

THE CONCEPT OF CSR AS ONE OF THE DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Anna KOCHMAŃSKA

Silesian University of Technology; Anna.Kochmanska@polsl.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-6243-8687

Abstract: The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming a permanent element of the long-term strategy of many organizations. Companies focus on environmental aspects by promoting a number of campaigns related to protection of the natural environment and creating ecological awareness within their employees, which, in today's world (especially in the light of various threats associated with it) is of considerable importance. The main aim of the article is to show the correlation between the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and the idea of Sustainable Development. In addition to defining key concepts, this article will present the results of surveys carried out among the employees of the Silesian Voivodeship, in which they expressed their opinion on the analyzed issue. The research method of the study was a diagnostic poll, the technique – a survey and the research tool – a questionnaire. It stems from them that the vast majority of respondents agree with the main thesis of the deliberations, according to which the concept of CSR constitutes one of the determinants of the idea of Sustainable Development.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development, ethical mainstay of Sustainable Development, management philosophy, environmental training.

1. Introduction

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is a key element for many organizations. They are involved in a number of diverse actions both in their external environment (taking active steps to protect the natural environment, or participating in many social campaigns which promote, for example, a healthy lifestyle), as well as in their internal environment (implementing on their basis some specific ethical norms and values related to the protection of employees' rights).

As a rule, the overriding goal of such activities is primarily willingness to bring help and an attempt to integrate with the society. In addition, it is also an effective way to create positive image and attract valuable employees to the company, which is of great importance in today's reality in which the employee's market is becoming dominant.

However, this type of activity, often one-time, may be not enough. Without a shadow of doubt, the problem of environmental protection should be given a deeper insight that may involve the necessity to increase employees' awareness and pro-ecological attitude. In this process, the idea of Sustainable Development, which analyzes the issues related to environmental protection in a very in-depth way, can be of a great help as it shows the irreversible effects of negligence in this area, not only for the present but also future generations. Moreover, "shaping pro-ecological attitudes and healthy lifestyle among the society by influencing the awareness is one of the main goals of education for Sustainable Development" (Radzymińska, Jakubowska, Mozelewski, 2015, p. 347).

Therefore, the main aim of this study is to show the correlation between the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development. Apart from defining the key concepts, this paper will present the results of a research carried out among the employees of the Silesian Voivodeship, at the turn of April and May 2019. The main intent of the research was to conduct an analysis of employee's opinion regarding the fact whether they perceive the CSR concept as one of the determinants of the idea of Sustainable Development.

2. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility – an attempt at a definition

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be understood as "taking the impact of company's activities on society seriously into account" (Szaban, 2012, p. 151). Another definition indicates that it is "a voluntary consideration of ecological and social aspects in all the activities carried out by the company in order to ensure its further functioning and development in a competitive market" (Lulewicz, 2009, p. 16).

According to Roszkowska, CSR can be described as "a broad ideological trend which embodies many concepts that de facto take the form of some kind of obligation that the company should meet for the benefit of the society, in addition to its main goal (namely maximizing the profit in the short term and maximizing the value in the long term)" (Roszkowska, 2011, p. 23). As the author emphasizes, "this concept has many names and definitions that complement one another: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Corporate Responsibility (CR), Business Responsibility, Corporate Sustainability, Corporate Citizenship (CC), Global Business Citizenship, Corporate Community Engagement, Community Relations" (Roszkowska, 2011, p. 23).

Moreover, Zbiegień-Maciąg, in turn, stresses that this term means "moral responsibility of the company to give an account for its activities in accordance with the law and society. The company is responsible to: owners, employees, shareholders, clients, creditors, banks, ecological movements, suppliers, cooperators, and state administration" (Zbiegień-Maciąg, 1997, pp. 48-49).

In the light of various views on CSR, it is worth paying attention to a set of factors that affect its effective implementation. They are according to Hąbek and Szewczyk (2010) as follows: internal factors (in the form of: company structure, company resources, personality of managers who show interest in the concept, employee qualifications or the possibility of establishing contacts with the stakeholders), external factors (which include the economic, political and legal, sociological and cultural as well as technological environments).

