

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE CONTEXT OF STAKEHOLDERS PRESSURE IN LITHUANIA

Bakanauskiene I., Staniuliene S., Zirgutis V.*

Abstract: The article presents the results of empirical research on stakeholders' impact to Lithuanian business organizations to perform corporate social responsibility. Theoretical research framework is based on International Business Environmental Barometer (IBEB) research tool and covers strength and types of different stakeholders, organizational strategies of relations with them, and consequences of stakeholders' impact. The results revealed quite low stakeholders pressure on business organizations' to perform CSR.

Key words: corporate social responsibility (CSR), stakeholders

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Introduction

Many scholars analyze corporate social responsibility (hereafter - CSR) as a growing organizational phenomenon with implications for practitioners, scholars, and society at large (Kot, 2014). In order to achieve sustainable development of organization, it is necessary to apply business strategies and activities that meet the organization and stakeholder today's needs, while it protects, strengthens and enhances human and natural resources that will be needed in the future (Simanskiene and Pauzuoliene, 2011). Therefore there is a flow of theoretical and empirical literature on the implementation of CSR in "advanced industrialized nations" in the West, as well as in "emerging market economies" (Yin and Zhang, 2012; Khan et al., 2013).

Despite the abundant research examining benefits from CSR practices for society coping with social issues and leading good practices examples from CSR pioneers, relatively little research has examined the stakeholders role an impact on companies to act in social responsible way. Moreover, the extant research has failed to reach a consensus regarding success of CSR implementation and it may arise questions, whether internal motivation is sufficient to start performing solid CSR actions, or adequate impact and pressure from stakeholders in business environment are prerequisites to make decisions to start perform CSR practises.

There is lack of complex researches of stakeholders' pressure to form CSR in organizations supported with a systematic approach while the public interest in dealing with social issues in society with an involvement of business organizations growing. Systematic researches would enable a comprehensive assessment of CSR practises in organizations to meet stakeholders' impact in adequate way.

* Irena Bakanauskiene prof.; Sonata Staniuliene, assoc. prof.; Vytautas Zirgutis, lect., Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Management, Vytautas Magnus University

✉ Corresponding author: s.staniuliene@evf.vdu.lt

✉ i.bakanauskiene@evf.vdu.lt; v.zirgutis@ evf.vdu.lt

Therefore, the object of the research – environmental pressure for Lithuanian business organizations to use CSR practices and the aim of the research is to assess the impact of external stakeholders on Lithuanian business organizations to perform in a socially responsible way. Adopted International Business Environmental Barometer framework was used for research. The sample of research consists of 387 respondents (top level decision makers) representing Lithuanian business organizations.

Literature Review

According to the OECD (2011) definition, corporate social responsibility is “*the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society*”. Grundey (2008), Kotchen and Moon (2011), etc. argue that companies should be aimed to follow the consistency of stakeholders’ benefits and the interests of society - to search for an effective “fit” between businesses and the societies. CSR practises go beyond a firm’s interests and legal requirements to promote a social good as CSR activities are voluntary (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) or even discretionary relationships and actions in favor of shareholders (Waddock, 2004). Well implemented CSR policy is the key to sustainable development (Kot and Brzeziński, 2015).

A successful company adapts all of these aspects of social responsibility so that they may function in equilibrium, in spite of constant economic, legal, moral and public pressure of stakeholders. Then companies and their managers should manage relationships with their stakeholders and according stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) companies could do well only by satisfying their stakeholders.

Studies demonstrate a positive link between investing in corporate social responsibility and a firm’s financial performance (Orlitzky et al., 2003). Godfrey (2005) argue that corporate philanthropy generates positive moral capital among communities and stakeholders. Aguilera et al. (2007) emphasise control, sense of justice, which is related to work satisfaction, commitment, etc., meaningful existence in individual motives. Socially responsible programs have been viewed as a tool for enhancing reputations and engendering goodwill among customers (Chernev and Blair, 2015). Therefore CSR may serve as a strategy to create and sustain a competitive advantage in order to survive and compete in the competitive global market (Lin et al., 2009).

The researches’ results show that the most common obstacle to perform CSR is that firms that engage in socially responsible activities incur additional costs for behaviors that have few measurable economic benefits (Mele, 2008).

