


Corporate social responsibility as a management concept in universities: A study of the top 10 Polish universities' websites

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Keywords: corporate social responsibility, strategy, universities, human resources, ISO 26000, management, ethics

JEL Classification: D21, L21, M14

Abstract

This article discusses issues related to the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) of Polish universities. The first part of the article presents the essence of CSR, and the next part focuses on the degree of involvement of universities in Poland in CSR activities. Afterwards, the CSR activities were grouped based on conceptual areas in accordance with the ISO 26000 standard. Moreover, the most popular socially responsible tools and practices at Polish universities were analysed. The main aim of the article is to present the level of corporate social responsibility and identify its main areas at the top 10 universities in Poland according to The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021. The article uses the literature query method and analyses and evaluates documents, reports, and websites. The research carried out at the top 10 Polish universities showed that all these entities are involved in socially responsible activities by taking into account social, environmental, and employee aspects in their activities. They are organizations that feel responsible for their activities and take into account the needs of their stakeholders, both internal and external.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the most popular management concepts. CSR is a strategy based on the principles of social dialogue and searching for favourable solutions to a company's environment, including the local community, employees, business partners, as well as the natural environment. CSR strives for the sustainable development of a company through pro-social and pro-ecological activities. The priority for a socially responsible enterprise is not only to acquire the highest possible profit but also to pay attention to social and environmental issues. CSR companies are entities that creatively shape the environment in which

they function. A socially responsible entity is an organization that feels responsible for its activities and takes into account the needs of both external and internal stakeholders. It also adheres to ethical principles for both its employees and customers (Leoński, 2019).

Many enterprises have decided to implement CSR policy due to the numerous benefits it can bring to the organization. Corporate social responsibility is constantly expanding, as it is used not only by the economic entities themselves but also by public administration bodies and non-governmental organizations (PARP, 2021). At this point, one should consider the issue of implementing socially responsible activities at universities. The author

has selected this topic because it seems that CSR is not as popular at Polish universities as it is among companies. If CSR can provide tangible benefits to other entities, especially in the area of image and reputation, universities should also benefit from this concept. The expectations of stakeholders may be one of the most important elements in favour of the implementation of socially responsible activities at universities. When conducting research and teaching activities, universities must take into account both social and economic conditions in the environment. The author intends to complete research that shows the level of corporate social responsibility along with identifying its main areas at the top 10 universities in Poland according to The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021. The Times Higher Education World University Ranking is recognized by students all over the world and is trusted by scientists, university governing councils, partners from the economic sector, and governments. The research topic was implemented using the critical evaluation method, including literature analysis, annual CSR reports, and university websites.

Literature review

The concept of corporate social responsibility dates back to the idea of sustainable development that appeared mostly in the USA and West European countries in the second half of the 20th century. It is a compromise between economic development, the natural environment, and society. Thanks to this idea, as well as pressure from governments and citizens, first-time entrepreneurs began to include extra-economic criteria in the development of their business activities. They concluded that a profit-oriented attitude can lead to various conflicts with diverse social groups.

Corporate social responsibility is a complex and multidimensional concept, partially due to its interdisciplinary nature. This is why the concept can have different definitions in the subject literature, international reports, and other studies. Moreover, enterprises themselves often try to create their own concept of corporate social responsibility, which is adapted to the conditions of a given economic entity. The many definitions of CSR and the issues they discuss indicate their validity and the popularity of the topic in management science. Broadly, CSR includes many concepts and ideas known by different names such as corporate responsibility, corporate accountability, business ethics, corporate citizenship, responsible

entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and the environment (Lu et al., 2019).

The definition of corporate social responsibility states that companies must not only pursue their main goal – to maximize profits – but also contribute to the well-being of society through voluntary efforts (Barauskaite & Streimikiene, 2021). CSR also includes the organizational innovation and social performance of a company (Dyck et al., 2018).

