



**NICOLAUS COPERNICUS  
UNIVERSITY  
IN TORUŃ**



**TEFCE  
Toolbox** An Institutional Self-Reflector  
Framework for Community  
Engagement in Higher  
Education



**Young Universities  
for the Future of Europe**



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

## **Mapping and analysing cooperation schemes**

**Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń**

**2023-2024**

**(Summary of the institutional report)**

## **About Nicolaus Copernicus University**

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, founded in 1945, is one of the largest universities in Poland, comprising 16 faculties. It runs undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for about 18 000 students, offering education in more than 100 fields of study. It employs 4 400 people and the number of graduates reaches 200 000. UMK has state-of-the-art research infrastructure, excellent teaching, social, cultural and sports facilities. It participates in international and national student and staff exchange programmes.

The University supports the local communities with knowledge, stimulates the development of the social and business environment and is a cultural institution.

The University is a signatory to the Declaration of the University's Social Responsibility, which refers to the main areas of the University's work: fostering values, shaping social attitudes, promoting equality, dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders, conducting research and teaching with respect for the principles of social responsibility, and minimising the impact of the academic community and its stakeholders on the environment.

NCU is a member of the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance, one of the first European universities, in which it is the leader of the Work Package Community and Civic Engagement.

## **Survey on community engagement at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń**

Mapping and analysing local cooperation schemes between YUFE partner universities and the social communities is one of the tasks of the YUFE 2030 Work Package 8: Community and Civic Engagement, co-financed by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101089770 - YUFE 2030 - ERASMUS-EDU-2022-EUR-UNIV.

The main objectives of the study are:

- To identify and analyse the social engagement practices of the NCU community,
- To assess the extent, form and nature of social engagement of the NCU;
- To increase the visibility of such practices at the university;
- To assess the extent to which the practices undertaken are linked to NCU's strategic objectives;
- To measure the level of institutional support for the community engagement practices undertaken;
- To develop recommendations.

In addition, according to the YUFE 2030 project, similar surveys should take place at all YUFE universities by November 2026, which would provide an opportunity for international networking of initiatives undertaken at partner universities.

## **Methodology**

The study on community engagement at the University of Toruń used the TEFCE Toolbox, developed as part of the Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education project (TEFCE, [www.community-engagement.eu/toolbox](http://www.community-engagement.eu/toolbox)).

The TEFCE Toolbox enables universities to map and improve their public engagement practices, allowing them to reflect on their public engagement achievements, identify areas for improvement, better engage with their communities and create more effective community engagement strategies.

The tool has previously been used by two YUFE universities: University of Rijeka (UNIRI) and University of Antwerp (UAntwerp).

## **Survey**

The survey was sent out to all NCU staff and students. Respondents were asked to indicate the activities they undertake that have an impact on society, e.g. scientific research related to the local community/ environment; events promoting science, culture, sport, health, cooperation with the social and business environment in the fields of studies creation/development, community-oriented activities for students (e.g. volunteering, internships in local institutions), and other initiatives for residents of the city and region, etc. Activities were to be:

- organised in cooperation with external, local organisations (e.g. local government, NGOs, housing estate councils, etc.),
- free of charge,
- implemented after 1 January 2022 or planned for 2023, or implemented before 1 January 2022, but of a cyclical nature and planned to continue in subsequent years.

62 practices were reported as part of the survey. It should be emphasised that these do not exhaust the actual stock of activities undertaken by the University community in collaboration with the social environment. The data collected provided a basis for analysing and better understanding the reported NCU community engagement practices and identifying areas for further action and improvement.

## **Analysis**

The 62 practices reported in the study were analysed.

The subject of the analysis was:

- to find the links between the activities and the objectives of the NCU Strategy 2021-2026,
- to assess to what extent the University (including staff and colleagues) and partners from the community support the practices,
- to map practices in terms of keywords,
- to create heat maps in relation to the characteristics:
  - authenticity of engagement;
  - societal needs addressed;
  - communities engaged with;
  - institutional spread;
  - institutional sustainability.

## **Analysis in relation to the NCU Strategy 2021- 2026**

Most of the reported activities implement more than one Strategic Objective indicated in the NCU Strategy 2021-2026.

The analysis of the reported practices indicates that most of the activities implemented within the framework of the NCU Strategy 2021- 2026 are aimed at the external community of the University. These practices focus on education and community relations objectives, reflecting NCU's broad commitment to education, popularisation of science and building external relations.