According to Chang et al. (2013), companies publish CSR reports, communicate their CSR philosophies and activities on corporate websites, and respond to public inquiries. Socially responsible companies implement product/service quality programs to realize maximum customer satisfaction, provide safe and healthy work conditions as the foundation for promoting the well-being of their employees (Navickas and Kontautienė, 2015), environmental management practices. Freeman (1984), Moon et al. (2005) see CSR implementation in corporation’s built-in, self-

regulating ethical standards (e.g., code of ethics), policies, and practices. Chang et al. (2014) list the adoption of international standards for CSR certification (e.g., ISO 26000) as well.

In a wide range of point of views towards CSR activities, Tang et al. (2015) argue that actions should be developed through the constant dialogue and negotiation between companies and their different shareholders. Antoni and Portale (2011) suggest cooperation with the stakeholders as a key strategy of CSR, therefore participation of the stakeholders becomes a part of the governance of the company.

Research Methodology

The pursuit to systemize CSR paradigm is guided by the notion, that organization could implement a certain linearity of practices in management: monitoring, action, and results (Lannelongue et al. 2014). Similarly Baumast (2000) hypothesized that issues from environment through the medium of stakeholders lead to corporate actions that have certain results. According these above considered attitudes, the framework for research was developed (see Figure 1):

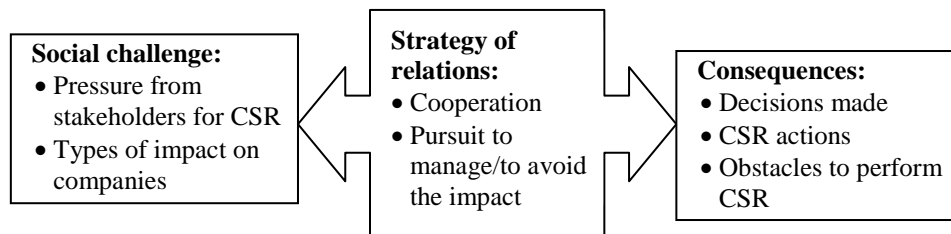


Figure 1. Framework for the research

Adopted International Business Environmental Barometer (hereafter IBEB) framework was used for research. Results by this survey were considered sufficiently reliable (Belz and Strannegard, 1997) and allowed drawing conclusions about the overall situation for Lithuanian business organizations performing CSR. IBEB allows for researchers to adapt their research methodology in each country to the national characteristics. The questionnaire also included questions about the field of the company's activities and number of employees. It was constituted of 95 questions.

According to data of Lithuanian Department of Statistics in 2014, the total of 34,794 companies (population) is registered in Lithuania of employing more than 4 employees. The calculated minimum sample of survey (N=380 respondents) guarantees with a 95% probability that the error results would not exceed 5%, therefore, the research data is reliable enough to make conclusions. The sample of research consists of 387 respondents (top level decision makers) representing Lithuanian business organizations. In order to test reliability of questionnaire

with the present study data, a series of Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each of the question groups; Cronbach's alphas meanings were ranging from 0.848 to 0.950. The random sample has been selected for the research. The field research method "face to face interview" with business organization's decision maker/responsible employee was used. Interview was carried out and data collected by market research company that conducts according to ICC/ESOMAR code. Sample by field of activity and the number of employees is presented (see Table 1):

Table 1. Sample distribution according company activity field and size

Company activity field	Number of companies*		Number of employees	Number of companies	
	Quantity	% (of valid)		Quantity	% (of valid)
Trade	205	53.0	5-9	199	51.7
Services	169	43.7	10-49	107	27.8
Manufacturing	80	20.7	Over 50	79	20.5

Note: some companies acts in more than one activity field

The statistical analysis was performed with SPSS Statistics 19 software tool.

