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## ACADEMIC SPORT AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY – CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN KATOWICE

**Abstract:** Sport is not the main activity of most universities, but it undoubtedly influences the psychophysical development of the academic community. It may also have a positive impact on the educational process and simply on the satisfaction with learning and functioning at university.

The possibility of developing sports at universities can be considered a manifestation of the university's social responsibility. A special role is played here by university clubs, whose members, often as volunteers and in cooperation with the authorities, carry out tasks related to the functioning of the sports sphere of higher education.

This work, based on a case study of the University of Economics in Katowice aims to show the role of amateur and semi-professional academic sports in implementing the idea of social responsibility by universities.

The work shows that although only a small group of students participate in university sports activities, they can achieve significant sports results, which may affect their satisfaction with the university education process, but also improve or at least maintain their health in their later lives.

**Keywords:** AZS, CSR, non-commercial product, sport economy, sport management.

### Introduction

Sport is present not only in physical education academies but also in polytechnics, universities, and non-public colleges. This is not the mainstream of the activities of these entities, but it undoubtedly affects the psychophysical development of the academic community, in particular students.

The possibility of sports development at higher education institutions can be considered as a manifestation of the university's social responsibility<sup>123</sup>. The clubs of the University Sports Association, whose members, often as volunteers and in cooperation with the university authorities, perform the tasks

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<sup>1</sup> **Quay J., Peters J.** Skills, strategies, sport, and social responsibility: reconnecting physical education, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 4(5), 2008, p. 601–626, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270801886071>

<sup>2</sup> **Bradish C., Cronin J.J.** Corporate Social Responsibility in Sport, *Journal of Sport Management*, 23(6), 2009, p. 691–697, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.23.6.691>

<sup>3</sup> **Walzel S., Robertson J., Anagnostopoulos C.** Corporate Social Responsibility in Professional Team Sports Organizations: An Integrative Review, *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(6), 2018, 511–530, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2017-0227>

related to the functioning of the sporting sphere of higher education, play a special role here<sup>456</sup>. Physical activity can be essential to compensate for the sedentary lifestyle of students in many fields and may have a beneficial effect on their future health<sup>7</sup>.

University Sports Association (Polish: Akademicki Związek Sportowy – AZS) in Poland is an active student organization in Poland, bringing together over 30,000 members. AZS members are usually students of public and non-public universities (but also academic staff and people loosely associated with universities) who practice various sports. This happens on the sidelines of their duties at universities. Club members also have the opportunity to start in sports competitions of varying levels of professionalism. It should be noted that practicing sports during studies at universities requires significant effort and proper time distribution between duties related to science and sports, which is not always easy and often depends on the profile of studies<sup>8</sup>.

The University Sports Association (AZS) is also a member of the EUSA – European Universities Sports Association, which brings together 46 European countries (as well as Asian countries, such as Israel). The official partners of the organization include the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Paralympic Committee, the European Olympic Committee, and the European Students' Union (ESU)<sup>9</sup>.

To a large extent, the European Union's activities in the promotion of sports in the academic environment refer to enabling higher education for professional athletes and the implementation of the so-called dual career<sup>10</sup>, although the approach of EU member states varies from the involvement of the central government in these activities, through institutional facilitation, to the abandonment of such formal structures<sup>11</sup>. As researchers point out, the management of this area in EU countries is often disorderly<sup>12</sup>, and sports education activities are more often carried out at lower levels of education<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> **Kniffin K.M., Wansink B., Shimizu M.** Sports at Work: Anticipated and Persistent Correlates of Participation in High School Athletics, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, 22(2), 2014, p. 217–230, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051814538099>

<sup>5</sup> **Rainer, Cropley, Jarvis, Griffiths** From policy to practice: The challenges of providing high quality physical education and school sport faced by head teachers within primary schools. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 17(4), 2011, p. 429-446, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2011.603125>

<sup>6</sup> **Fox C.K, Barr-Anderson D., Neumark-Sztainer D., Wall M.** Physical Activity and Sports Team Participation: Associations With Academic Outcomes in Middle School and High School Students, *Journal of School Health*, 80(1), 2009, p. 31-37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2009.00454.x>

<sup>7</sup> **Diehl K., Fuchs A.K., Rathmann K., Hilger-Kolb J.** Students' Motivation for Sport Activity and Participation in University Sports: A Mixed-Methods Study, *Hindawi BioMed Research International* Vol. 2018, Article ID 9524861, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/9524861>

