Akademia WSB

WSB University

SDG 5
Tracker Report

2025

5 GENDER EQUALITY



Gender Equality: WSB University's SDG 5 Report 2025

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

Executive summary

Gender equality is embedded in WSB University's leadership, policies and international activity. Women are the majority among students, staff and academic managers, and the University has been led by a woman Rector since 2008. In 2025 WSB contributed to gender equality beyond its own institution by co-developing tools for gender equality in business-school accreditation, by supporting young women from post-industrial regions and by working to close the gender gap in STEM education.

Key results for the reporting year:

- **External assessment:** the THE Impact Rankings 2025 identified SDG 5 as one of WSB's strongest goals. In the THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026 the University was placed in the 201–300 band worldwide for SDG 5.
- **Leadership:** about 64% of employees and almost 64% of vice-deans and unit coordinators are women. Women hold three of the five positions in the Rector's Office, including that of the Rector.
- **Accreditation tools:** the Erasmus+ project EQUATION, in which WSB is a partner, presented its final results in March 2025. They include model Gender Equality Plans, guidelines for accreditation bodies and training for quality evaluators.
- **Young women:** an Erasmus+ project develops the digital and networking competences of young women from small towns and post-industrial areas.
- **STEM:** the 3D Smartbox project brings 3D printing into schools with the explicit aim of narrowing the gender gap in STEM.
- **Research excellence:** three women, among them the Rector and the Vice-Rector for Science and Education, were among the six WSB researchers on the 2025 list of the world's top 2% most-cited scientists.

Context

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Its targets include:

- ending discrimination against women and girls (5.1);
- eliminating violence against women (5.2);
- ensuring women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership (5.5);
- enhancing the use of technology, in particular ICT, to promote the empowerment of women (5.b);
- adopting policies for gender equality (5.c).

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities' contribution through research on gender, the proportion of women among students, staff and senior leadership, policies on non-discrimination and maternity and paternity, and measures supporting women's access and progression.

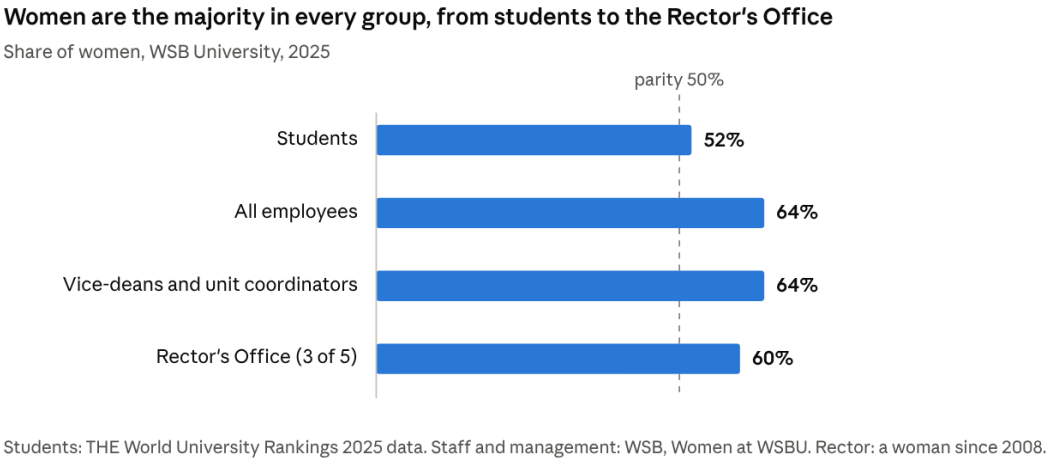
SDG 5 is one of the seven priority goals of WSB's Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030. The Strategy commits the University:

- to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making;
- to use enabling technologies, in particular ICT, to empower women;
- to adopt and strengthen policies for the promotion of gender equality.

These commitments are implemented through the University's Gender Equality Plan, its Diversity Policy and its international projects.

Women in leadership

Women form the majority at every level of WSB University. Prof. Zdzisława Dacko-Pikiewicz has served as Rector since 2008. In 2025 the University community honored her with the title "Rector Maximus" in recognition of her role in shaping the University's development and values.



THE World University Rankings 2025 student data; WSBU Women at WSBU page · four groups

The Rector's Office comprises three women and two men. Two of the Vice-Rectors are women: Prof. Katarzyna Szczepańska-Woszczyna, Vice-Rector for Science and Education, and Dr Sabina Ratajczak, Vice-Rector for Development.

