Akademia WSB

WSB University

SDG 11
Tracker Report

2025

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Sustainable Cities and Communities: WSB University's SDG 11 Report 2025

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

Executive summary

WSB University operates in the Upper Silesian and Zagłębie metropolis, one of the most densely urbanised regions in Europe and a region in transition from coal mining. The University contributes to SDG 11 as an urban institution that:

- educates and serves residents of all ages across more than a dozen towns;
- strengthens the capacity of local authorities to plan, manage and respond to crises;
- supports the energy and environmental transformation of cities;
- enriches the cultural life of the region.

Key results for the reporting year:

- **Recognition from the city:** at the University's thirtieth anniversary gala on 14 April 2025, the Mayor of Dąbrowa Górnicza presented the Rector with the Golden Oak Leaf, stating that WSBU had turned a traditionally industrial town into an academic center.
- **Regional integrator:** the Tychy Chamber of Industry and Commerce named WSBU "Integrator Roku 2025" for strengthening the city's potential through cooperation with business, local government and social partners.
- **Lifelong learning across the region:** the Third Age University network operated in eleven towns with almost 3,500 learners, and the Children's University reached more than 1,500 children in its seventeenth edition.
- **Municipal resilience:** WSBU trained local authorities in crisis management and co-organized a national civil-protection exercise at TAURON Arena Kraków on 27 November 2025.
- **Urban energy:** the University was content partner of the conference "Energy challenges of cities" in Tychy (11 April 2025) and completed a solar-energy Industry Skills Centre in Żywiec in November 2025.
- **Campus environment:** in UI GreenMetric, WSBU's score for setting and infrastructure rose from 385 points in 2023 to 620 in 2024, and its transport score from 800 to 850.

Context

SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Its targets of particular relevance to universities are:

- access to safe, affordable and sustainable transport systems (11.2);
- inclusive and participatory urban planning (11.3);
- the protection of cultural and natural heritage (11.4);
- resilience to disasters and the strengthening of risk management (11.5 and 11.b);
- a reduced environmental impact of cities, with particular attention to air quality and waste (11.6);

- access to safe and inclusive public spaces, in particular for older people and people with disabilities (11.7).

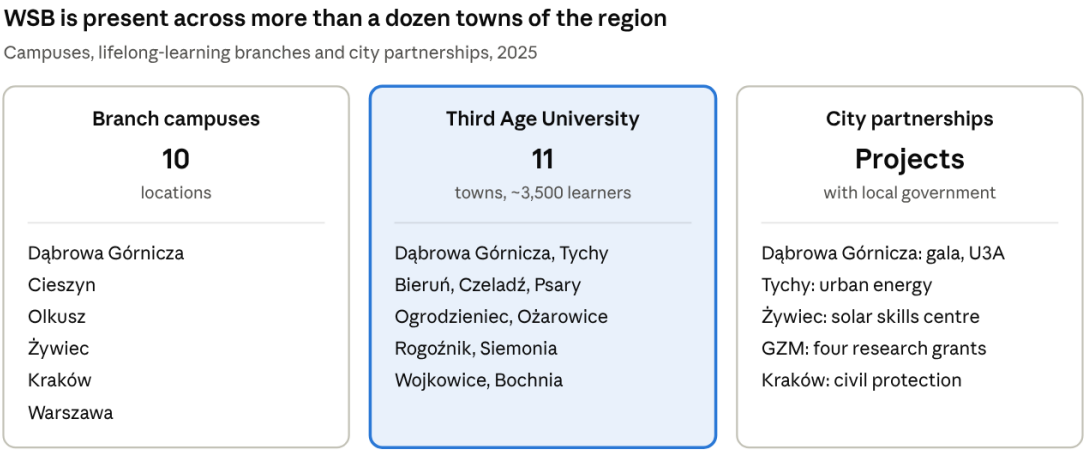
The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities through research on sustainable cities, the provision of arts and heritage to the public, support for sustainable practices on campus, and the university's role in urban planning in its own city.

SDG 11 is one of the seven priority goals of WSBU's Sustainable Development Strategy to 2030. The Strategy commits the University:

- to support access to safe, affordable and sustainable transport systems;
- to promote inclusive and participatory planning and management of human settlements;
- to help reduce the adverse environmental impact of cities, with particular attention to air quality and municipal waste.

The regional context shapes this work. The Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis (GZM) comprises 41 municipalities with about 2.3 million residents. Its cities face the consequences of the move away from coal, long-standing air-quality problems and an ageing population.

Presence across the region



WSBU presence in the region, 2025

WSBU's contribution to the life of cities does not depend on students travelling to a single campus. The University teaches at ten locations, runs lifelong-learning branches in eleven towns, several of them small municipalities such as Ożarowice, Psary, Rogoźnik and Siemonia, and carries out projects with city authorities and the metropolis. In 2025 it opened its tenth campus, in the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw.