As mentioned before, implementing this concept on an organizational basis can bring measurable benefits to the company in the form of building a positive image or attracting valuable employees to it. Korpus also emphasizes that the benefits resulting from the implementation of the discussed concept can be divided into two groups, namely external and internal benefits. The first one includes: efficient and conflict-free operation in the local community, gaining new clients and an increase in the loyalty of existing customers, significantly greater efficiency of business operations, being more competitive and gaining increased interest of investors (Korpus, 2006).

The second group, in turn, includes: being perceived by the business environment as an employer who is very attractive in the labor market, increase in both motivation and involvement of the employees, improvement of organizational culture, as well as internal coordination, increase in company's innovativeness (Korpus, 2006).

While listing the positive outcomes of the implementation of the CSR concept, the arguments against it should also be mentioned. Szaban mentions the following examples: reduction in the economic efficiency of the company in relation to its excessive involvement in social issues, increase in prices due to social involvement of the business (which generates additional costs), insufficient competence of the business-related staff in terms of effective prevention of social problems (Szaban, 2012). Despite the afore-mentioned drawbacks, this concept is worth implementing on the organizational basis, because the balance will certainly be a profit and not a loss.

3. Sustainable Development – characteristics of the idea

In the literature on the subject, many definitions of Sustainable Development can be distinguished. One of these provides that the idea is based on "bringing about greater social cohesion (by equalizing opportunities, preventing discrimination and exclusion, greater economic equality) and improving the quality of the natural environment by limiting the negative impact of both production and consumption on the natural environment, and through protection of ecosystems" (Rokicka, and Woźniak, 2016, p. 101).

Szewczyk and Midor emphasize "many definitions describe Sustainable Development as implementation of a certain goal or set of goals. At a high level of generality there is a consensus

that its general purpose is the fulfillment of physical satisfaction and psychological needs of the man through proper arrangement of his relation to the natural environment" (Szewczyk, and Midor, 2007, p. 19).

It is also worth remembering that "Sustainable Development is a management philosophy that opposes narrowly understood economic growth, and, in the social sphere, identifying quality of life with just material well-being. It is the first attempt to combine problems related to environmental protection with socio-economic development, which means an attempt to integrate the definitions of social, economic, ecological and spatial problems" (Czerwonka, 2013, p. 36).

Others, however, points to the ethical mainstay of Sustainable Development. According to Kuzior, "ethical demands encompassed by the concept of Sustainable Development are based on such values as: dignity, freedom, equality, justice, responsibility, tolerance" (Kuzior, 2014, p. 27). Attention should also be paid to the important fact that in terms of these values, the idea of Sustainable Development is based on the provisions included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Kuzior, 2014).

In order to be able to not only successfully implement certain postulates, but also to perform managerial duties in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Development, the company should act in accordance with strictly defined steps. Herein, Hąbek (2016) includes: stakeholder analysis which involves identifying the spheres within which company's activities have significant impact, establishing a policy and goals for sustainable development, designing and executing the implementation plan, developing organizational culture based on greater employee participation (this definitely constitutes a motivational factor because it increases the support for the activities carried out at the organization), measurement and operating standards, reporting, internal monitoring process (such as organizing internal environmental audits, however, doing so requires appointment of experts who have both the necessary knowledge and experience in carrying out such activities, and who are perfectly familiar with the areas that are subject to verification).

To ensure success of these activities, the company must act in a purposeful and thoughtful way. Therefore, its management must be extremely involved and must list these actions as a priority in the long-term strategy of the organization.

4. Correlation between the concept of CSR and the idea of Sustainable Development

According to the considerations above, the idea of Sustainable Development appears to be a much broader concept than the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility that, in turn, is one of its key determinants. Holding the principle of highest level of care for the environment

requires educating the employees in order to develop deep ecological awareness in them, which, in turn, is based on the holistic responsibility of the company.