<sup>8</sup> **Suchecki K., Sobczyk K., Grajek M.** The role of academic sport in health promotion - the example of the Academic Sports Association in Poland. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 12(10), 2022, pp. 153–161. <https://doi.org/10.12775/JEHS.2022.12.10.018>

<sup>9</sup> **EUSA (European University Sports Association).** *Members* [online], 2024 [Accessed: 09.11.2024]. Available at: <https://www.eusa.eu/members>

<sup>10</sup> **Condello G., Capranica L., Doupona M., Varga K., Burk V.** (2019), Dual-career through the elite university student-athletes' lenses: The international FISU-EAS survey. *PLoS ONE* 14(10), 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223278>

<sup>11</sup> **Aquilina, D., Henry, I.** (2010). Elite athletes and university education in Europe: a review of policy and practice in higher education in the European Union Member States. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 2(1), 2010, pp. 25–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406941003634024>

<sup>12</sup> **D'Isanto T.** Physical and sport education between Italian academic system and European Research Council structure panel, *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*, vol. 14(Proc1), 2019, p. 66-S76, DOI:10.14198/jhse.2019.14.Proc1.08

<sup>13</sup> **Andersson, F.** Sport schools in Europe: a scoping study of research articles (1999–2022). *Sport in Society*, 27(5), 2023, pp. 721–743. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2023.2273856>

Academic sports play an extremely important role in the United States. The best student-athletes often have access to free higher education and scholarships that allow them to support themselves<sup>14</sup>. However, this system rewards only the best and those who achieve success. Researchers also point to numerous problems related to the mental health of young athletes at universities and a frequent lack of support from authorities or coaches<sup>15</sup>.

Corporate social responsibility is recognized as a development of corporate responsibility. It is recognized that both the economic responsibility, that is to the owners of the company, and the legal responsibility, or the state, do not exhaust the concept of corporate responsibility or, more broadly, the organization. CSR is responsible for the effects of any organization's actions on third parties, i.e. people not directly affiliated with the company<sup>16</sup>.

CSR is the ability to choose the right actions in an organization, which, on the one hand, creates favorable conditions for achieving satisfactory financial results and the development of an enterprise, and on the other hand, allows them to positively influence the organization's environment, so passively. They could have a positive impact on the environment actively - directly affecting the environment in the enterprise, both in the social and environmental spheres. It is a kind of social welfare creation which, of course, can in the long run affect the economic viability of an enterprise which, on the one hand, will be seen as socially responsible and on the other hand a prosperous society will most likely be more inclined to acquire products or services of this organization or related organizations<sup>17</sup>.

In corporate social responsibility issues, there are two main models, the before-profit obligation and the after-profit obligation, which are opposites.

Before profit obligation is a model that assumes that the foundation of an enterprise is to work in harmony with morality. The moral norms are inviolable, must be fulfilled absolutely and their fulfillment cannot be influenced by the possible unfavorable financial result. After fulfilling moral responsibility, the enterprise should fulfill the social responsibility, which is understood quite broadly, because not only the stakeholders themselves but also the enterprise as a whole participates in it. Only at the very end, after fulfilling moral and social responsibility, an organization can think of economic responsibility<sup>18</sup>.

The second model, proposed by A.B. Carroll, is the model after profit obligation. It assumes that the realization of social responsibility can take place after the satisfaction of other types of responsibility, considered to be lower ones. In the first place, an enterprise should place its economic responsibility, that is to ensure the existence of the organization itself by achieving positive financial results and meeting the owner's financial goals. The higher form of liability is the legal responsibility, that is to act in accordance with local regulations, including the fulfillment of their obligations in both civil law and public law. Here, too, society demands that the company act not only in accordance with legal norms but also with the spirit of the law, that is, the actions of the company, also those lawful, do not harm the common good or society. At the summit, socially responsible philanthropic responsibility is sought, e.g.: the active engagement of the organization in actions for the good of the society and the external environment, in particular the good of the local community<sup>19</sup>.

In the economy, both models of social responsibility can be found. Both models are after-profit obligation and before-profit obligation. The before-profit obligation model is most often used by non-profit units whose primary objective is not to achieve a positive financial result. In the case of public

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<sup>14</sup> Michener J.A. *Sports in America*. New York: The Dial Press, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Hagiwara G., Iwatsuki T., Isogai H., Van Raalte J.L., Brewer B.W. Relationships among sports helplessness, depression, and social support in American college student-athletes, *Journal of Physical Education and Sport (JPES)*, 17(2), Art 114, 2017, pp. 753 – 757, DOI:10.7752/jpes.2017.02114

<sup>16</sup> Klimczak B. (1999). *Etyka gospodarcza*, Wyd. AE, Wrocław.