Results

Determining the stakeholders and the extent of their impact on organizations, 15 stakeholders were listed, and the respondents were asked to assess the extent of the impact of each of them in the area of social responsibility on a scale, where "0" stands for 'no impact at all', and "5" stands for 'a very powerful impact' (Table 2):

Table 2. Stakeholders' impact on business organizations

Stakeholders	Total				Trade			Manufacturing			Service		
	N	M	Rank	Std. Dev.	N	M	Rank	N	M	Rank	N	M	Rank
Competitors	382	0.97	1	1.58	204	0.87	2	79	1.06	3	166	0.96	1
(Inter)national regulators	382	0.96	2	1.61	204	0.85	3	78	1.4	1	167	0.87	3
Management	382	0.88	3	1.64	204	0.93	1	79	1	5	166	0.8	4
Non-governmental org.	384	0.82	4	1.33	204	0.68	7	79	0.91	9	168	0.88	2
Owners, investors	382	0.8	5	1.54	204	0.8	4	78	1.04	4	167	0.68	6-7
Employees/trade unions	382	0.75	6	1.42	204	0.66	9	78	1.12	2	167	0.68	6-7
Press/media	382	0.73	7	1.4	204	0.74	5	79	0.91	8	166	0.69	5
Consumers	382	0.69	8-9	1.38	204	0.67	8	78	0.82	10	167	0.62	9
Local community	382	0.69	8-9	1.36	204	0.57	12	78	0.97	6	167	0.61	10
Suppliers, subcontractors	381	0.65	10	1.31	204	0.69	6	78	0.74	11	166	0.6	11
Municipality institutions	381	0.62	11	1.25	202	0.58	11	79	0.68	12	167	0.65	8
Insurance companies	383	0.59	12	1.34	204	0.5	13	79	0.94	7	167	0.49	13
Distributors	383	0.58	13	1.25	204	0.61	10	79	0.62	13	167	0.57	12
Banks, credit unions	382	0.45	14	1.13	204	0.45	14	79	0.52	14	166	0.46	14
Scientific institutions	380	0.38	15	1.07	202	0.36	15	78	0.46	15	167	0.43	15
Total		0.70				0.66			0.88			0.67	

It was determined that organizations experience a very weak impact of all the stakeholders (the extent of the impact ranges from 0.97 to 0.38). The highest impact in the area of social responsibility is achieved from the competitors and regulators (0.97 and 0.96, respectively), while the lowest impact is done by the scientific institutions (0.38). Considering the feedback from trade, manufacturing and service companies in isolation, it was observed that the extent of the impact of all the stakeholders in the area of social responsibility is the same in the trade and service sectors (average of 0.664 and 0.666, respectively), while the manufacturing sector reports a higher impact (0.879). The trade sector experiences a particular impact of the management, competitors and regulators; the manufacturing sector reports the impact of the regulators, employees and trade unions, competitors, owners and investors; and the service sector is affected by the competitors, non-governmental organizations and associations, regulators.

According to Freeman (1984), the stakeholder classification is proposed. The average impact of each type of the stakeholders on organizations in the area of social responsibility was calculated, resulting in the highest average impact achieved by the Governmental stakeholders (G) – 0.790; the average impact of the Market stakeholders (M) amounts to 0.707, and the Public stakeholders (P) demonstrate the lowest average impact – 0.655; however the differences are not significant.

It was intended to determine what means of pressure are mainly used by the stakeholders in the area of social responsibility to influence the decisions taken by organizations. The respondents were asked to assess the frequency of use of each kind of means of pressure (economic, legal, moral and publicity) on a scale of 0 to 3, where "0" stands for 'not used', and "3" stands for 'used' (see Table 3). It was determined that the stakeholders rarely use all kinds of means of pressure (which is related to the overall weakness of impact of the stakeholders on organizations). The most frequently used means of pressure is moral (0.73), while the least frequently used is publicity (0.41). The frequency of use of the means of pressure in the sectors is almost the same; certain differences are reported only in the manufacturing sector, where the publicity is used more frequently than the legal means.