CSR is a continuous and long-term process guided by organisational and personal values. It is concerned with people (as stakeholders), the environment, and organisational policies, and it is influenced by political concerns (Kvasničková et al., 2014). Another definition identifies the social responsibility of an organization with the active and voluntary participation of an enterprise in activities aimed at improving the economic, ecological, and social factors of the environment in which a given entity operates (Garay & Font, 2012). M. Hopkins (Hopkins, 2007, p. 15) highlighted the frequent reference to the concept of CSR in treating stakeholders in an ethical and responsible manner. Carroll (Carroll, 2015) defined CSR as the benchmark and central piece of a socially responsible business movement.

CSR represents a plethora of responsibilities that a company should adopt in its policies and perform beyond legal requirements in response to the needs and expectations of its different stakeholders and society at large. The synthesis of the definitions shows that CSR requires a company to consider the social, environmental, and economic impacts of its business operations and be responsive to the needs and expectations of its customers, employees, investors, shareholders, and local communities (Nasrullah & Rahim, 2014). CSR is also interpreted as a corporate commitment to maximize positive impacts on society and minimize negative impacts (Coombs & Holladay, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the implementation of CSR may have a measurable beneficial effect on various aspects of the functioning of a company. Studies have shown that the effective implementation and communication of a company's engagement in CSR activities translates to its performance, competitive advantages, customer loyalty, a strong company image and reputation, compliance with laws, as well as improvements in recruitment and retention indexes (Haugh & Talwar, 2010).

In the subject literature, one can find proposals for defining a socially responsible university. K. Leja (Leja, 2008) believes that a socially responsible university is a university that serves the environment, and displays a responsibility towards

society by preparing its graduates to serve as knowledge workers and building close relations with businesses and local government. This approach arises from the fact that universities are institutions that create and transfer knowledge. Taking into account the modern operating conditions of universities, it should be added that the social responsibility of universities should be combined with activities such as ensuring high-quality education, transfer of knowledge to the economy to stimulate its growth, education of the future elite of society, implementation of an active social policy towards students, lecturers, and other university staff, and the elimination of social barriers (Sagintayeva & Kurakbayev, 2013). The essence of a university's social responsibility includes this idea permanently in the university's mission and also leads to a situation in which the educated students will be sensitive to social issues and will take responsibility for their actions (Geryk, 2010, p. 14).

The main goal of a university is to help its community so that a graduate's skills meet future needs. This can be achieved through educating students to obtain high qualifications, as well as through scientific research leading to technological and socio-economic achievements that will make it possible to solve problems and also seize future opportunities (Gough & Scott, 2008). K.J. Sullivan (Sullivan, 2008) emphasizes that today's universities should help people become leaders of their generation. Every university has a huge role to play by promoting education as the main engine of change and development in modern society (Szyszka, 2000).

In order to analyse the concept of corporate social responsibility, it is worth mentioning the main areas of CSR developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). According to the 26000 CSR standard, it is the responsibility of an organization to have a positive effect on sustainable development and contribute to the welfare of society – the responsibility for the impact of an organization's decisions and actions that influence society and the environment through transparent, legal, and ethical behaviour that also takes into account the expectations of stakeholders. The ISO 26000 standard is one of the principles of CSR implementation, which points to numerous tools that are of universal character. The major CSR focus areas include organizational order, human rights, employment relationships, the protection of the natural environment, fair operational practices, relations with consumers, and social engagement. The standard is meant to be implemented voluntarily by all organizations regardless of their

ownership form, size, type, or location. The standard is meant to facilitate the adoption of CSR activities by organisations, and it has become a requirement of societies all over the world – not just a matter of choice. Furthermore, this standard is not subjected to any certification procedure (ISO, 2009).

According to the ISO 26000 standard – corporate governance is a system through which an organization makes and implements decisions to achieve its goals. This means that the basis for the effective management of an organization is defining the policies, systems, and procedures appropriate for a given work environment.

Human rights are the fundamental rights of all people. There are two broad categories of human rights. The first category focuses on civil and political rights, e.g., the right to live and the right to liberty, equal treatment before the law, and the freedom of expression. The second category focuses on economic, social, and cultural rights, e.g., the right to work, the right to consume food, the right to the highest possible health standards, the right to education, and the right to social security.