<sup>17</sup> Rybak M. *Etyka menedżera – społeczna odpowiedzialność przedsiębiorstwa*. Warsaw: PWN, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Kang Y.Ch., Wood D.J. Before Profit Social Responsibility Turning the Economic Paradigm Upside Down, *Business and Society*.1995

<sup>19</sup> Carroll A.B. *Business and Society: Ethics and Stakeholder Management*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014.

universities, in principle, we can talk about the model before profit obligation, or at least that should be the premise of the functioning of such an organization.

In the case of universities, there are several stakeholder groups to which the university, as an entity, should be responsible<sup>20</sup>: a) students and graduates, b) academic teachers, c) other university employees, d) employers of future graduates, e) organizations cooperating with the university, f) society. However, it is assumed that internal relationships (e.g. with students or employees) have greater strength than external relationships. However, expectations regarding the role that universities should shape in society are also growing<sup>21</sup>. It is also pointed out that enabling proper work-life balance is of great importance, i.e. the ability to combine work or studies with private life, family, social activity, or interests<sup>22</sup>.

Universities in Poland are also implementing documents that are to be a kind of road map for socially responsible actions. One of the turning points was the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the Declaration of Social Responsibility was adopted by, among others, Wrocław University of Science and Technology, and its effect was, among others, the establishment of a unit for equality. These activities were part of a broader context of changes in organizations, which concerned better communication with stakeholders and undertaking initiatives that are to be socially useful due to the extraordinary time that appeared unexpectedly in the life of societies<sup>23</sup>.

### Materials and methods

This work, based on a case study intended to show the role of academic sport in implementing the idea of social responsibility by higher education institutions.

The case study is a research method that uses “a detailed description, usually of a real economic phenomenon, e.g. the organization, the management process, its elements or the organization’s environment, in order to formulate conclusions about the causes and results of its course<sup>24</sup>”. It allows you to effectively present socio-economic problems and, due to the possibility of developing critical thinking, it is eagerly used in teaching. In order to fully present the analyzed phenomenon, it is recommended to conduct further research, but using other research methods, which should complement the described method. It is worth using triangulation of the research methods<sup>25</sup>. The use of a case study is particularly recommended, although it is not limited to situations when: “the boundaries between the phenomenon under study and its context are not clearly defined and may have a significant impact on the phenomenon in question; in the study of complex phenomena involving many variables and elements; where not just one outcome is expected; in research that is based on many different sources of evidence<sup>26</sup>”. It is an empirical method that allows for the study of current phenomena, and their analysis takes place within

<sup>20</sup> **Białoń L. Werner E.** Społeczna odpowiedzialność szkoły wyższej w kontekście jej wizerunku, *Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe*, vol. 1(39), 2012, p. 142-161.

<sup>21</sup> **Geryk M.** Społeczna odpowiedzialność uczelni niezbędnym czynnikiem jej rozwoju, [In:] M. Geryk (ed.), *Organizacja w obliczu współczesnych wyzwań*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania w Gdańsku, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> **Leoński W.** Społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu w polskich uczelniach wyższych. *Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie*, vol.6 (1), 2019, p. 239-252.

<sup>23</sup> **Czajkowska A.** Wpływ pandemii COVID-19 na działania CSR podejmowane przez przedsiębiorstwa, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie*, vol. 3, 2020, p. 45-62, <https://doi.org/10.15678/ZNUEK.2020.0987.0303>

<sup>24</sup> **Grzegorzczak W.** Studium przypadku jako metoda badawcza i dydaktyczna w naukach o zarządzaniu. In: Grzegorzczak W. (Ed.), *Wybrane problemy zarządzania i finansów. Studia przypadków*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015, p. 9-16.

<sup>25</sup> **Pizlo W.** Studium przypadku jako metoda badawcza w naukach ekonomicznych, *Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu*, 11(5), 2009, p. 246-251.

<sup>26</sup> **Kożuch A. Marzec I.** Studium przypadku jako strategia badawcza w naukach społecznych, *Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL*, 2(172), 2014, p. 32-44 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/17318157.1127093>

a specific context<sup>27</sup>. In this method, the researcher, as part of his scientific reflection, goes beyond the field defined by empirical material<sup>28</sup>, and an extremely important part of it is the discussion of the results obtained and the existing scientific literature. Some authors claim that this gives rise to the conclusion that the abductive method is being implemented<sup>29, 30</sup>. The purpose of the study may be exploration, description, or explanation<sup>31</sup>.