In this regard, the key issues related to responsibility in the field of environment may concern the following: consumption of natural resources, water and air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, waste management, energy consumption, soil contamination and erosion, ozone layer destruction (Roszkowska, 2011).

Zuzek draws attention to the correlation between CSR and the concept of Sustainable Development. The author states that the areas of Company Social Responsibility comprise environmental protection in terms of technology and organization of all activities of the company related to the use of environmental resources, proper management of natural resources at the company, appropriate assessment of resource usage, compliance with the regulations on environmental protection (Zuzek, 2012, pp. 199-200). This area undoubtedly constitutes one of the main pillars of sustainable development.

This could be the reason why actions for CSR and Sustainable Development are very often identified with each other in Poland. Some experts even use them interchangeably, which proves that there is a strong correlation between them (Gadomska-Lila, 2016). A wide range of possible actions is a huge challenge for any organization. However, it is definitely worth undertaking in order to improve the quality of life, both in the immediate and more distant timelines.

5. Analysis of survey results

The research was conducted in April and May 2019 among the employees of the organizations operating in the Silesian Voivodeship. The research method was a diagnostic poll, the research technique was a survey, and the research tool was a questionnaire (consisting of 5 closed questions and a metric). The reason for selecting this research method was the possibility of surveying a larger group of respondents in a relatively short time. The main aim of the study was to analyze the opinions of the employees from the Silesian Voivodeship regarding the fact whether they perceive CSR as one of the determinants of the Sustainable Development concept. The sampling was random (the poll was to be conducted among 150 respondents, but 129 surveys were returned). The research tool was delivered directly to the respondents.

The following thesis was brought forward in the poll: "the concept of CSR constitutes one of the determinants of Sustainable Development". Moreover, it was based on the following survey questions:

- Which factors influence the perception of the concept of CSR as one of the determinants of Sustainable Development?

- How often are training sessions concerning environmental protection organized?
- How do respondents evaluate the training programs concerning environmental protection?

Questions included in the questionnaire were created by the author of the article, and were not based on literature sources, but on the observation of the situation of companies that have enacted the concept of CSR.

As mentioned above, 129 respondents (including 62 women and 67 men) took part in the poll. Most of them completed tertiary education (68.99%), 20.93 percent of the respondents completed secondary education, and only 10.07 percent of the respondents completed vocational education. The largest number of respondents (as many as 44.96%) were in the age range between 25 and 34 years, and the respondents aged 35-44 were the second group in terms of size (30.23%). The respondents from the age group below 24 years accounted for 20.15 percent of the surveyed population, 4.65 percent of the respondents were aged 45-54. In terms of work experience, people with six to ten years of experience constituted the largest group (49.61%). Employees with 11-15 years of experience constituted 21.70 percent of the respondents, 16.27 percent of them had 0 to 5 years of experience and 12.40 percent – more than 15 years.

Analysis of questionnaires is presented below.

