointed by the Minister of Education to the Interregional Coordination Team for the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030. The Strategy shapes national policy on lifelong learning, a key factor in the employability of adults at risk of exclusion.

Continuing activities in 2026

The measures launched or continued in 2025 shape the University's SDG 1 activity in 2026:

- **EduConnect** enters its first full year of implementation, with the deployment of early-warning monitoring, the Hy-Flex teaching model and a mobile application supporting students who combine study with work.
- **Development, Education, Learning Without Barriers** continues building a permanent accessibility model until 2028.
- **EduTrend** continues to modernise programmes and implement drop-out prevention measures until 2029. The two Just Transition Fund projects conclude in June 2026.
- **Tuition support** under the Ministry of Health programme continues for Nursing and Emergency Medical Services students until the end of the 2025/26 academic year.
- **Outreach to older adults and children** continues to grow. In the 2025/26 academic year the Third Age University network expanded to 16 branches and about 4,500 learners, and the Dąbrowa Children's University held its eighteenth edition.
- **Social policy cooperation** with the Regional Social Policy Centre of the Silesian Voivodeship opens new opportunities for joint research and student placements in social assistance.