The environmental area mainly involves issues such as reduction and adaptation to climate change, as well as protection and regeneration of the natural environment; therefore, good practices in this area should be focused on an objectively measurable pursuit of the maximum reduction in the amount of pollution released to the environment. It also involves taking all possible steps to minimise the use of natural resources due to a company's activity.

In the area of fair market practices, the provisions particularly focus on a company's ethical behaviour in its relationships with other organizations, including government organizations, partners, suppliers, contractors, competitors, and associations it is a member of. Any business wishing to be considered as an entity that follows fair market practices and, consequently, a socially responsible entity, should implement good practices aimed at eliminating unfair competition, promoting fair cooperation, and respecting property rights.

The next area of ISO 26000 focuses on employment relationships. Good practices in this aspect pertain to work conditions and social care, occupational health and safety, social development (training sessions), the need for constant social dialogue, and maintaining open and fair relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

The next area of the ISO 26000 standard in question focuses on relations with consumers (in the case of universities, these are mainly students). Every

company should demonstrate a fair and transparent approach towards its consumers. Particular attention should be paid to fair practices in product and service marketing, ensuring appropriate and transparent contractual conditions, as well as providing objective and reliable information. Another important aspect in this area involves educating the market, demonstrating engagement in the issues of protecting consumer health and safety, ensuring quality service and support, and complaint processing.

The next area of ISO 26000 relates to social engagement. Under the guidelines presented in this section, a company should actively support local communities to solve their problems, especially those that involve its employees and stakeholders. Good practices in this area should focus on ensuring a social dialogue, which should engage social organizations in the planning and execution of social projects, considering real social needs in the selection of engagement directions, including social investments in areas such as education and culture, health, technological development, and access to technology.

When reviewing the involvement of universities in Poland, it should be stated that there are no comprehensive studies focusing on the degree of activity of these entities in the field of corporate social responsibility. Organizations, including universities, engage in socially responsible activities in their own way, depending on their specialization, resources, or identified stakeholder needs (Białoń & Werner, 2012); therefore, it may be difficult to analyse the popularity of socially responsible practices at Polish universities.

The University Declaration of Social Responsibility sheds some light on this aspect. This declaration has been signed by 23 research centres. The authors of the Declaration were members of the Working Group for education and popularization of CSR, operating as part of the Team for Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility, an auxiliary body of the Ministry of Development and Finance. The document analysed four areas of university functioning: ensuring academic values, program performance, project implementation, and research important for the development of social responsibility, the organization of university work, and its cooperation with stakeholders (Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2017). The declaration contains 12 principles related to various aspects of the university's functioning, educational and research activities, internal organization, and dialogue with stakeholders. As part of each of the

principles, expectations have been formulated for the signatory universities to develop a given area of university functioning with respect for the environment and social solidarity.

Of course, the fact that the declaration was signed only by 23 research centres does not mean that other universities do not implement socially responsible activities, to a greater or lesser extent; however, these data may show the degree of interest in CSR among Polish universities. At this point, it is worth referring to the data of all universities that operate in Poland. Out of the 24 universities that signed the Declaration, there were 13 public academic universities and 10 non-public academic universities. The number of signatories is not large, considering there are 59 public universities and as many as 253 non-public universities in Poland. The data above may indicate that in Poland, social responsibility is the domain of public universities. There is no doubt that CSR activities require the involvement of resources, especially financial ones. Greater involvement of public universities may result from the greater potential of these universities – especially financial resources.

It should be noted that in 2019 the number of universities that signed the Declaration increased to 83, which may indicate a growing interest in corporate social responsibility in research centres in Poland. The universities that signed the charter decided to promote the principles of social responsibility in their teaching and research activities, but also in management systems and internal organisations.

To summarise the literature review, it is good to outline that there is no single definition of CSR, but we can distinguish certain characteristics that appear in numerous definitions. The authors often emphasise the voluntary aspect of CSR activities. Another common feature are the spheres included in the concept: employees, the natural environment, and society. Here, the authors emphasise the effect of synergy between the listed CSR areas and the economic results of business activity. Another issue that is often mentioned in the context of CSR is the cooperation with internal and external stakeholders, which appears to be key to this concept. The next common element is the company's responsibility for its activity and ethical conduct.