The case of research is an academic sport at the University of Economics in Katowice and its AZS Academy Club. Thus results for only one university in Poland. Although complete generalization is not possible, it can illustrate the general situation of academic sport as an emanation of the social responsibility of the universities in Poland.

The University of Economics in Katowice (UEKat) is a public university educating students in fields related to economics, management, and computer science. It educates at all levels of studies, both in full-time and part-time forms. Activities that can be considered socially responsible include, among others, activities aimed at facilitating education for students with special needs, going beyond those required by Polish law, including voluntary and free training of academic teachers (the “UEKat Dostępny” Programme), the possibility of associating in scientific circles and student organizations, student self-government (UEKat Student Parliament), the University of Economics Choir, the “Silesianie” Folk Song and Dance Ensemble, the possibility of using free psychological counseling, regular campaigns promoting voluntary blood donation (together with the Independent Students’ Association - NZS), campaigns promoting organ transplants (together with DKMS Poland)<sup>32</sup>.

## Results

### *Genesis of University Sports Association (AZS) in Poland*

The history of university sports dates back to the early 20th century, but its development was halted by the outbreak of World Wars I and II. It was not until the late 1940s that the International Federation of University Sports – or Fédération Internationale du Sport Universitaire in French (FISU) – was founded. It is the university equivalent of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It draws on similar values to the IOC, but its activities are aimed primarily at students and other members of the academic community<sup>33</sup>.

The Academic Sports Association (AZS) is the largest academic organization in Poland, operating at over 300 public and private universities, with over 30,000 members. The Polish Academic Championships organized within the AZS and their equivalents in individual regions (voivodeships) are the basis of the competition system between universities. AZS clubs train both competitive athletes (mainly physical education universities) and ordinary students, amateurs practicing their sports disciplines<sup>34</sup>.

AZS was founded in 1909. The development of AZS took place after Poland regained independence in 1918. Associations were established in the main academic centers of the country (Warsaw, Krakow,

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<sup>27</sup> **Glinka B., Czakon W.** *Podstawy badań jakościowych*, Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> **Czakon W.** Łabędzie Poppera – case studies w badaniach nauk o zarządzaniu, *Przegląd Organizacji*, vol. 9, 2006, p. 9–13.

<sup>29</sup> **Järvensivu T., Törnroos J. Å.** Case study research with moderate constructionism: Conceptualisation and practical illustration. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(1), 2010, p. 100-108.

<sup>30</sup> **Halinen A., Törnroos J. Å., Elo M.** Network process analysis: An event-based approach to study business network dynamics. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 42, 2013, p. 1213-1222, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2013.05.001>

<sup>31</sup> **Yin R.K.** *Application of case study research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> **UEKAT** (2024), University of Economics website [online], 2024a [Accessed: 11.11.2024]. Available at: <https://www.ue.katowice.pl/>

<sup>33</sup> **FISU** (International University Sports Federation) website [online], 2024 [Accessed: 09.11.2024]. Available at: <https://www.fisu.net>

<sup>34</sup> **Wartecki A.** *Zarządzanie organizacjami sportowymi*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo AWF im. E. Piaseckiego w Poznaniu, 2008.

Poznań, Lviv). Sports activities developed until the outbreak of World War II when they had to be limited due to occupation, but they were not completely abandoned. After the war, the reconstruction of higher education began. AZS structures were also rebuilt. In the Polish People's Republic, AZS was an important part of national sport, and athletes of AZS sports clubs often represented Poland in the international arena. Not only in the context of competition at the academic level but also at the world championships and the Olympic Games. The political transformation forced the University Sports Association to make organizational changes and re-register - the Association and individual clubs, and to adapt to the new conditions of functioning<sup>35</sup>. Today, AZS clubs bring together many students, academic workers, and others.

The University Sports Association operates under the law in force in Poland and under the AZS Statute updated in 2022. The organization's goals are defined in Section 7 of the Statute<sup>36</sup>.

1. Promoting sports, physical culture, and tourism improving physical fitness and improving the health of the academic community.
2. Developing competitive sports in the academic environment.
3. Creating activities and developing a sense of co-responsibility for the fate of the parent club, college, and the environment.
4. Maintaining the tradition of national development and national civic awareness, and educating members of the Association in accordance with the traditions of AZS.
5. Promoting environmental protection.
6. Promoting physical culture and sports, as well as rehabilitation of people with disabilities.
7. Promoting equal opportunities for young people from families with a difficult situation.
8. Action on European integration and development of contacts and cooperation between societies.
9. Promoting voluntary organizations.
10. Counteracting social pathologies, in particular drug addiction, alcoholism, and nicotine addiction that threaten the environment of young people studying.
11. The promotion and dissemination of Olympism, ideas, and education.
12. Actions for the development of sports and tourist facilities.
13. Actions for the development of education.
14. Actions to promote health and health education adapted to the needs of various social groups.
15. Conducting scientific research on issues related to sports, rehabilitation, biological regeneration, health care, and ecology.”