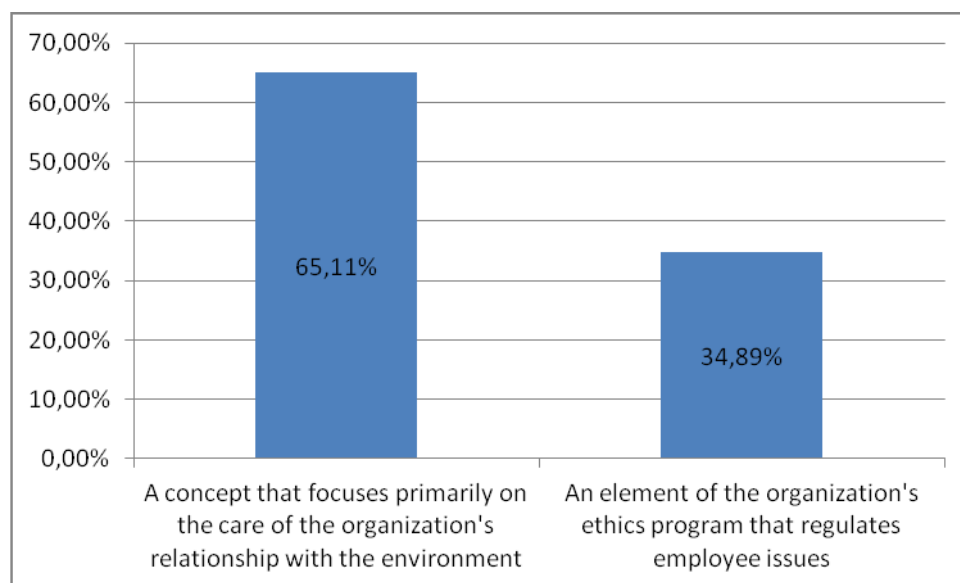


Figure 1. Definition of the concept of *Corporate Social Responsibility* provided by the respondents. Source: own study.

The first question constituted an attempt to determine what the respondents mainly identified as the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. As the column chart above shows, the vast majority of them (as many as 65.11%) believed that it was a concept that primarily emphasized care for the relationship the organization had with the environment. The reason for such answers could be associated with the numerous campaigns that are – what is worth

emphasizing – widely promoted in the mass media (such as campaigns for environmental protection, co-financing of various sports events, etc.), in which modern organizations are very active, thus encouraging others to follow them. In turn, 34.89 percent of the respondents claim that this is part of the ethics program of the organization that regulates issues regarding employees' rights. Such perception of CSR may be related to the attitude of employers changing in favor of the employee. Entrepreneurs who want to attract, motivate and, thus, keep valuable, loyal and organization-related staff, first and foremost act ethically, showing care for the rights of their employees.

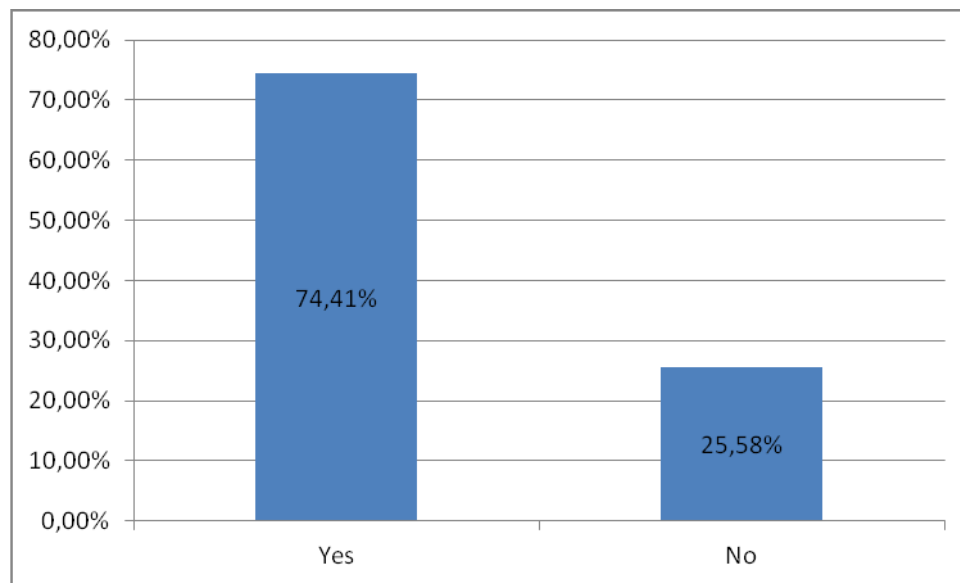


Figure 2. The opinions of the respondents' regarding the question of whether the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility constitutes one of the determinants of the idea of Sustainable Development. Source: own study.

Another interesting key issue highlighted by the findings were the opinions of the respondents on the question of whether the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility was one of the determinants of the idea of Sustainable Development. The respondents' choice of answer clearly indicates that the respondents mostly shared this opinion (74.41% of respondents answered 'yes'). Only every fifth respondent had an opposite opinion on the matter, which may result from lack of sufficient knowledge of the gist of the idea of Sustainable Development. For this reason, its importance for proper social function of not only the present, but also future generations should be emphasised at various training sessions.