Partnership with cities and the metropolis

Dąbrowa Górnicza

At the gala marking the University's thirtieth anniversary on 14 April 2025, the Mayor of Dąbrowa Górnicza, Marcin Bazylak, said that WSBU had transformed a traditionally working-class town into an academic city and contributed to its recognition across Poland. He presented the Rector with the Golden Oak Leaf, bearing the city's coat of arms.

Joint activity with the city covers education, accessibility and community life:

- the Dąbrowa Children's University, run with the city since 2008;
- the Third Age University, awarded the "Senior-Friendly Place" certificate by the Mayor and the City Seniors' Council;
- the Accessibility Gala at the Zagłębie Palace of Culture;
- the Karol Adamiecki Economic Award for local enterprises, of which WSBU was a partner in its tenth edition on 12 June 2025.

The GZM Metropolis

In 2025 the Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis financed four WSBU research projects through its Metropolitan Science Fund. Each addresses a question arising from the life of the metropolis:

Project	Relevance to cities
AI analysis of satellite images to assess flood-protection infrastructure	Monitoring of dikes, dams and reservoirs, and early detection of threats to urban safety
Features and patterns of the most widespread deepfakes	Resilience of residents and institutions to digital disinformation
Physical factors in nerve injury during regional anaesthesia	Safety of patients in metropolitan hospitals
Digital competences of teachers in the GZM Metropolis	Evidence from Bytom, Zabrze, Sosnowiec and Świętochłowice for the digital transformation of schools

Tychy and Żywiec

- **Tychy:** on 11 April 2025 WSBU was content partner of the national conference "Energy challenges of cities: building the energy competences of local government", organized with the Tychy Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the Katowice Special Economic Zone. It addressed municipal energy self-sufficiency, local energy planning, energy communities and energy clusters. The Chamber later named WSBU "Integrator Roku 2025".
- **Żywiec:** in partnership with the city, WSBU established an Industry Skills Centre for solar energy at the local Mechanical and Electrical School Complex (National Recovery Plan, PLN 11.7 million, completed November 2025). Its closing conference gathered more than 250 representatives of science, education, local government and the renewable-energy industry.

Regional transport

On 3 March 2025 WSBU co-organised, with the Polish Economic Society in Katowice and Górnośląskie Towarzystwo Lotnicze, the conference "Vision and prospects for the development of Katowice International Airport", held in the hall of the Silesian Parliament. Participants discussed the airport's role in the regional mobility system and the investment needed to sustain it.

Education for residents of all ages

WSBU's "Open WSBUU" programme makes the University a resource for residents, not only for enrolled students.

Older residents

The Third Age University network, with eleven branches and almost 3,500 learners in 2024/25, is one of the largest in Poland. It reaches small municipalities as well as larger towns, and offers lectures, workshops, physical activity and community projects. Learners run their own initiatives for other residents, from sailing on the tall ship *Pogoria* to intergenerational craft workshops.

The network holds the "Senior-Friendly Place" certificate from the City of Dąbrowa Górnicza, and the University holds a "Senior-Friendly University" certificate from the MANKO Association. WSBU's commitments to older residents are set out in its Senior Care Policy.

Children and school pupils

- **Dąbrowa Children's University:** run jointly with the city, it completed its seventeenth edition in 2024/25, with more than 1,500 children taking part in lectures and workshops on subjects from biology and astronomy to artificial intelligence.
- **Open Academy of Science:** free lectures and workshops delivered to schools on campus or online.
- **Preparation for higher education:** matura preparatory courses, partner-school agreements and, with the Silesian Voivodeship and the Metis Teacher Training Centre, work on a systemic model for identifying and developing pupils gifted in STEM.

Residents and the environment

SHORE (Horizon Europe) brought environmental education about oceans and inland waters into schools. In the 2025/26 academic year WSBU delivered more than 18 activities with over 2,500 participants, supported 11 schools and involved 191 children and young people from Ukraine. EduLider funded the "EkoŚcieżka" (Eco-Path), an interactive installation for environmental education.

Safety and resilience of communities

Preparing local authorities for crisis

WSBU trains the staff of local authorities in crisis management and civil protection, two areas in which municipalities bear direct legal responsibility.

On 27 November 2025 the University co-organised, with the Małopolska Voivode, a national training in civil protection and civil defense at TAURON Arena Kraków. WSBU also took the Małopolska Young Uniformed Staff initiative under its patronage.

Research on urban risk

- **Flood protection:** the GZM-funded project on AI analysis of satellite images develops a prototype system for monitoring dikes, dams and reservoirs, enabling early detection of threats and supporting flood-risk management in the metropolis.
- **Digital resilience:** the project on deepfake detection analyzed twenty widely circulated cases to identify the most effective detection methods.
- **Protection of public institutions:** the Universal CBRNE Protection System project (Internal Security Fund, EUR 3.33 million, 2025–2028) develops procedures, VR-based training and the educational game THOR to protect open university campuses against chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive threats.