*Basic information of the University of Economics in Katowice AZS Academic Club*

University of Economics in Katowice AZS Academic Club (Polish: *Klub Uczelniany AZS Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach*) operates within the framework of the Regional Organization of AZS in Katowice - AZS Katowice. AZS Katowice acts as an association with legal personality. This organization brings together University clubs of the Silesia region<sup>37</sup>.

The AZS UE Katowice Academic Club brings together the academic community of the University of Economics in Katowice, who are also members of at least one of the sports sections. The total number of AZS members at the University should be 290 people as of 30.06.2022<sup>38</sup>, and the number of active

<sup>35</sup> **Hanusz H., Korpak B.** *100 lat Akademickiego Związku Sportowego*. Warszawa: AZS Zarząd Główny, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> **Statute of University Sports Association Katowice** (Pol. Statut Akademickiego Związku Sportowego Katowice). [online], 2020 [Accessed: 01.10.2023]. Available at: <https://www.azs.katowice.pl/images/stories/druki/Statut-AZS-Katowice-2020.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> **Statute of University Sports Association Katowice** (Pol. Statut Akademickiego Związku Sportowego Katowice). [online] 2022 [Accessed: 01.10.2023]. Available at: <https://www.azs.katowice.pl/images/stories/druki/Statut-AZS-Katowice-2020.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> **XXXIX Zjazd Akademickiego Związku Sportowego. Sprawozdanie z działalności. 27 czerwca 2020 – 17 września 2022**. Warsaw: Akademicki Związek Sportowy, 2022.

members of the organization in various academic years (participating in the competitive and sports section) is estimated at about 200-300 people.

Members of sports sections (both students and university employees) have the opportunity to represent the University Club in competition with AZS members from other universities. This competition often brings success, both for the individual athletes and for the entire club. An example is the first place of the Academic Club AZS UE Katowice in the general classification of the Academic Championships of Poland AZS (Polish: Akademickie Mistrzostwa Polski – AMP) of social-science university in the season 2016/2017, 2017/2018, and 2018/2019<sup>39</sup>.

The Academic Club Board is made up of students and other members of the academic community who have obtained their positions through the election of section delegates. The activity in the management of the Club allows students to develop many skills, and such experience is often a valuable entry in the CV in the future career of young managers<sup>40</sup>.

Members of AZS at the University of Economics in Katowice, according to a study of 2015<sup>41</sup>, most people (94%) had already practiced sport, with some cultivating a different sport than the one being improved in AZS. Members of the AZS Club at UEKat are also generally satisfied with their membership. The average rating (where 1 was the lowest and 6 was the highest possible rating) in the cited studies was 4.88, and two-thirds of respondents rated their membership as 5 or 6. Only 10% of players considered their satisfaction with their AZS membership to be lower than four. This shows how valuable participation in a sports organization and the opportunity to play sports is for the academic community.

#### *CSR of the University of Economics in Katowice and sports developments of students*

Like most universities in Poland, the University of Economics in Katowice has its mission. „The University of Economics in Katowice conducts scientific research in a responsible and professional manner and educates highly qualified staff in the field of economics, management, finance, logistics, administration, as well as IT and communication. As an academic community, we identify with the dynamically developing region and surroundings, offering lifelong learning and supporting entrepreneurship, business, and the public sector. We are a university open to international and expert cooperation. We create a community based on common values and trust, we enable equal opportunities and counteract all forms of exclusion<sup>42</sup>”. The University’s mission is based on 6 values:

1. “Professionalism (P): we provide a high level of knowledge and competences to our students, using modern tools and technologies; we care about the continuous and responsible professional development of our staff; we modernize infrastructure and adapt to the individual needs of our stakeholders.

2. Innovation (I): we engage in innovative research, discovering new knowledge, disseminating it, and, above all, creating useful value from it; we develop centers of scientific excellence and zones for science and teaching; we offer attractive forms of education, contributing to the creative and sustainable development of the region and the world.

3. Openness (O): we are looking for new ideas and ambitious challenges, focusing on diversity and flexibility in action; our goal is to expand knowledge and share achievements.