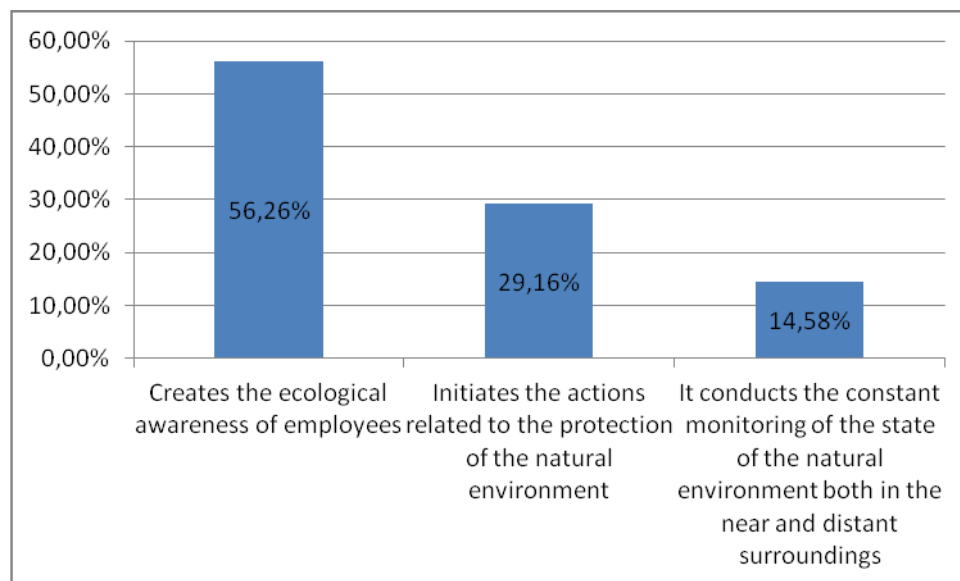


Figure 3. The respondents' opinion on the reasons why the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the determinants of the idea of Sustainable Development. Source: own study.

The respondents who gave the 'yes' answer in question no. 2 were asked to justify their answers. The results of the analysis were as follows: 56.26 percent of the respondents stated that the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility bolstered employee environmental awareness. The result is not satisfactory enough. However, the situation can be continuously improved by holding regular meetings with employees where they are made aware of the benefits resulting from such activities, or by organizing training sessions during which environmental experts will lay out visual presentations of the social consequences of negative impact on the environment. Almost 30 percent of the respondents stated that the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the descriptions of the idea of Sustainable Development, due to the fact that one of its main assumptions is initiation of actions related to protection of the natural environment. As mentioned earlier, within the European Union, modern organizations genuinely emphasise this element, permanently maintaining it in their long-term strategies. Continuous monitoring of the natural environment in both close and distant surroundings of the company was indicated by the least respondents (14.58% of responses). The reason for the relatively low percentage of these answers could be low awareness in the area. The respondents are well aware that environmental campaigns are carried out at their companies, but they are not aware that, in order to be successful, these must be put into practice (therefore, they require implementation of permanent control, with an increasing benefit for the natural environment).

