

OUR IDENTITY

Eight Decades of Responding to a Changing World



Introduction

The identity of Wrocław University of Economics and Business has not been shaped by stability, but by nearly eight decades of responding to profound economic, social and geopolitical change while remaining steadfast in its commitment to academic excellence, high-quality education and impactful research. Since its **establishment in 1947**, the University has evolved alongside one of the most remarkable periods in the modern history of Poland and Europe.

It was born during the reconstruction of a country devastated by war, developed through decades of a centrally planned economy, helped prepare society for the transition to a market economy, embraced the opportunities created by European integration, and today contributes to addressing the challenges of an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world. Throughout every transformation, the University has been guided by one enduring principle: its responsibility is not only to understand the changing world but also to prepare people capable of shaping it.

Responding to Reconstruction (1947–1950)

Wrocław University of Economics and Business was established because history demanded it. The Second World War left Poland's economy, public institutions and higher education system in ruins. Wrocław itself had to rebuild almost everything—from its infrastructure to its academic community. In this context, the newly established Higher School of Commerce was created to educate economists, administrators and business professionals capable of supporting the reconstruction of the country and rebuilding economic life.

The University's first academic staff brought with them not only scientific expertise but also the intellectual traditions of the universities of Lviv and Vilnius. They created much more than a new institution—they rebuilt an academic community and transferred knowledge, values and academic culture to a new generation.

On 3 February 1947, Professor Wincenty Styś delivered the University's inaugural lecture. Today, one of the University's lecture halls bears his name, symbolising the continuity of academic values that have guided the institution from its very beginning.

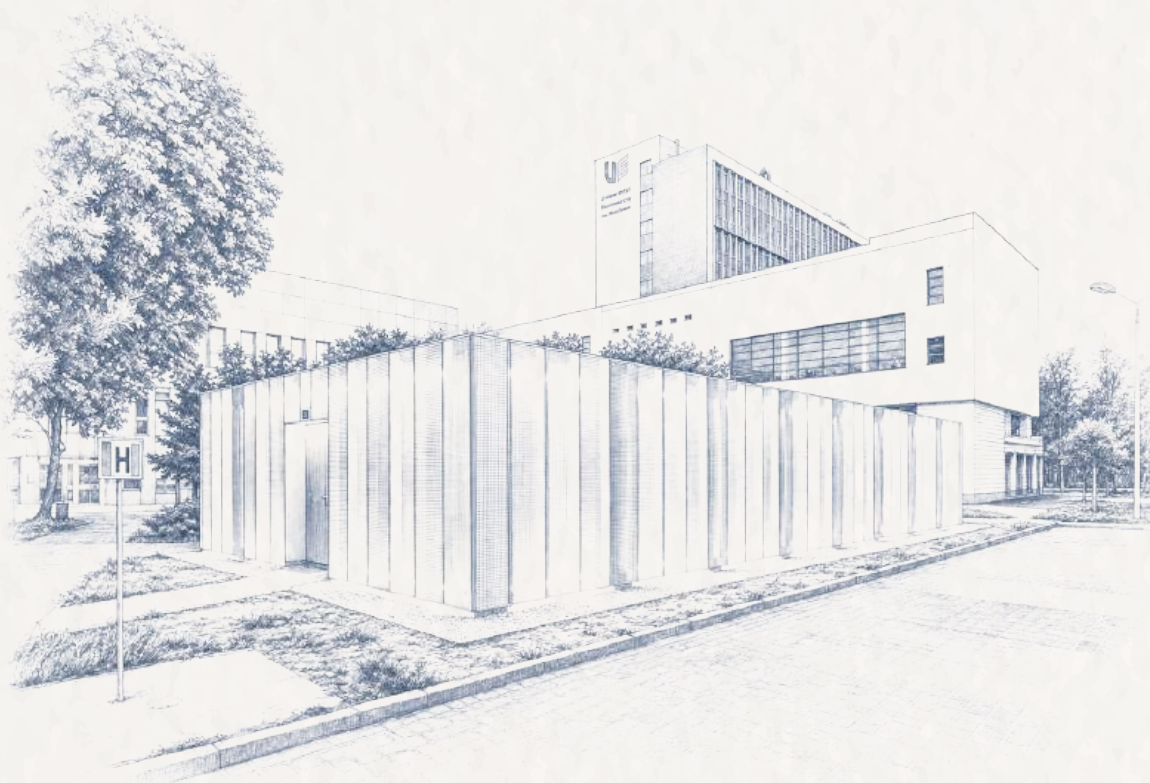
From the outset, education was understood not simply as the transfer of knowledge but as a responsibility towards society. The University's first contribution to the world was therefore not measured in publications or rankings, but in people prepared to rebuild a country.