Table 3. The frequency of use of means of pressure by stakeholders

Means of pressure	Total				Trade companies				Manufacturing				Service			
	N	Aver	Rank	Std. Dev.	N	Aver.	Rank	Std. Dev.	N	Aver.	Rank	Std. Dev.	N	Aver.	Rank	Std. Dev.
Moral	384	0.73	1	1.03	205	0.63	1	0.99	64	0.86	1	1.03	169	0.76	1	1.04
Economic	386	0.59	2	1.00	205	0.56	2	0.96	64	0.67	2	1.03	169	0.52	2	0.93
Legal	385	0.52	3	0.98	205	0.48	3	0.97	64	0.47	4	0.92	168	0.49	3	0.93
Publicity	380	0.41	4	0.85	203	0.35	4	0.79	64	0.58	3	0.97	167	0.38	4	0.86

Determining the actions taken in the area of social responsibility in organizations represented by the respondents during the past 2 years, the respondents were asked

whether the organization had taken the indicated actions, had taken them in part, or had not taken any actions at all (see Table 4):

Table 4. The actions taken for CSR in organizations

Actions taken	n	Rank	Ta-ken	In part	Not taken
Ensured fair and timely remuneration for work to employees	386	1	297	41	48
Enabled the employees to pursue lifelong learning, development and education of others	385	2	225	77	83
Ensured equal opportunities for the employees of different social groups in the organization and recruitment procedures	386	3	209	70	107
Utilized only socially responsible marketing tools	384	4	198	97	89
Implemented the use of socially responsible ethical principles	384	5	177	111	96
Created procedures ensuring safe and healthy working places	385	6	150	116	119
Encouraged involvement of the youth in professional activities	385	7	142	87	156
Participated in community events or initiatives, considering and combining the interests of community and organization	386	8	134	93	159
Promoted measures against all the forms of corruption	383	9	124	115	144
Implemented measures to prevent corruption in organization	383	10	104	88	191
Participated in or supported big social initiatives	384	11	82	77	225
Participated in charity events/organized not for own benefit	385	12	78	115	192
Adapted workplaces for the disabled people or employed	385	13	59	101	225
Implemented individual social responsibility activities	382	14	34	96	252
Prepared the corporate social responsibility report	382	15	26	75	281
Developed the corporate social responsibility strategy, policy	381	16	24	75	282
Joined the National Responsible Business Network	381	17	21	59	301
Implemented tools for monitoring the corporate social responsibility activities	383	18	18	81	284

Upon processing the research data it was determined that, according to the respondents, the vast majority of organizations ensured fair and timely remuneration for work to the employees (297 cases out of 386), enabled the employees to pursue lifelong learning, development and education of others (225 cases out of 385), ensured equal opportunities for the employees of different social groups in the organization and recruitment procedures (209 cases out of 386). The assessment of the total results and the results of specific sectors (trade, manufacturing, services) showed that the top ten of the most common actions were nearly the same. The least frequent action was implementation of tools for monitoring the corporate social responsibility activities, which was done in 18 companies out of 383 only; other 81 companies had done this in part.

Determining the respondents' opinion on how the actions taken in the area of social responsibility had affected various areas, they were asked to assess the impact on a 5-point scale where "1" stands for 'a very negative impact', "3" stands for 'no impact at all', and "5" stands for 'a very positive impact'(see Table 5):

Table 5. Effect of the CSR actions taken in business organizations

Impact areas	Total			Trade			Manufacturing			Service		
	N	M	Std. Dev	N	M	Std. Dev	N	M	Std. Dev	N	M	Std. Dev
Competitiveness	383	3.15	0.85	205	3.16	0.90	79	2.99	0.93	166	3.13	0.71
Company image	381	3.30	0.90	203	3.23	0.87	79	3.32	0.89	166	3.30	0.87
Cost saving	381	2.89	0.85	205	2.91	0.81	78	2.74	0.94	165	2.92	0.80
Long-term profit	383	2.90	0.87	205	2.95	0.85	79	2.92	0.90	166	2.84	0.81
Market share	382	2.99	0.76	205	2.98	0.74	79	2.96	0.75	165	2.99	0.75
Development possibilities	384	3.03	0.79	205	3.02	0.77	80	2.86	0.70	166	3.07	0.75
Satisfaction of owners	382	3.15	0.92	205	3.15	0.88	79	2.99	0.95	165	3.18	0.88
Product image	383	3.16	0.92	205	3.15	0.87	80	3.06	0.90	165	3.19	0.90
Increase of productivity	382	2.97	0.86	205	3.00	0.88	79	2.84	0.82	165	3.00	0.76
Volume of sales	384	3.06	0.81	205	3.12	0.79	80	2.90	0.80	166	3.05	0.71
Short-term profit	379	2.86	0.83	203	2.92	0.80	78	2.69	0.77	165	2.88	0.80
Satisfaction of management	384	3.12	0.88	205	3.13	0.87	80	3.10	0.89	166	3.10	0.80
Trust of authorities	381	3.15	0.81	205	3.10	0.85	79	3.23	0.81	164	3.18	0.67