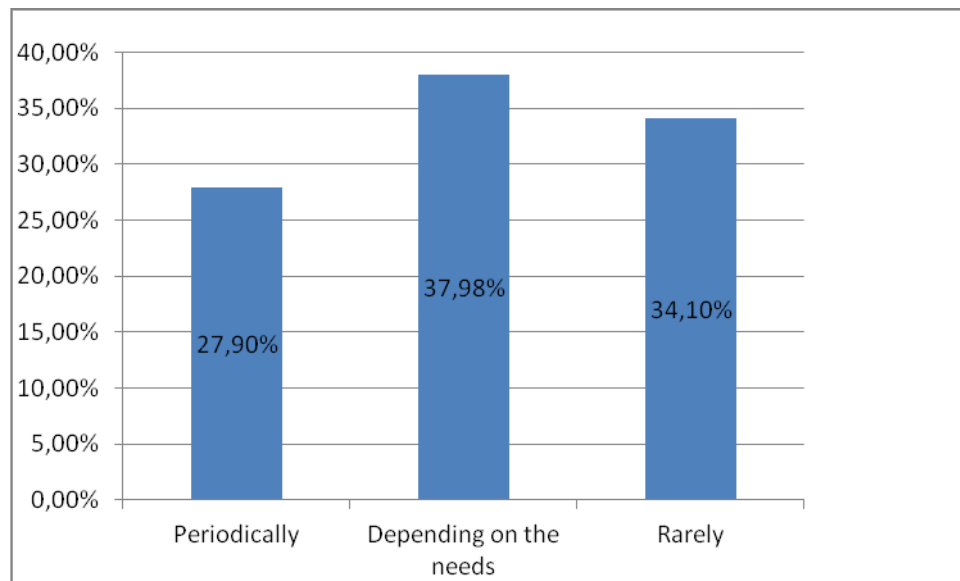


Figure 4. Frequency of training sessions on environmental protection. Source: own study.

Respondents participating in the poll were asked about the frequency of training sessions concerning environmental protection. As shown in Figure 4., a total of 37.98 percent of them responded that training sessions were organized depending on the needs, 34.10 percent of the respondents stated that they were organized relatively rarely, while only 27.90 percentages indicated certain periodicity of these initiatives. Therefore, due to the importance of this type of training, this situation should undoubtedly be improved, and training sessions ought to be organized much more frequently for the benefit of the natural environment.

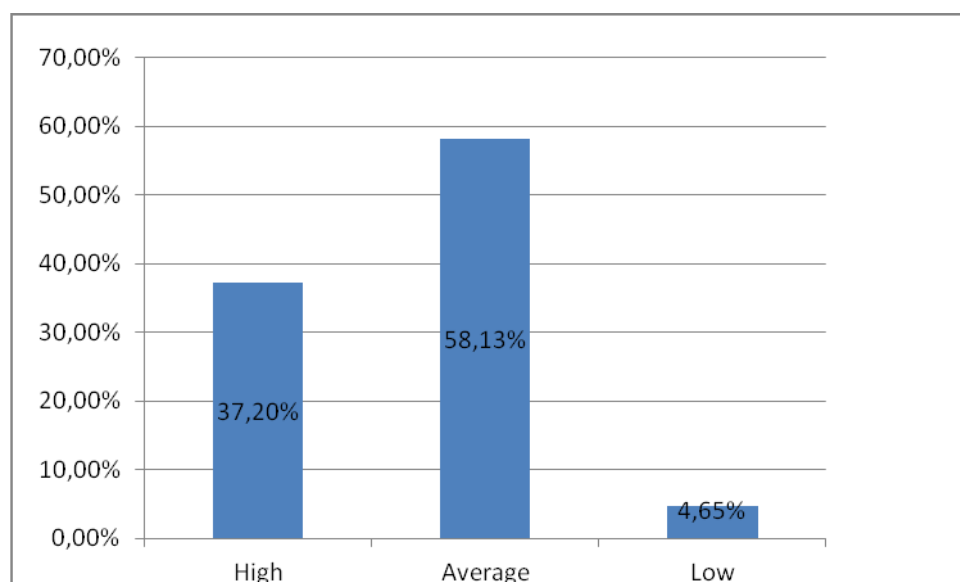


Figure 5. Respondents' evaluation of the training programs concerning environmental protection. Source: own study.