Methods

The article analyses the top 10 universities according to the Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE), which is one of the most

respected and most noted university rankings in the world – alongside the Academic Ranking of World Universities and QS World University Rankings. Each of the rankings evaluates universities based on various criteria and, therefore, the position of universities in each of these rankings is different.

THE ranking is the only worldwide university scoreboard that assesses research universities in all of their main missions: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international perspectives. Institutions are assessed based on criteria such as teaching, research, citations, economic income, and internationalization. The latest THE World University Ranking includes over 1500 universities from 93 countries. Oxford remains in first place for the fifth year in a row. Second and third places were taken by the American universities, Stanford University and Harvard University. The top 10 list includes six other academic centres from the USA: California Institute of Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of California at Berkeley, Yale University, Princeton University, and Chicago University. The list also included 19 Polish universities, of which Jagiellonian University (JU) scored the highest, being promoted to the 501–600 range, increasing its score by 1.6. The University of Warsaw (UWA) and the Medical University of Warsaw (MUW) fell in the range of 801–1000. The remaining Polish universities were in the 1000+ range. In addition to the above-mentioned universities, the ranking includes:

- Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (AMU);
- AGH University of Science and Technology (AGH);
- Cracow University of Technology (CUT);
- University of Gdańsk (UG);
- Gdańsk University of Technology (GUT);
- University of Łódź (UŁ);
- Lodz University of Technology (ŁUT);
- Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (NCUT);
- University of Silesia in Katowice (USK);
- Silesian University of Technology (SUT);
- SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities (SWPS);
- Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW (SGGW);
- Warsaw University of Technology (WUT);
- Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences (WUELS);
- Wrocław University of Science and Technology (WUST);
- University of Wrocław (UW).

The research covers the content on the official websites of the ten highest-ranked universities in Poland in order to analyse their degree of involvement in corporate social responsibility. Furthermore, the main areas of CSR in the studied universities were identified based on ISO 26000. The author also analysed CSR reports and other websites associated with the top 10 universities in Poland, e.g., faculty websites and social media.

Top Polish universities and CSR areas

When analysing the activities of socially responsible universities, they were grouped into key areas of the concept. For this study, CSR areas were adopted based on the ISO 26000 standard.

The ISO 26000 standard is meant to be implemented voluntarily by all organizations, regardless of their ownership form, size, type, or location. The standard is meant to make it easy for organizations to act in a socially responsible way, which is becoming a requirement in societies all over the world, and is not just a matter of choice. Furthermore, this standard is not subjected to any certification procedure.

For areas compliant with ISO 26000, the socially responsible activities of the top 10 universities in Poland have been listed in Table 1, where “x” marks those CSR practices that are present at the Polish universities selected for the study. Reaching the data related to CSR was not easy because most universities do not have CSR pages on their websites, and one can find only residual information about individual socially responsible activities. Moreover, CSR reports are absent in most cases (only two universities, AGH and UŁ, prepare CSR reports).

All surveyed universities implemented CSR practices in the following areas: Organizational governance, Human rights, Labour practices, Consumer (student) issues, and Community involvement and development.

The most popular practices in the field of Organizational governance include reliable information, facts, and figures presented on the official websites of all universities. All surveyed universities were transparent in their undertaken activities. Building interactions with a recipient based on transparency – i.e., the broadly understood transparency and openness of activities, universal access to information, and insight into the services provided – is a credible activity and a value desired by students and other stakeholders.