4. Cooperation (C): we operate in a region undergoing dynamic transformation, we initiate and co-create partnership and strategic relationships with stakeholders from Poland and abroad; we evaluate ourselves through the prism of the successes of our partners, employees, and students.

5. Commitment (Z): we engage in work for the development of the region and the country, we actively support the development of socially important projects and we take into account the voice of

<sup>39</sup> AMP. *Akademickie Mistrzostwa Polski* [online], 2023 [Accessed: 01.10.2023]. Available at: <https://ampy.pl/>

<sup>40</sup> Bieda J. Rozwój kariery i sukcesja, [in:] Bieniok H. (red.), *System Zarządzania Zasobami Ludzkimi Przedsiębiorstwa*, Katowice: Wyd. Akademii Ekonomicznej w Katowicach, 2006, p. 217-237.

<sup>41</sup> Suchecki K. The role of university sports in health promotion among people with disabilities in Poland, *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 21, suppl. 2, 2021, p. 1203 – 1210, DOI:10.7752/jpes.2021.s2153

<sup>42</sup> Mission of the University of Economics in Katowice [online], 2023, [Accessed: 28.09.2023]. Available at: <https://www.ue.katowice.pl/uczelnia/o-uczelni/misja.html>

the environment; we contribute to building a knowledge-society prepared to live in a rapidly changing environment and a digital world open to the challenges of the green economy.

6. Sensitivity (S): we are aware of the needs of the environment and counteract all forms of exclusion; we support the development of civic attitudes, we are ethical and transparent in our activities<sup>43</sup>”.

As can be observed, there is no immediate reference to academic sports or even to the university’s social responsibility in the given mission and objectives. However, the university is engaged in activities related to sports activities of students, which can be considered socially responsible. This is done by the University of Economics in Katowice AZS Academic Club, which, as a quasi-university unit (retaining some autonomy from university authorities), whose activity is partially financed by the university, runs sports sections, administers, promotes sports and sends students to sports competitions.

There are a number of issues that arise with discussions with members of the university club. On the one hand, the sport is supported by the school, both financially (with a subsidy for the university club as a student organization), and as a matter of fact – section coaches are usually the full-time staff of the university, and the sports section includes their didactic, sports hall and swimming pool for sports section and competitions organized by the club are available free of charge. Thus, university students have the opportunity to develop sports, they can pursue their sports passions under the professional supervision of section coaches. Sports activities are also an interesting springboard after exhaustive didactic activities at the university and provide the opportunity to better materialize, thanks to a greater diversity of student activity.

Students of the University of Economics in Katowice have taken part in the AZS Academic Championships of Poland very often in recent years, often achieving success. Statistics of starts in 2016-2024 are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Statistics of AZS UE Katowice starts in the AZS Academic Championships of Poland in 2016–2024**

<b>Academic year</b>	<b>Place in the general classification</b>	<b>Place in the classification of social and natural sciences universities</b>	<b>Number of disciplines represented / total in season</b>
2023/2024	34	6	32/47
2022/2023	26	3	39/48
2021/2022	23	2	38/48
2020/2021	21	2	32/48
2019/2020	17	2	28/45
2018/2019	15	1	38/44
2017/2018	16	1	39/43
2016/2017	15	1	36/43

Source: own study based on AMP (2023) and AZS (2024)

Having AZS sports sections is an additional role played by the University of Economics in Katowice. This is, undoubtedly, the emanation of the university’s social responsibility. Such a form of classes gives students the opportunity not only to develop their education, which is the main goal of the university as part of the didactic activity but also psycho-physical development, which helps not only to develop passions and diversify the time spent at university but also can prevent many civilization diseases, the same is the function of health prevention.

The members of the university club, however, complain about too few sports activities (as a matter of fact, one and a half hours per week), which makes it difficult for them to prepare well for such

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem.

competitions as the AZS Academic Championships of Poland. The noticeable problems in academic sports include the limited funding of student trips to sports competitions. Accommodation of competitors further away from the competition, self-prepared transport often for several hundred kilometers, meals in the form of a financial diet, and not in the form of meals proposed by the organizer.

## Discussion

Corporate social responsibility has long gone beyond the interest of commercial entities only. Public and non-governmental entities also benefit from business experience. The goals of universities increasingly include those related to social responsibility or, related to it sustainable development<sup>44</sup>. Of course, it is not enough to simply establish certain socially responsible goals, but it may be much more important to involve the academic community in this process – scientists, teachers, students, and administrative staff<sup>45</sup>. This is, of course, a big challenge for university management staff<sup>46</sup>. Today, we can basically say that this trend is global<sup>47, 48</sup>.

