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Science and education



Lublin's academic traditions

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Lublin is a city with many centuries' traditions in higher education, dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first records of the academic life of the city are attributable to Lublin rabbi Salomon Shahna and the Talmudic Academy he established. The Jesuit College was also set up at the time. While they were not schools of higher learning, but religious schools, they became the foundation of high education. Enjoying enormous interest, they soon won acclaim outside the country. Consequently, students started flocking in from all over Poland, Bohemia and Germany. Studium Generale, a school of higher learning with a philosophical and theological profile and the Seminary opened in Lublin in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The next stage of the development of higher education in Lublin took place during the 20-year interwar period. The first university was the University of Lublin, established in 1918 (renamed the Catholic University of Lublin ten years later). As favourable conditions emerged, new schools came into existence. They included a Jesuit theological college (known as Collegium Bobolanum) and the Talmudic College at which Jews gained education - scholars and rabbi candidates. From 1918 on, Lublin was already widely known as a university city where elites of the Polish state were educated. The outbreak of World War II prevented further academic progress, actually putting to a stop all educational activities of those schools. Immediately after the hostilities ceased and the city was liberated, the Catholic University of Lublin re-launched its activities. Unfortunately, the development of the university was prevented by the unfavourable attitude of the authorities who acted to its detriment, e.g. by closing down some of its faculties. On the other hand, just after the front passed Lublin, in 1944, another university was established. It was the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS). Initially, it had only four faculties, all related to exact sciences. As it later turned out, in the 1950s UMCS became the parent of two other universities which are today operating in Lublin. They are the Medical University (previously Medical Academy) and the University of Life Sciences (formerly Agricultural College). They were established on the basis the Medical and Pharmaceutical, and the Agricultural, Veterinary and Animal Science faculties, respectively, spun-off from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. However, this step did not mean that UMCS ceased to function. The change was simply necessitated by the need to aim at specialisation of universities owing to the growing popularity of higher education at the time. This enabled each of the 3 institutions to develop their structures and continuously expand their educational offer. Apart from the Catholic University of Lublin, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, the Medical Academy and the College of Natural Sciences, the Evening School of Engineering was established in 1953, i.e. today's Lublin University of Technology. In the post-war period, with its high number of fields of study and courses offered by five schools of higher education, Lublin ranked high among the few reputable academic centres then existing in Poland. As the only city in Poland, Lublin boasted having two universities. Therefore, interest in studying in Lublin was growing dynamically in 1944-1989. This is testified not only by the increasing number of students, but also by the development of the academic staff. The political transformation, followed by the reform of higher education, brought about further changes conducive to the development of Lublin's higher education institutions. After 1990, non-public schools also started to open, the education system was changed, and higher education institutions were authorised to engage in commercial activities.

Lublin's rich experience as the foremost academic centre in Eastern Poland makes it a city pervaded with the academic spirit. A moment of reflection on the history of development of schools of higher education automatically commands respect. Respect for all those involved in creating the institutions, wholeheartedly committed to science, but also respect for the intellectual elite of this country, who have been educated in Lublin.