In the area of human rights, the tools used by all surveyed universities included various codes

Table 1. Polish Universities and areas of CSR

Universities/ Areas of CSR	Organizational governance	Human rights	Labor practices	The environment	Fair operating practices	Consumer (student) issues	Community involvement and development
JU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
UWA	x	x	x	x		x	x
MUW	x	x	x			x	x
AMU	x	x	x	x		x	x
AGH	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
CUT	x	x	x			x	x
UG	x	x	x			x	x
GUT	x	x	x	x		x	x
UŁ	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ŁUT	x	x	x	x		x	x

and regulations. These codes constitute a written, formal statement of principles and standards of conduct towards stakeholders, addressed to people employed at the organization and students. The code of ethics provides regulations in which an employee or student can find templates of ethical behaviour (Leoński, 2016). Furthermore, the Code may contain practical examples of how to cope with different situations. The above-mentioned codes and regulations contain provisions on tolerance and respect for different views, attitudes, ethnic origins, as well as cultural and religious identities. Academic teachers or students who adhere to the principles set out in the code or regulations are obliged to act in accordance with the law, to follow the principles of social coexistence and good manners, impartiality, transparency, responsibility, rejecting the discriminatory division of people, etc. Moreover, codes of conduct are important instruments for managing relations with employees, and they limit unwanted and unethical behaviour and shape the organizational culture. An appropriate atmosphere in an organization allows for better employee integration, strengthens the sense of membership, eliminates conflicts and negative emotions, and increases employee motivation and productivity. It is worth noting that in the case of most of the surveyed universities, independent positions or teams for ethics were created, the purpose of which is, among others, training, education, information sharing, and promoting the principles contained in ethical codes among internal and external stakeholders. Their task is also to consider reported violations of ethical regulations or doubts regarding the course of appropriate behaviour. People employed in ethical positions help enforce desired behaviour at the university, prevent negative phenomena such as discrimination in the workplace

and mobbing, non-compliance with work standards, or corruption.

One of the leaders of CSR in the area of human rights is the University of Warsaw, which has established several institutions whose task is to counteract discrimination and provide support to people who have faced this problem. These are institutions such as an Ombudsman (academic spokesman), Chief Equality Specialist, Coordinator for Counteracting Mobbing, Rector's Commission for Counteracting Discrimination, and Commission for Counteracting Mobbing.

Another area of CSR that was implemented at all of the surveyed universities were Labour practices. The surveyed universities employed staff in a transparent manner that follows regulations. There are clear hiring and dismissal procedures, new employees are hired in accordance with existing regulations, etc. The recruitment process avoids discrimination based on gender, age, appearance, nationality, disability, religion, sexual orientation, etc. In this case, only the appropriate substantial information is taken into account for hiring and dismissal procedures. Furthermore, universities undertake structured activities aimed at ensuring safe and hygienic working conditions. All of the surveyed universities have social departments whose task is, inter alia, to develop plans to meet the social and living needs of university employees, their family members, the retired, and pensioners.

In the case of the surveyed organizations, attention should be paid to a wide range of training and courses intended for employees to improve their professional qualifications. These training courses are intended for both academic teachers, administrative staff, and management. Universities provide their employees with a number of solutions that help

them both in the implementation of life plans and self-improvement. Apart from training, they also offer coaching and language courses. (It should be noted that during the time associated with the threat posed by the coronavirus, these activities are carried out online.)

At some universities, periodic employee surveys are carried out. An example is the University of Lodz, where research concerns issues related to the evaluation of activity in the fields of science, teaching, organization, working conditions, discrimination, and social responsibility. The study used the seven-point Likert scale, a dichotomous scale, and the respondents were allowed to provide their own answers and submit comments on individual areas. Such research is an exceptionally valuable source of information for the university. As a result of such research, the university learns about its strengths, problem areas, causes of existing conflicts, and considers proposals for changes. Undoubtedly, a high level of employee satisfaction can translate into the success of an organization. Thanks to the conclusions drawn from the research, the university can improve its management process in various areas of operation. This also improves communication and the general atmosphere, and it is possible to monitor the implemented solutions and make adequate adjustments.

