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The Polish Economic Society—Cracow Branch

A century of economic debate in Cracow

The Cracow Branch of the Polish Economic Society (PTE) is one of the oldest and most active centers of organized economic activity in Poland. Its history is closely linked to the Economic Society in Cracow, established in 1921, whose traditions form part of the historical foundations of the PTE. Cracow thus represents an important center in the development of the modern, institutionalized economic movement in Poland.

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Historical Roots

The Economic Society in Cracow was established on 1 March 1921, on the initiative of leading representatives of the city's business and academic communities. Its primary objective was to contribute to the economic development of the newly independent Polish state. The Society became a forum for research, lectures, journalism, and publishing, with its activities focused on analyzing economic challenges and developing possible solutions.

Its first president, elected at the founding meeting, was Baron Jan Götz-Okocimski (1864–1931), owner of the Okocim brewery, president of the Bank



Source: https://www.szukajwarchiwach.gov.pl/en/jednostka/-/jednostka/5898114/obiekty/325556.

of Lesser Poland and the Association of Industrialists in Cracow, and a long-standing parliamentarian in both the Austrian and Polish legislatures. His public service focused strongly on economic affairs. During World War I, he was also involved in efforts to support Polish independence in Western Europe.

From its inception, the Society combined economic analysis with practical engagement in public affairs. Its 1921 statute explicitly defined the organization as apolitical, a principle that has remained an important element of its institutional tradition. The Society also maintained a commitment to economic liberalism, reflecting its intellectual links with the Cracow School and the liberal tradition represented by scholars at Jagiellonian University.

The Society's activities extended beyond academic discussion. It submitted legislative proposals and memoranda to public authorities, addressing issues of economic policy and institutional reform. One of its final pre-war initiatives was a 1939 memorandum concerning the need to amend the statute of the Bank of Poland. Between 1921 and 1939, the Society also developed an extensive publishing program, while its institutional reach expanded beyond Cracow. A branch in Bielsko was established in January 1927.

The outbreak of World War II brought eighteen years of intensive activity to an end. The institutional history of economic thought and professional organization in Cracow, however, dates back even further. In 1887, the city hosted the first congress of Polish economists and lawyers, marking an important starting point in the development of the tradition of congresses within the Polish economic movement.

From 1946 to the Present Day

The Economic Society in Cracow was not re-established after World War II. Instead, at a national meeting of economists held in Łódź on 1–2 December 1945, it was decided to replace the existing regional societies with a single nationwide organization operating through local branches. Cracow was represented at the meeting by Adam and Witold Krzyżanowski, who were therefore among the founders of the Polish Economic Society (PTE). Cracow's economic community thus participated not only in the establishment of its local branch but also in the creation of the nationwide organization. The intellectual legacy of the Cracow School of Economics was subsequently carried forward within the PTE. The Cracow Branch was established at its first general assembly on 16 February 1946, and Professor Witold Krzyżanowski, one of the Society's founders, was elected as its first president. In 1992, an amendment to the PTE statute enabled the Cracow Branch to become an independent legal entity. It acquired legal personality and was entered in the court register in December of that year. Throughout its history, the branch has followed the principle expressed in the motto: "Looking to the future, we do not forget tradition." This approach combines respect for the intellectual heritage of the Cracow School of Economics with an emphasis on contemporary economic challenges. Drawing on this tradition, the Cracow Branch continues to support the dissemination of economic knowledge, promote professional and academic cooperation, and contribute to discussions of socio-economic development.

The anniversaries commemorated in 2022 were of particular historical significance: the centenary of the establishment of the Economic Society in Cracow and the 75th anniversary of the Cracow Branch of the Polish Economic Society. Originally planned for 2021, the celebrations were postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately took the form of the academic conference "The Polish Economic Society—Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," held on 18 March 2022. The conference addressed two main areas. The first concerned the history of the economic movement in Poland, with particular emphasis on the contribution of the Cracow School of Economics to economic thought and the interwar economy. The second focused on contemporary socio-economic challenges and the future role of organizations such as the PTE in the context of rapid economic, technological, and social change.