1. Dominance of educational practices: as many as 50% of the submitted activities realise Strategic Objective II 'Education', which shows that Nicolaus Copernicus University is intensively involved in the development of educational programmes and initiatives aimed at individualising students' development paths, using modern technologies and international experience. This also demonstrates a strong emphasis on adapting the educational offer to the dynamically changing needs of the labour market and the global community.
2. Relations with the environment: 35% of placements are related to the implementation of Objective III 'Relationships', indicating the significant role of the University as an institution open to cooperation with the environment. These activities often include the organisation of events popularising science, social initiatives and cooperation projects with local and international partners, which are aimed at building a positive image of NCU and strengthening its relations with the environment.
3. Strengthening the scientific position of UMK: 12% of the reported activities implement Strategic Objective I 'Science', which emphasises NCU's efforts to strengthen its scientific position through scientific achievements, international cooperation and the development of talented and motivated academic staff, as well as young research.

Findings from the analysis of reported practices suggest that, while NCU is effective in meeting its education and community relations objectives, there is a need for greater engagement with internal stakeholders, investing in their development and the University's communications.

1. Increasing internal engagement: NCU should invest more resources and attention in initiatives to develop the internal organisational culture, to support staff and students and to improve management processes.
2. Balancing strategic objectives: increased commitment to the goals of related to people and management will contribute to a more balanced strategy for the development of the University, which can ultimately increase the efficiency and satisfaction of the entire academic community.

In summary, the reported practices indicate a strong commitment to education and relationship building, while suggesting a need for greater commitment to internal development. The combination of external and internal activities is crucial for sustainable development and the achievement of the University's long-term strategic goals.

#### **Analysis in response to the question: to what extent does the university support this practice?**

1. Does the university provide facilities

The majority of reported practice takes place outside the walls of the University. However, there are activities carried out in UMK spaces, such as open days and events at individual faculties.

Conclusions: internships are mainly carried out outside the university and aimed at people outside UMK. It is worth considering greater use of university facilities to organise these activities. This could increase the involvement of the university community and improve the accessibility and visibility of these internships.

2. Does the organizer have a formal budget?

The University only fully funds 7 of the 62 reported internships. The majority of these take place take place with the support of partners from the socio-economic environment, indicating strong links and external collaboration.

Conclusions: internships are mainly funded from external sources, highlighting the need to further develop partnerships and seek new sources of funding. However, increased financial support from the university could contribute to a greater number and variety of internships being delivered.

3. Does the university provide administrative support?

Of the reported practices, 21 are administratively supported by the University and 31 with the support of partners from the socio-economic environment.

Conclusions: some internships do not require administrative support from the University, showing that there is some flexibility in the implementation of these activities. However, increased administrative support from the University could improve the organisation and implementation of internships, especially those with greater and importance.

4. Does the university give any form of promotion of the practice?

The University provides full promotional support for 11 activities and 26 practices receive some form of promotional support.

Conclusions: apprenticeships are promoted by the University, but it would be worth increasing the form and intensity of promotion. Better promotional support could help to raise the profile of the placements, thereby increasing engagement with the University community and external partners.

5. Does the university give any form of career-recognition?

The University gives little recognition to social engagement activities in the career pathway.

Conclusions: it is worth paying more attention to social engagement practices, intensifying their promotion and developing a form of recognition of these activities in the academic and non-academic career pathway and non-academic careers. Recognition of such activities could encourage those working and studying to actively participate in social initiatives.

**Analysis in response to the question: to what extent do your colleagues, management and students support and value the practice?**

The analysis shows that the support for the practice is significant. Co-workers and management appreciate activities that respond to social needs. The practices are recognised as valuable and relevant to the image and mission of the University, which shows that there is strong internal support for these initiatives.

The analysis in response to the question: how do community partners support and value the practice? The results of the analysis indicate strong support from the community and external partners. Partners often co-finance, provide administrative support and promote the practice, which shows their support and commitment. Strong external support may also mean that partners see the value and benefits of implementing such activities, which may encourage the development of such initiatives

in the future.

**Summary:**

NCU is highly supportive of the reported practices, but there is room for improvement in terms of funding, administrative support and recognition in the career pathway. Strong support from colleagues, management and external partners indicates the high value and need to further develop these initiatives.

**Analysis of practices in terms of keywords:**

Keywords help to find specific content more quickly in extensive datasets. This allows individual projects to be assigned to relevant categories, making management and analysis easier.

The GCM Community Engagement Survey identified 14 primary keywords to identify reported practices within each category.