Consumer (student) issues were another area of CSR present at all of the surveyed universities. The most common tool, in this case, was a student survey, thanks to which students have the opportunity to assess the quality of education at the university and the conditions for conducting didactic classes. In addition, the surveys often featured the evaluation of student satisfaction, e.g., the student satisfaction barometer at the Jagiellonian University. In such a study, many factors were assessed that may affect the subjective satisfaction of studying at the university. The collected and processed results constitute the basis for implementing the solutions conducive to the creation of a study-friendly environment. The student questionnaires are anonymous and are carried out in accordance with the principles of voluntary involvement and confidentiality. The data, in the form of collective tables, are subjected to statistical processing. Reports on the obtained results are submitted to the authorities and heads of the basic organizational units of the university. Student evaluations constitute an important element of the work analysis and periodic evaluation of a research-didactic or didactic employee. They also support heads of units in making decisions about the courses and

lecturers involved in the study programs. Students can also express their opinion and evaluate the education quality of the faculty by participating in meetings with faculty authorities, through the supervisor of the year, or by reporting anonymously via the contact box on the faculty website.

When implementing the practices in the area of Consumer (student) issues, universities set up faculty and university teams and commissions to ensure the proper quality of education. These are mainly The Commission for the Quality of Education, Education Quality Evaluation Unit, Office of the Council for the Quality of Education, Education Quality Office, University and Departmental Team for Education Quality Assurance, Commission for the Education Quality Assessment, and Quality Management Departments. Moreover, the student community and doctoral students at the studied universities can develop their interests by participating in many events, conferences, training courses, internships, competitions, and numerous projects organized by the faculties and the rector's office. Another type of activity is the involvement in the Student Self-Government and Doctoral Students Self-Government, as well as in numerous student research clubs. Some female and male students go abroad as part of the available mobility programs that give them a chance to study or participate in an internship in a selected country. The studied universities are very active when it comes to the number of female and male students participating in the Erasmus+ program (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students). In addition, the variety of fields of study available at the surveyed universities and the rich offerings of additional classes enable the acquisition of competencies needed in the labour market and allow students to develop skills. Students also have the opportunity to use the financial assistance system, which includes social scholarships, special scholarships for the disabled, the rector's scholarship for the best students, and allowances.

All of the surveyed universities were involved in the area of "Community involvement and development". Usually, this entailed the organization and participation in various types of actions and charity initiatives. Employee volunteer work has been introduced at most universities (activities that involve the enterprise's support for undertaking and supporting the activities of employees in relation to non-governmental organizations and institutions specified by law), or student volunteer work, under which the following were organized: blood donation campaigns,

participation in national charity initiatives, among the employees and students – collecting money and necessary items for people most in need, and original projects of employees and students aimed at providing support to the local community. A good example is the University Volunteer Centre of the University of Warsaw, which aims to support and promote active attitudes in civic society, as well as to support and initiate cooperation with the University's environment through the implementation of joint activities with non-governmental organizations and public institutions. In its pro-social activities, the centre supports the development of male and female volunteers, both in the field of soft skills and practical experiences that will help them in their careers.

Practices in the field of the environment were carried out by 7 out of 10 of the surveyed universities. The most popular CSR practices in this area were pro-ecological investments in energy-efficient infrastructure (including the construction of new energy-efficient university buildings, thermal modernization of buildings, installation of photovoltaic panels, and increasing the share of renewable energy sources and modernization of ventilation systems to minimize negative impacts on the environment). University teams also focused on activities related to environmental protection. Examples of such teams include: an advisory team for climate and ecological crises, whose task is to conduct and coordinate educational and practical activities to counteract climate and ecological crises and issues related to the social responsibility of the university in the face of these crises; the diagnosis of needs and the development of good practices related to reducing the negative impact of the university on the natural environment; cooperation with the scientific community, the academic community, non-governmental organizations, representatives of businesses and authorities to exchange experiences, promote activities, and develop joint solutions for the protection of the natural environment. Another example is the Research Team for Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Law, whose tasks include reviewing existing legal regulations and proposing a comprehensive plan for legal changes to protect the environment and nature, including counteracting adverse climate changes, saving endangered species, protecting humans against negative environmental factors (including smog, exhaust fumes, noise, electromagnetic fields), proposing solutions for environmental protection at the University, and organizing meetings with students, scientists, and external experts in the field of ecology.