Emergency services and first aid

WSBU supports the Provincial Ambulance Service in Katowice in its campaign "Your Courage – Their Professionalism", in which paramedic students deliver first-aid workshops for residents. Further activities bring safety education into the community:

- **Security Day** (31 January 2025) presented the work of uniformed and rescue services to secondary-school students;
- the **13th National Tournament of Uniformed Classes** gathered more than 30 school teams;
- the event **"From Deepfakes to First Aid"** combined digital safety with practical rescue skills.

Reconstruction after crisis

The Erasmus+ project ReBuild transfers European experience of sustainable post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction to vocational education providers in the Eastern Neighbourhood. In September 2025 WSBU researchers studied earthquake reconstruction in Bologna, Ravenna, Spoleto and Preci, examining how Italian towns combine structural safety, heritage protection and energy efficiency.

Campus, mobility and the urban environment

Sustainable mobility

WSBU's campuses are located in city centres, within reach of public transport. The University's E-Shuttle enables students and staff to share rides between its city campuses, rather than operating a fixed shuttle service. Together with the use of bus, tram and rail connections, this reduces the number of single-occupancy car journeys.

In the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings, WSBU's transport score rose from 800 points in 2023 to 850 in 2024. The University also contributes to regional work on electromobility.

Campus infrastructure

The University manages its buildings with the technologies it teaches: building management systems, building information modelling, smart metering of energy and water, environmental sensors for air quality and lighting, and monitoring of solar-panel output. Between 2023 and 2024 WSBU's UI GreenMetric score for setting and infrastructure rose from 385 to 620 points, the largest increase of any category.

Air quality and waste

The Strategy's SDG 11 commitment concerns the environmental impact of cities, with particular attention to air quality and municipal waste. WSBU addresses it through:

- **Energy transition research:** the Institute of Energy Transformation works on low-carbon heating and transport, the principal sources of urban air pollution in Silesia.
- **Waste management:** segregation and recycling on campus, supported since July 2025 by cooperation with ALBA, a municipal services company.
- **Green Office:** certification by the Foundation for Environmental Education Poland, following an audit of paper, water and energy use and waste.
- **Building efficiency:** from April 2026 the thermo-modernisation of the University's historic building at ul. Konopnickiej 36 in Dąbrowa Górnicza (European Funds for Infrastructure, Climate and Environment, PLN 4.2 million) will replace heating, ventilation and lighting systems and add rooftop photovoltaics with energy storage.

Culture, heritage and public space

Culture open to residents

The University's anniversary year brought cultural events open to the public and held in the city's own venues:

- a concert at the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice;
- a concert by Piotr Rubik with orchestra at WSBU;
- the Accessibility Gala at the Zagłębie Palace of Culture in Dąbrowa Górnicza.

The intergenerational band AWeSomeBand, supported from July 2025 by the European Solidarity Corps project EKSPonad, brings together children, students, older people and people with disabilities. It makes cultural participation a route into community life for people who might otherwise remain outside it.

Heritage and design

- **Built heritage:** the University's building at ul. Konopnickiej 36 in Dąbrowa Górnicza is a historic structure. Its planned modernization combines conservation requirements with energy efficiency.
- **Design Observatory:** with Zamek Cieszyn, WSBU is a partner of the Design Observatory within the Silesian network of Regional Innovation Observatories, which supports design as a factor in regional development.
- **Reconstruction and conservation:** the ReBuild study visits examined how Italian towns rebuild after earthquakes while protecting historic fabric.

Inclusive public space

Accessibility of public space is addressed through the project "Development, Education, Learning Without Barriers", which covers architectural, digital and communication accessibility across the University's buildings and services. The Accessibility Gala extended the discussion to the city, bringing together local government, non-governmental organizations and residents.

Sport in the community

The University Sports Association of WSBU offers training in more than twenty disciplines. In the 2024/25 season WSBU ranked first in sport among non-public universities in the Silesian Voivodeship and fourth among all universities in the region. Community sport includes the seniors' cycling rally held under the patronage of the Rector, and the participation of the AWSBU Running Team in the "Tauron Biegnij dla Aniołów" charity run for children from Katowice.

Continuing activities in 2026

- **Lifelong learning in the region:** in the 2025/26 academic year the Third Age University network grew to 16 branches and about 4,500 learners, and the Children's University held its eighteenth edition.
- **Energy-efficient buildings:** the thermo-modernization of the historic building at ul. Konopnickiej 36, including photovoltaics with energy storage, runs from April 2026 to March 2027.
- **Urban resilience:** the CBRNE Protection System project continues until 2028, and civil-protection training for local authorities continues with regional partners.
- **Reconstruction:** ReBuild completes its transfer of European reconstruction practice to vocational providers in the Eastern Neighbourhood.
- **Metropolitan research:** the GZM Metropolitan Science Fund projects completed in December 2025 deliver recommendations for flood-risk management, digital safety and schools in post-industrial cities.
- **Regional cooperation:** the title "Integrator Roku 2025" and new agreements with municipal and industrial partners extend the University's role in the development of the metropolis.