Unfortunately, programs implemented in schools and universities regarding the knowledge of corporate social responsibility have little impact on the approach of future business practitioners and corporate employees. It is indicated that, instead of regular learning, these classes should be more practical in nature or related to the discussion of specific issues<sup>49</sup>. In addition, researchers indicate that the degree of knowledge of CSR among students is low, and the understanding of the concept itself is intuitive. Despite the interest of universities in the idea of social responsibility, it is difficult to talk about its full implementation in academic life<sup>50</sup>.

One of the manifestations of universities' social responsibility may be involvement in sports, and a specific sport, i.e. academic sport. This involvement also refers to the issues of interests of consumers of these entities, i.e. students, as indicated by researchers<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> **Bokhari A.A.H.** Universities' Social Responsibility (USR) and Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Framework, *SSRG International Journal of Economics and Management Studies*, 4(12), 2017, p. 1–10.

<sup>45</sup> **Ismail, Z., & Shujaat, N.** CSR in Universities: A Case Study on Internal Stakeholder Perception of University Social Responsibility, *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 6(1), 2019, p. 75-90, DOI:10.14738/assrj.61.5256

<sup>46</sup> **Setó-Pamies D., Domingo-Vernis M., Rabassa-Figueras N.** Corporate social responsibility in management education: Current status in Spanish universities. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 17(5), 2011, p. 604-620. doi:10.5172/jmo.2011.17.5.604

<sup>47</sup> **Rahman A.A., Castka P., Love T.** Corporate social responsibility in higher education. A study of the institutionalisation of CSR in Malaysian public universities, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(14), 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1731>

<sup>48</sup> **Perić, J., Delić, A.** Developing social responsibility in Croatian Universities: a benchmarking approach and an overview of current situation, *International Review of Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, vol. 13, 2016, p. 69–80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-015-0144-5>

<sup>49</sup> **Wolska G.** Edukacja młodzieży z perspektywy idei CSR, *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe*, vol. 2, 2024, p. 69–80, <https://doi.org/10.14746/h.2024.2>

<sup>50</sup> **Pabian A.M.** The Market Functioning of Polish Higher Education Institutions in the Context of the Implementation of the Concept of Social Responsibility, *Marketing of Scientific and Research Organizations*, 39 (1), 2021, p. 1–24, DOI: 10.2478/minib-2021-0001

<sup>51</sup> **Nejati M., Shafaei A., Salamzadeh Y, Daraei M.** Corporate social responsibility and universities: A study of top 10 world universities' websites, *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(2), 2011, p. 440–447.

Sports activity, in its assumption, should be socially responsible, at least due to its impact on health promotion<sup>52</sup>, also in its professional version<sup>53, 54, 55</sup>. Getting involved in sports activities is one of the most popular manifestations of corporate social responsibility, especially in the case of commercial organizations that often decide to sponsor clubs, athletes, events, or initiatives<sup>56</sup>. Researchers indicate that sport has become a tool for implementing corporate social responsibility programs<sup>57</sup>. In the case of universities, especially those not involved in sports from a scientific or teaching perspective, this is a step beyond their standard scope of activities and requires commitment, both from the management side and the commitment of resources, financial, human (teachers, students), and infrastructure. However, sport is one of the extremely important elements of the education of children, adolescents, and young adults<sup>58</sup>, and from the point of view of universities with economic and business profiles, it should be noted that there is a positive impact of physical activity on the economic condition in local societies<sup>59</sup>.

Getting involved in sports activities of students at universities is generally voluntary and requires the involvement of one's free time. Hence, there is a relatively small number of students at the University of Economics in Katowice who belong to the AZS University Club. However, the results achieved by these student-athletes in academic competitions at the national level, especially in competitions between universities with a similar profile, allow us to believe that the activities in the club allow them to develop their sports skills and pursue their passions. They also allow you to maintain a satisfactory physical condition and obtain satisfaction, which, at various ages, often comes from physical activity<sup>60</sup>. The promotion of sports and physical activity may also have a positive impact on students' academic results and their socialization process, especially in the case of students with disabilities<sup>61</sup>. In recent years, however, there has been a reduction in the number of hours of optional sports classes at UEKat, including a reduction in some disciplines or combining groups of different genders due to the rising costs of maintaining the University<sup>62</sup>. Activities related to the promotion of sports among the academic community are also in line with the assumptions of the Higher Education and Science Development Programme for 2015-2030,