Horizons of Economics

In line with the statutory objectives of the PTE, the Cracow Branch conducts a broad range of outreach, research, and educational activities. These include the preparation of economic expert reports and analyses, as well as the organization of public lectures, discussion seminars, academic conferences, courses, and training programs. Through these activities, the branch

contributes to the exchange of knowledge between academic research, economic policy, and business practice.

HORYZONTY EKONOMII

A flagship initiative of the Cracow Branch is the Horizons of Economics (Horyzonty ekonomii) seminar series, which focuses on disseminating economic knowledge and addressing current challenges of socio-economic development. The seminars are open to the public and interdisciplinary, bringing together perspectives from different academic disciplines and professional communities. The range of topics reflects the diversity of contemporary economic challenges. Recent seminars have addressed sustainable consumption and its implications for the modern economy, the use of artificial intelligence in assessing the social and economic impact of research, economics in the age of AI, the economics of sport, the future of higher education in Poland, tax compliance and the reasons why individuals pay taxes, behavioral economics and decision-making, Claudia Goldin's research on women in the labor market, and nonfinancial reporting in business practice. Some seminars are organized in cooperation with other PTE branches, including those in Szczecin and Łódź, as well as with university partners. Such cooperation extends the discussion beyond the regional level and strengthens the national dimension of the series. Several recent webinars have also continued debates initiated during the 11th Congress of Polish Economists. Publicly available recordings further extend the reach of the seminars and make the discussions accessible beyond their immediate audience.

Economic Education

A particularly important area of activity is economic education among young people. The Cracow Branch is responsible for organizing the Małopolska regional stage of the Economic Knowledge Contest (Olimpiada Wiedzy Ekonomicznej), one of Poland's longest-running and most prominent economics competitions for secondary school students. The contest provides an important link between the branch and schools across the region, supporting the development of economic literacy and interest in economics among young people.

These activities are complemented by broader educational initiatives, including the Regional Forum of the Year of Economic Education—*Educational Impulses 2024*, which brought together representatives of education, academia, and other stakeholders to discuss contemporary challenges in economic education.

Conferences, Debate and Publications

The Cracow Branch has also provided a forum for discussion of fundamental issues affecting the Polish economy. Conferences organized by the branch have included: "The Polish Model of Capitalism: Can We Afford a Debate Without Complexes?," "Financial Security and Economic Patriotism: Markets, Enterprises, Technological Innovation," and "The Economics of the Future: An Effective or a Just State?"

Representatives of the branch were involved in preparations for the 11th Congress of Polish Economists and participated in the Copernican Congress in Cracow. The branch also contributes to documenting the history of economic thought and its institutional development. In early 2026, it published a monograph devoted to the history of Polish economic thought and its institutional foundations. In addition to organizing its own events, the branch provides honorary patronage and institutional support for international academic conferences, investor and business events, and competitions organized by student research clubs. These activities strengthen cooperation among universities, businesses, public institutions, and student communities, contributing to the development of Cracow as an important center of economic research, education, and public debate.



A Community of Economists

The Cracow Branch is located on Rakowicka Street, in close proximity to the Kraków University of Economics, with which it has maintained long-standing

academic and organizational cooperation. The branch also works with regional and local authorities in Małopolska and with institutions supporting the business community. Its membership brings together economists from different generations and professional backgrounds, including academics, practitioners from financial institutions and public administration, as well as doctoral and undergraduate students beginning their research careers. This diversity creates opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and experience between economic theory and practice and supports an environment centered on substantive discussion and professional cooperation. The achievements of distinguished members are recognized through the PTE's honorary distinctions, reflecting the Society's long-standing civic and community-oriented role in the development and dissemination of economic knowledge.

Looking Ahead: Significance and Future Directions

The more-than-century-long tradition of organized economic activity gives the Cracow Branch of the PTE an important place in the development of Polish economic culture. In the context of digital transformation, climate change, and demographic shifts, the dissemination of reliable economic knowledge, support for young researchers and students, and the creation of a forum for substantive and apolitical discussion remain particularly important. These objectives are consistent with the tradition established more than a century ago while responding to the challenges of the contemporary economy. The principle of "Looking to the future, we do not forget tradition" therefore continues to provide a useful framework for the branch's activities.