While implementing activities in the field of environmental protection, some universities have built or are currently building energy-saving infrastructure. For example, The Jagiellonian University is currently implementing a project focused on an integrated system for acquiring and distributing throughout the campus energy generated from renewable resources. This project will enable the production of electricity and thermal energy obtained from solar energy, which will be used entirely for the university's own needs. These activities are expected to provide material and environmental benefits: saving financial resources and reducing the emission of pollutants, including carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. The recipients of the project will include, *inter alia*, students and academic staff of the Jagiellonian University, who will be able to conduct observations and research in the field of the efficiency of using renewable energy. Another example of such activities is the project of the Centre for Eco-innovation of the Gdańsk University of Technology. The building will serve as an office and will also have didactic, research, and demonstrative functions. It will also include a control room with devices that control and monitor the operation of building systems and campus lighting. The energy self-sufficiency of the facility is to be ensured by, among others, its thermal insulation, the largest possible glazing of the southern facade to obtain heat from the sun, the use of renewable energy sources by installing photovoltaic panels in the windows, on the roof, and the facades of the building, as well as the use of a heat pump. Another example of pro-ecological investments is the construction of a passive office building for the needs of the administration and students of the Lodz University of Technology. The essence of the passive building standard is to reduce the energy consumption needed for the current operation of the building, in particular a significant reduction in energy demand for heating or domestic hot water preparation, which translates into lower emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, the studied universities have not yet developed an environmental policy – understood as a documented policy – that defines the general direction of its environmental activity and stipulates the principles to be followed by the organization in terms of environmental issues. This will provide a point of reference for assessing all of the actions falling under the environmental management system.

In line with the ISO standard, in the area of fair organizational practices, the following issues should be considered: anti-corruption, responsible political

engagement, fair competition, the promotion of social responsibility in the value chain, and respecting property rights. It was difficult to find information related to this subject on the websites of the surveyed universities. An additional research limitation was the fact that only two universities publish annual CSR reports. In addition, most universities do not have a CSR tab/link on their official website. Only three universities had materials regarding this area; however, this does not mean that other universities are active in this area. The lack of information and communication related to these activities on the websites resulted in the fact that seven universities were not included in this area; however, it is hard to imagine that the top Polish universities would not respect aspects such as property rights because all academic centres use uniform anti-plagiarism systems and have anti-plagiarism regulations. The Uniform Anti-plagiarism System, prepared by the Information Processing Centre at the request of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, is a system that is obligatorily used when verifying the originality of written diploma dissertations prepared at Polish universities. The system uses the resources of the National Repository of Written Diploma Theses, the database of legal acts, and collections of the Polish Internet using the NEKST search engine. Statistical, stylometric, and semantic analyses of the studied texts are performed.

The promotion of CSR in the surveyed entities takes place mainly through didactic activities (the subject of corporate social responsibility in management-related faculties) and research (master's and doctoral theses) related to the concept of corporate social responsibility. Moreover, the studied universities organized workshops and seminars devoted to CSR. Another element related to the promotion was participation in fairs. Only one Polish university, The University of Lodz, took part in the CSR Fair as an exhibitor. This fair is the largest event in Poland related to sustainable development and responsible business, offering the opportunity to present CSR activities and establish business contacts – which is particularly important in the era of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Conclusions and limitations

The research carried out at the top 10 Polish universities has proven that all of these entities are involved in socially responsible activities. The attribution of specific activities undertaken by the studied universities in CSR areas in accordance with ISO

26000 was conducted solely by the author of this article since universities do not classify their CSR activities in a way proposed by the creators of this standard. CSR practices at the surveyed universities do not include only one selected area. The top Polish universities are entities that take into account social, environmental, and employee aspects in their activities. They are organizations that feel responsible for their activities and take into account the needs of their stakeholders – both internal and external. These universities adhere to ethical principles for both their staff and students. They are governed in accordance with the norms and rules of CSR. Universities create awareness among their employees regarding how they can engage in the achievement of educational, scientific, and social goals in accordance with the applicable common values described, *inter alia*, in ethical codes and regulations.