<sup>52</sup> **Suchecki K., Sobczyk K., Grajek M.** The Role of Academic Sport in Health Promotion – The Example of the Academic Sports Association in Poland. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, vol. 12, no. 10, 2022, pp. 153–161. <https://doi.org/10.12775/JEHS.2022.12.10.018>

<sup>53</sup> **Babiak K., Kihl L.A.** (2018), A Case Study of Stakeholder Dialogue in Professional Sport: An Example of CSR Engagement, *Business and Society Review*, vol. 123 (1), 2018, p. 119-149, <https://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12137>

<sup>54</sup> **Athanasopoulou P., Douvis J., Kyriakis V.** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Sports: Antecedents And Consequences [In:] Vrontis D., Weber Y., Kaufmann H.R., Tarba S., Tsoukatos E. (Ed.) 4th Annual EuroMed Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business. Business Research Challenges in a Turbulent Era, Nijmegen: EuroMed Press, p. 158-170, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> **Filizöz B., Fişne M.** (2011), Corporate Social Responsibility: A Study of Striking Corporate Social Responsibility Practices in Sport Management, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 2011, p. 1405-1417, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.062>

<sup>56</sup> **Miragaia D.A.M., Ferreira J., Ratten V.** Corporate social responsibility and social entrepreneurship: drivers of sports sponsorship policy, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 9(4), 2017, pp. 613-623, DOI: 10.1080/19406940.2017.1374297

<sup>57</sup> **Levermore R.** CSR for Development Through Sport: examining its potential and limitations, *Third World Quarterly*, 31(2), 2010, p. 223-241, DOI: 10.1080/01436591003711967

<sup>58</sup> **Hastie P.A., Martinez de Ojeda D., Calderón Luquin A.** A review of research on Sport Education: 2004 to the present, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 16(2), 2011, p. 103-132, DOI: 10.1080/17408989.2010.535202

<sup>59</sup> **Huterska A., Huterski R., Zdunek-Rosa E., Lapińska J.** Impact of economic conditions of the physical activity of regional communities in Poland, *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, Vol. 20 (suppl. 2), 2020, p. 1031 – 1037, DOI:10.7752/jpes.2020.s2143

<sup>60</sup> **Kubińska, Z., Pańczuk, A.** Health needs satisfied by physical activity in the elderly, *Rozprawy Społeczne/Social Dissertations*, 12(1), 2018, p. 73-79. <https://doi.org/10.29316/rs.2018.09>

<sup>61</sup> **Suchecki K.** The role..., op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> **UEKAT Physical Education and Sports Center Class Schedule.** [online], 2024b [Accessed: 11.11.2024]. Available at: <https://www.ue.katowice.pl/jednostki/cwfis/plan-zajec.html>

and pro-social (including pro-sports) activities can encourage candidates to undertake studies in the context of demographic decline and problems of many Polish universities with recruitment for studies<sup>63</sup>.

### Conclusions, research limitations, and further research directions

Having a sports section of a university club is an important assumption of social foundations among universities in Poland. It is an activity not only common to the academic community but is also required by some people as one of the pillars of the university.

The operation of the university club at the University of Economics in Katowice is well and very well assessed, although there are serious shortcomings, especially in the limited number of hours of sports activities, problems with financing student trips to sports competitions, communication errors between the university club and the university authorities. It may adversely affect the task assigned to the club.

This may also result from the model of financing Polish universities and subsidies provided by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland. The funds used to finance sports at universities come from subsidies for teaching activities, and universities have considerable freedom in decisions regarding the use of these funds. The Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland also conducts activities within the framework of academic sports, but here they are more in the nature of financing national and regional tournaments. It seems, however, that there is a lack of cooperation between these ministries. This would allow for better promotion of sports and physical activity at universities.

Activities related to the development of academic sport also give the opportunity, under the before-profit obligation model, to improve the image of the university, increase its popularity among the candidates for study, and thus economic benefits.

Academic sports require financial inputs and must be long-term, but especially in public universities, is part of the mission of education and student development. It also offers great opportunities for students and encourages them to study at a particular university. This initiative should be implemented in collaboration with university staff and students to better meet their needs in this area, and the authorities themselves should allow the academic community the widest access to physical activity and the development of their sports passion.

However, it is necessary to note the limitations of this work, which is based on a case study of one Polish university. Despite the fact that it is a fairly large public university located in a provincial city, it cannot be assumed that academic sport is treated similarly at other universities in Poland. It would be worth extending the analyses to other public and non-public universities, as well as conducting primary research – quantitative research among consumers – students of Polish universities, as well as qualitative research among decision-makers at these universities.

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