The last issue (one that was interesting for the researcher) was the evaluation of the quality of training programs concerning environmental protection. Such training programs are of great importance, not only due to the fact that they develop ecological awareness within the

participants, but also because they improve the quality of life both in the immediate and distant surroundings of the organization. Analysis of this question revealed that the respondents assessed training policy in the field of environmental protection relatively well. 58.13 percent of them described training sessions as mediocre, 37.20 percent thought that the sessions were of high quality, and only 4.65 percent thought that the quality of the sessions was low. Of course, this result can be definitely improved by regular involvement of highly-professional experts from the field. The applied method of sharing knowledge, which should be clear, transparent and accessible to all participants of the training, is also important. It is recommended to present the participants with examples that will stimulate their imagination, and will make the audience aware of the importance of following certain rules related to the protection of the natural environment, and will develop a sense of responsibility for the environment which we all live in.

6. Conclusions

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming a permanent element of the long-term strategy of many organizations. It manifests itself in the form of various campaigns, the priority of which is to show care for the natural environment. It is worth emphasizing, however, that environmental protection should be considered in a wider perspective, and that there should be constant increase in the employees' sense of responsibility for the environment. Undoubtedly, the idea of Sustainable Development which is a broader concept based on, what is also worth emphasizing, the aforementioned ethical mainstay such as dignity, freedom, equality, justice, tolerance or the already-mentioned corporate social responsibility, may be helpful in this case as it may enable, to a greater extent, development of pro-ecological attitude within the employees.

The main aim of the study was to analyze the opinions of the employees from the Silesian Voivodeship regarding the fact whether they perceive CSR as one of the determinants of the Sustainable Development concept. Analysis of the questionnaires revealed that the majority of the respondents agree with this thesis. It is worth emphasizing that the poll was of pilotage nature, and the number of the respondents who participated in it was relatively small. For this reason, there are plans to conduct further research of this kind in the future and then to compare their results.

References

1. Czerwonka, M. (2013). *Inwestowanie społecznie odpowiedzialne*. Warszawa: Difin SA.
2. Gadomska-Lila, K., Wasilewicz, J. (2016). Zrównoważony Rozwój i Społeczna Odpowiedzialność z perspektywy biznesowej. *Studia i Prace WNEIZ US*, 46/1, 304. doi. 10.18276/sip.2016.46/1-23.
3. Hąbek, P. (2016). *Społeczna odpowiedzialność dla inżynierów*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej.
4. Hąbek, P., Szewczyk, P. (2010). *Społeczna odpowiedzialność a zarządzanie jakością*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej.
5. Korpus, J. (2006). *Społeczna Odpowiedzialność przedsiębiorstw w obszarze kształtowania środowiska pracy*. Warsaw: Placet.
6. Kuzior, A. (2014). *Aksjologia Zrównoważonego Rozwoju*. Bańska Bystrzyca: Belianum. Matej Bel University Press. Faculty of Arts.
7. Lulewicz, A. (2009). Społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu formą wdrażania zrównoważonego rozwoju w przedsiębiorstwach. In E. Lorek (ed.), *Zrównoważony rozwój regionów uprzemysłowionych* (p. 16). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej.
8. Radziwińska, M., Jakubowska, D., Mozelewski W. (2015). Postawy i zachowania proekologiczne względem zagadnień środowiskowych. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 2, 347.
9. Rokicka, E., Woźniak, W. (2016). *W kierunku zrównoważonego rozwoju. Koncepcje, interpretacje, konteksty*. Łódź: Katedra Socjologii Ogólnej, Wydział Ekonomiczno-Socjologiczny, Uniwersytet Łódzki.
10. Roszkowska, P. (2011). *Rewolucja w raportowaniu biznesowym. Interesariusze, konkurencyjność, społeczna odpowiedzialność*. Warszawa: Difin.
11. Szaban, J. (2012). *Zachowania organizacyjne*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
12. Szewczyk, P., Midor K. (2007). *Zrównoważony rozwój w gminach województwa śląskiego*. Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej.
13. Zbiegień-Maciąg, L. (1997). *Etyka w zarządzaniu*. Warszawa: CiM.
14. Zuzek, D.K. (2012). Społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu a zrównoważony rozwój przedsiębiorstw. *Zeszyty Naukowe Małopolskiej Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomicznej w Tarnowie*, 21, 2, 199-200.