Women from WSBU also hold leadership roles beyond the University:

- **Prof. Zdzisława Dacko-Pikiewicz** received the Crystal of the President of the Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Gliwice on 6 September 2025.
- **Prof. Katarzyna Szczepańska-Woszczyna** represented WSB at the Congress of Universities of the European Union and Central Asia in Samarkand, and in the 2025/26 academic year was appointed to the supervisory board of NASK, Poland's national research institute for cybersecurity.
- **Prof. Paulina Polko**, Chair of the Scientific Council for Security Studies, was appointed to the Science Evaluation Committee for the national assessment of research in 2022–2025.
- **Prof. Joanna Kurowska-Pysz**, Director of the Institute for Territorial and Inter-Organizational Cooperation, acts as an expert to the European Commission and the OECD on cross-border cooperation.

Policy framework

Gender Equality Plan

WSBU's Gender Equality Plan sets out the University's commitments in three main areas:

- **Representation:** gender balance in management, decision-making bodies and recruitment committees.
- **Work-life balance:** measures that support staff in combining work and family life.
- **Language and communication:** the use of gender-sensitive language in University communication.

The Plan also meets the eligibility requirement of the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme, under which public bodies and higher education institutions must have a Gender Equality Plan in place.

Diversity Policy and protection from violence

The Diversity Policy establishes an independent Rector's Plenipotentiary for Equality. It provides for anonymous reporting of violence, including sexual violence, and sets out procedures for responding to reports. These provisions are supported by:

- the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Discrimination Policy (Rector's Order No. 61/2017/2018);
- a standing Anti-Mobbing and Anti-Discrimination Committee;
- codes of ethics for employees and students.

Work-life balance and family support

WSB supports staff in reconciling professional and family responsibilities through:

- maternity, paternity and parental leave in accordance with Polish labor law;
- care support for staff with dependents;
- flexible working hours;
- structured onboarding for employees returning after long absences, including parental leave.

The University's HR Excellence in Research award commits it to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, including non-discrimination and gender balance in recruitment and career progression.

Equality in daily University life

In 2025 WSBU marked International Women's Day with celebrations that emphasized that real equality and solidarity are the foundation of a strong community, and included events with learners of the Third Age University. The University's Awareness Days programme includes Women's Day alongside days devoted to human rights and the prevention of modern slavery.

Gender equality in higher education: the EQUATION project

WSBU's most significant contribution to gender equality beyond its own institution is its role in the Erasmus+ project EQUATION (EQUality through AccreditaTION). The project was led by CEEMAN, the international management development association, together with:

- IEDC-Bled School of Management (Slovenia);
- WSB University (Poland);
- Vistula University (Poland);
- Riga Technical University (Latvia).

Its aim was to develop practical tools that support gender equality in business schools, with particular attention to accreditation. Accreditation shapes how business schools across Central and Eastern Europe define and assure quality.

The project's closing meeting, combined with a Learning, Teaching and Training session, took place at IEDC-Bled School of Management on 3–4 March 2025. It brought together representatives of universities, accreditation organizations and gender equality experts from several countries. The main results presented were:

- model **Gender Equality Plans** for business schools;
- **guidelines for accreditation bodies** on integrating gender equality into assessment procedures;
- **training programmes** for experts responsible for evaluating the quality of education.

Participants discussed how to implement these tools in their own institutions and shared experience of testing them in practice.

As part of the project, WSBU prepared the Poland country chapter of the Report on Gender Equality in Business Schools and Accreditation. The chapter presents the Polish context and WSB's own experience. It positions WSB as a contributor to the standards by which business schools are assessed, not only as an institution that applies them.

Young women, STEM and leadership

Young women from post-industrial regions

WSB implements the Erasmus+ youth project "Shaping the network competences of young girls from minor towns and restructured areas as future business leaders operating in a 4.0 economy" (EUR 120,000, December 2024 – November 2026). Young women from smaller towns and post-industrial regions gain tools to develop digital and social competences, build professional networks and enter the labor market with confidence. The project helps them pursue positions traditionally held less often by women, and supports their active participation in the digital and professional life of their communities. It directly implements the Strategy's commitment to use ICT for the empowerment of women.

Narrowing the gender gap in STEM

The Erasmus+ project 3D Smartbox (EUR 250,000, December 2024 – November 2026) integrates 3D printing into school education to improve engagement in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and art. Teacher training is a central element. The project explicitly aims to make STEM education more

inclusive and to help narrow the gender gap in STEM. Within the project, WSBU donated 3D printers to schools.