**Key words with number of indications:**

- Education/knowledge transfer: 44
- Culture and arts: 19
- Research: 16
- Ecology and environment: 14
- Health promotion: 14
- Equality measures: 12
- History and heritage: 10
- Architecture and urban planning: 8
- Sustainable development: 7
- Sport: 5
- Innovation and entrepreneurship: 4
- Language learning: 4
- Politics and democracy: 3
- Security: 2

Here is an elaboration of the meaning of the keywords for NCU's community engagement:

1. education/knowledge transfer: engaging in education means supporting learning and knowledge transfer from the university to the community. It is about promoting access to knowledge, developing competencies and skills and supporting innovative teaching methods.
2. language learning: initiating activities that support language learning, promoting multilingualism and intercultural communication, which contributes to global understanding and cooperation.
3. health promotion: activities aimed at raising community health awareness, promoting healthy lifestyles, disease prevention and providing access to health information and services.
4. culture and arts: supporting cultural diversity, promoting local and regional arts and culture and regional culture, organising cultural events that build community identity and attract tourists.
5. sport: promoting sporting and recreational activities, organising sporting events, supporting physical health and values such as fair play and competition.
6. ecology and environment: initiating environmental protection activities, environmental education, promoting biodiversity, and research on climate change and its impact on society.
7. architecture and urban planning: engaging in the shaping of urban spaces, promoting sustainable urban development and spatial order, preserving architectural and cultural heritage and ensuring access to public spaces.

8. research: conducting scientific research, supporting innovative research projects, technology development and knowledge and technology transfer to industry and the local and regional community.
9. equality and inclusion measures: promoting gender equality, combating racial and ethnic discrimination, supporting LGBTQ+ people, people with special needs and other groups at risk of social exclusion.
10. sustainable development: supporting socio-economic development that is compatible with the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
11. innovation and promotion of entrepreneurship: supporting entrepreneurship, promoting innovation and creativity, supporting start-ups and the transfer of new technologies to business.
12. security: ensuring the physical and digital security of the community, working with state security institutions and education on threats and methods to counter them.
13. politics and democracy: fostering democratic values, civic education, promoting citizen participation in public life, developing transparent institutions and upholding human rights.
14. History and heritage: protection of cultural and historical heritage, history education, promotion of local history and activities to preserve the memory of the past.

Each of these areas is central to NCU's community engagement, which seeks to integrate academic knowledge with the needs of the local community and the global challenges of today's world.

### **Analysis of the NCU community engagement heat map**

#### **Conclusions**

##### 1. Authenticity of involvement:

- High level: NCU students and staff show authentic involvement in social activities. Students carry out their own educational and promotional initiatives, and employees take part in debates and initiatives responding to social needs.
- Medium level: the authenticity of staff involvement is at a medium level, suggesting that there is room to increase their activity and engagement.

##### 2. Meeting societal needs:

- High level: the university is effective in identifying and meeting social needs.
- Medium level: however, there is room for further development in terms of identifying and meeting social needs.

##### 3. Community engagement:

- High level: the university engages with various communities, including local NGOs and residents.
- Medium level: community engagement is moderate in some areas, suggesting a need for greater integration and collaboration.

##### 4. Institutional spread:

- Medium level: community engagement is spread moderately across the institution, suggesting that not all departments and units are equally active.
- Low level: engagement is limited in some areas, indicating a the need for more coordination and support from the university.

##### 5. Institutional sustainability:

- Medium level: the university shows moderate sustainability in its social activities, suggesting that there is room for improvement in terms of long-term planning and support.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Increase the authenticity of engagement:**

- Encourage male and female staff to become more involved in community initiatives by offering training, support and recognition for their contributions.
- Promote and support student community initiatives to increase their impact and reach.

### **2. Develop programmes to meet social needs:**

- Continuing and expanding projects such as 'STOP SMOG' or domestic violence surveys.
- Regular consultation with local communities to identify new needs and challenges.

### **3. Strengthening community engagement:**

- Creating platforms and events that enable greater interaction between the university and local communities.
- Fostering partnerships with NGOs and other institutions to implement joint projects.

### **4. Increasing institutional spread:**

- Promote community engagement across all faculties and units of the university through awareness campaigns and support programmes

### **5. Improve institutional sustainability:**

- Develop long-term community engagement strategies that incorporate sustainability and long-term goals.
- Provide adequate resources and financial support for community initiatives to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

## **Summary**

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń shows significant community engagement, but there is room for further development and improvement in several key areas. Implementation of the above recommendations can contribute to increasing the university's impact on the local community and strengthening its role as a leader in social responsibility.