It seems that one weakness of the CSR concept at the studied universities is the lack of an established procedure for reporting pro-environmental and pro-social activity. Only two universities (the University of Science and Technology and the University of Lodz) out of ten prepare annual CSR reports. A social report is a document prepared by an organization showing its social, ecological, and environmental commitments. It is aimed at various stakeholder groups and shows how a given university benefits its environment. Social reports may take the form of traditional (hard copy) documents or electronic reports (provided via the Internet or through social media). A social report serves two main purposes: to build the business's positive image and reputation, and to create favourable conditions for communicating with the business's environment and stakeholders. A socially responsible university may use an array of tools, such as blogs, photoblogs, microblogs, social networking websites, social bookmarking sites, Wikipedia, and online forums and discussion lists. Compared with traditional reporting, the use of social media for social reporting offers more benefits, such as interaction or active communication with a business's stakeholders. By using the Internet, including social media, a business is free to modify and update the content of its reports (Beyer & Leoński, 2016). The implementation of the reporting process at other universities can result in additional benefits for them and their stakeholders. For stakeholders, it would serve as a database of information about the university's activities. If they don't know that an organization (university) provides support to social and ecological environments, they're missing out on some key

elements about their relationship with this organization. CSR reporting allows stakeholders to compare and react to the economic, social, and ecological performance of companies. CSR reporting gives stakeholders an instrument to sanction companies that are performing poorly or do not take adequate steps. Moreover, they can put pressure on companies to disclose information and improve due to the competitive nature of business (Fifka & Loza Adauí, 2015). Social reporting allows organizations to become transparent and obtain feedback from the environment about the products and services they offer – in the case of universities, for example, these could be curricula or study programs. Opening a dialogue with stakeholders enables the organization to effectively identify their needs, and it also allows involving them in their decision-making processes. Such actions make it possible for the university to learn about its strong points and weakness while also providing an opportunity to assess the degree of CSR implementation.

Another weakness of the discussed concept in the case of Polish universities is the lack of comprehensive information on CSR on the websites of most of the surveyed universities. Undoubtedly, universities should implement new channels of communication with stakeholders in the field of CSR. It has to be emphasised that communication plays a significant role in the concept of corporate social responsibility. A socially responsible university can choose from a wide range of tools for communicating with its stakeholders, e.g., a corporate website, intranet, conferences, social media, a newsletter, or traditional media (press and television). The method of communicating with stakeholders in CSR is of fundamental importance as it may translate into the effectiveness of the discussed concept. More and more stakeholders desire information regarding a university's beneficial influence on its surroundings, as well as data on its activity aimed at solving environmental issues. Opening a dialogue with stakeholders enables an organization to effectively identify their needs, and it also allows for their involvement in decision-making processes. Information regarding socially responsible activities should be communicated in a way that reaches as many stakeholders as possible. Meanwhile, for most of the surveyed universities, it is difficult to find information about CSR on their websites. A website is a perfect place for posting information about pro-social and pro-ecological activities undertaken by a university.

The surveyed universities had Facebook accounts where they could also communicate CSR activities

in a more advanced and frequent way. The presence in social media is crucial from the viewpoint of contacts with stakeholders, e.g., students, as it enables the organization to quickly react to information coming from Internet users. The most important advantage of the discussed communication tool is its continuously increasing reach. It is worth noting that, according to the Digital 2020 report, the average Pole spends 6 hours and 26 minutes per day on the Internet, including as many as 2 hours on social media (WeAreSocial, 2020). Moreover, the number of active social media users in Poland in 2020 was 20 million. To summarise, if the studied universities want to develop CSR activities, they should also develop more effective methods of communication with stakeholders, as communication is very important in the concept of CSR.

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Cite as: Leoński, W. (2021) Corporate social responsibility as a management concept in universities: A study of the top 10 Polish universities' websites. *Scientific Journals of the Maritime University of Szczecin, Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Morskiej w Szczecinie* 66 (138), 58–68.