Women in technology

The University reports the Women in Tech Summit 2025 (4–5 June 2025) as part of WSB's socio-economic engagement. It is the largest event in Poland, and one of the most important in Europe, dedicated to women in new technologies and the sciences. The summit gathered 10,000 participants and 500 speakers, covered 200 technology topics on five stages and included a job fair with 105 IT companies.

WSB's women students achieve recognition in technical and security fields:

- **Wiktoria Ostrowska**, a Computer Science student, won second place in the Huawei Tech Arena Poland hackathon, which focuses on artificial intelligence, optical networks and wireless network algorithms.
- **Paulina Słupik** won the diploma-thesis category of the 8th Safety Culture Competition of the Office of Rail Transport with a thesis on the safety culture of rail traffic controllers.

Women in business education

The Perspektywy MBA ranking 2025 placed WSB's MBA programmes in the "Golden Fifteen" and first in the participants category. Assessors highlighted the diversity of participants by nationality and gender balance, as well as gender equality among the teaching staff.

Women in sport

Izabela Żmuda, a Physiotherapy student and holder of the Rector's scholarship for sporting achievement, became in 2025 the youngest Polish woman ever to qualify for and compete in the IRONMAN World Championship in Hawaii.

Women's health in research and education

Research in gynaecological oncology

At the 29th European Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology (EBCOG) in Frankfurt (5–7 June 2025), two researchers from Collegium Medicum presented work on cancers affecting women:

- **Breast cancer:** Prof. Beniamin Oskar Grabarek presented microRNAs that regulate the PI3K/AKT/mTOR pathway as potential targets for less toxic and more effective therapies for aggressive breast cancer.
- **Endometrial cancer:** Prof. Dariusz Boroń presented research on genes involved in epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition in endometrioid endometrial cancer, a process central to tumor invasiveness and metastasis. The research may lead to new biomarkers and personalized therapies.

Clinical education in women's health

- **Simulation facilities:** the Multiprofile Medical Simulation Centre includes a clinical simulation laboratory for gynecological and pediatric procedures, a high-fidelity childbirth simulator,

a delivery bed, and high-fidelity newborn and premature-infant simulators. Students of medicine, nursing and emergency medical services can practice obstetric and neonatal care in safe conditions.

- **Clinical department:** in the 2025/26 academic year the University established a Clinical Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Gynecological Oncology at the Provincial Specialist Hospital No. 3 in Rybnik. This expands clinical teaching and joint research in women's health.
- **Support for future midwives and nurses:** WSB takes part in the Ministry of Health development programme, funded by the National Recovery Plan, that provides non-repayable support to students of nursing, midwifery and emergency medical services. At WSB, 30 students receive tuition support under the programme.

Women's achievements and recognition

Recognition	Date	Recipient
THE Impact Rankings 2025: SDG 5 among WSB's strongest goals	2025	WSB University
THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026: 201–300 worldwide for SDG 5	2026 edition	WSB University
World's top 2% most-cited scientists	2025	Prof. Zdzisława Dacko-Pikiewicz, Prof. Katarzyna Szczepańska-Woszczyna, Prof. Tetiana Pimonenko
Crystal of the President of the Regional Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Gliwice	6 September 2025	Prof. Zdzisława Dacko-Pikiewicz, Rector
"Rector Maximus" title from the University community	2025	Prof. Zdzisława Dacko-Pikiewicz, Rector
Medals of the Commission of National Education	30 October 2025	WSB staff including Dr Aneta Orczyk and Barbara Borkowska-Kępska
2nd place, Huawei Tech Arena Poland	2025	Wiktoria Ostrowska, Computer Science student
Winner, diploma-thesis category, 8th Safety Culture Competition of the Office of Rail Transport	2025	Paulina Słupik, graduate
Youngest Polish woman to compete at the IRONMAN World Championship	2025	Izabela Żmuda, Physiotherapy student

Continuing activities in 2026

- **Young women's leadership:** the Erasmus+ project for young women from small towns and post-industrial areas continues until November 2026.
- **STEM in schools:** 3D Smartbox develops and pilots its toolkit for schools, with the aim of making STEM education more inclusive.
- **Women in leadership roles:** Prof. Katarzyna Szczepańska-Woszczyna serves on the supervisory board of NASK, and Prof. Joanna Kurowska-Pysz advises the OECD IMPACT pilot on community-led local development at the Polish-Lithuanian and Polish-Czech borders.
- **Women's health:** the new Clinical Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Gynecological Oncology in Rybnik strengthens teaching and research.
- **Gender Equality Plan:** the Plan, together with the Diversity Policy and the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Equality, continues to guide the University's equality work.