Preserving Academic Excellence During Times of Change (1950–1989)

The following decades brought a different challenge. Poland functioned within a centrally planned economy and remained largely isolated from the international academic community. Higher education operated under political and institutional constraints that shaped universities throughout the country. Despite these limitations, Wrocław University of Economics and Business continued to grow. New academic programmes were established, scientific research developed, the campus expanded and successive generations of students were educated to the highest standards possible within the realities of the time. These decades reinforced one of the University's defining characteristics: the ability to evolve while preserving academic quality and integrity.

Even when external circumstances limited international cooperation or institutional autonomy, the University remained committed to developing knowledge and educating highly qualified graduates. Looking back, this period demonstrated that resilience is not simply the ability to survive change—it is the ability to continue fulfilling an academic mission despite changing circumstances.



Supporting Poland's Economic Transformation (1989–2004)

The political and economic transformation of 1989 fundamentally changed the environment in which the University operated. Within only a few years, Poland shifted from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. New institutions emerged, entrepreneurship developed rapidly, international companies entered the Polish market and entirely new professional competences became essential. The University responded by expanding its educational offer, developing programmes in finance, management, accounting, international business and entrepreneurship, while continuously strengthening its research activities.

Once again, the institution adapted—not because change itself was the objective, but because society required graduates prepared for a completely new economic reality. This period profoundly shaped the University's identity. It confirmed that higher education should not merely observe economic transformation but actively contribute to it by educating people capable of leading change responsibly.

Opening to Europe and the World (Since 2004)

Poland's accession to the European Union opened another chapter in the University's development. International cooperation became an essential element of academic life. Student and staff mobility expanded significantly, partnerships with universities around the world intensified, international accreditations confirmed educational quality and research became increasingly embedded within global academic networks. Internationalisation was never understood as an objective in itself. Rather, it reflected the University's belief that understanding complex economic and social challenges requires openness to different perspectives, cultures and ideas.

The University therefore evolved from an institution responding primarily to national needs into a university actively contributing to international academic and professional communities while remaining firmly rooted in its regional responsibilities.

Preparing for an Uncertain Future

Today's world presents challenges that differ fundamentally from those faced by previous generations. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, demographic change, sustainability, geopolitical instability and rapidly evolving labour markets require universities not only to respond to change but increasingly to anticipate it. Throughout its history, Wrocław University of Economics and Business has learned that every generation faces different challenges, yet every generation requires the same foundations: reliable knowledge, critical thinking, ethical responsibility and the ability to learn continuously.

For this reason, the University sees education as much more than preparing graduates for their first job. It prepares individuals capable of understanding complexity, making responsible decisions and contributing to the long-term development of the economy, society and business. Research plays an equally important role in this mission. Scientific excellence is not pursued as an end in itself but as a means of creating knowledge that addresses real societal and economic challenges, supports evidence-based decision-making and contributes to sustainable development.



We Inspire Development

Looking back over nearly eight decades, the history of Wrocław University of Economics and Business reveals a remarkable consistency. While the political, economic and social environment surrounding the University has changed repeatedly, the institution has consistently responded by adapting its educational and research activities to the needs of the time without compromising its academic values.

The University was established to support the reconstruction of a country devastated by war. During the decades of a centrally planned economy, it continued to educate highly qualified specialists and develop scientific knowledge despite limited opportunities for international cooperation. Following Poland's transition to a market economy, it prepared graduates capable of leading economic transformation and responding to the demands of a rapidly changing labour market. After Poland joined the European Union, the University embraced internationalisation, expanding academic partnerships, mobility opportunities and international research collaboration. Today, it continues to evolve in response to global challenges such as technological transformation, sustainability and geopolitical uncertainty.

Throughout each of these periods, the external environment changed fundamentally. The University's response changed as well. What remained constant, however, was its commitment to academic excellence, high-quality education and the development of research that contributes to society and the economy.

This ability to evolve while remaining faithful to its academic purpose has become the defining characteristic of Wrocław University of Economics and Business. The University has never regarded change as a threat. Instead, it has consistently viewed changing economic and social conditions as an opportunity to rethink educational programmes, strengthen research, build new partnerships and prepare graduates for challenges that did not exist only a few years earlier.

For nearly eighty years, WUEB has educated successive generations of students whose careers have contributed to the development of business, public institutions and society. At the same time, its researchers have sought not only to advance scientific knowledge but also to provide solutions to challenges faced by the economy and society. In this way, the University has continuously fulfilled its responsibility as a public academic institution: creating knowledge, educating future generations and contributing to the sustainable development of its region, Poland and the wider international community.

The University's identity has therefore not been defined by any single historical event, organisational change or strategic initiative. It has been shaped by the ability to respond responsibly to successive generations of challenges while remaining committed to the enduring principles of academic excellence, intellectual curiosity and service to society.

Today, this identity continues to guide the University's development. It explains why Wrocław University of Economics and Business invests in innovative education, internationally recognised research and strong partnerships with business and society—not as isolated initiatives, but as the natural continuation of a journey that began in 1947. The University's greatest strength has never been change itself, but its ability to remain academically excellent while preparing each new generation for a different world.