Upon processing the research data it was determined that all the actions taken had practically no effect on the business areas of the organizations under research. The assessment of the total results demonstrated the range from 2.86 to 3.30 (according to the assessment scale, "3" stands for 'no impact at all'). It should be noted that the respondents' opinion on the issue was very unanimous, the mean standard deviation ranging from 0.76 to 0.92 (or from 15 to 18 percent of the assessment scale). Considering the limits of statistical error, it can be concluded that, according to the respondents, the actions taken in the area of social responsibility had no impact on the analysed business areas of the organizations. The applied research tool can establish a logical connection between the actions taken, their volume and the results (positive or negative). However, since the research data demonstrated the respondents' opinion on the actions having no results at all, there is no point in calculating these correlations.

Then obstacles or problems hindering implementation of the corporate social responsibility tools in organizations was aimed to identify, assessing them on a scale from "0" (no problems / obstacles) to "5" (major problems / obstacles) (see Table 6).

Upon processing the research data it was determined that the respondents had not seen any significant obstacles for implementation of the corporate social responsibility tools. Lack of financial support for implementation of such tools was identified as the biggest obstacle, however the estimation of this obstacle is merely 2.19, which is attributable to the "minor obstacles".

The estimation of all other potential obstacles is less than 2, and the estimation of some obstacles is even less than 1 (the respondents do not suppose that implementation of the corporate social responsibility tools would undermine the

attainment of the desired level of quality or that there are no feasible technical solutions for implementation thereof).

Table 6. The obstacles of CSR implementation in business organizations

Obstacles	Total				Trade		Manuf.		Service	
	N	M	Rank	Std. Dev.	N	M	N	M	N	M
Lack of financial support	383	2.19	1	2.03	205	1.85	78	2.59	167	2.22
Difficult to include costs in the price	381	1.89	2-3	1.84	204	1.67	76	2.36	168	1.74
Too costly	384	1.89	2-3	1.86	205	1.64	78	2.42	168	1.71
Higher prices of products/services	383	1.67	4	1.75	204	1.56	78	2.06	168	1.58
Lack of public awareness about the environmental achievements	381	1.48	5	1.75	204	1.24	78	1.78	166	1.62
Difficult to reconcile with the regulation	382	1.43	6	1.58	204	1.31	77	1.69	168	1.36
Lack of information regarding the tools	383	1.33	7	1.64	205	1.09	77	1.84	168	1.27
Difficulties to organize	382	1.27	8	1.61	204	1.15	78	1.58	167	1.17
Undisclosed help recipients/ insufficient capacity to deal with social issues	382	1.23	9	1.57	205	1.15	77	1.55	167	1.12
Low awareness and support of employees	384	1.22	10	1.49	205	1.07	79	1.65	167	1.07
Lack of skilled human resources	383	1.20	11	1.55	205	1.02	78	1.58	167	0.98
Lack of management support	385	1.04	12	1.50	205	1.00	79	1.19	168	0.89
Undermine the attainment of the desired level of quality	381	0.96	13	1.38	203	0.92	77	1.26	168	0.83
No feasible technical solutions	384	0.78	14	1.39	205	0.69	78	1.08	168	0.67
Total:		1.40				1.24		1.76		1.30

On the other hand, in this case quite significant divergence was observed in the respondents' opinions, the mean standard deviation ranging from 1.38 to 2.03 (or from 23 to 34 percent of the assessment scale). The individual analysis of the trade, manufacturing and service sectors showed that the estimation average of all obstacles is similar in the trade and service sectors, amounting to 1.24 and 1.30, while the one of the manufacturing sector is higher and amounts to 1.76. Despite this small difference, the top ten of the main obstacles is the same in all sectors.

Discussion

Although CSR is understood as organizational investments with large economic benefits through social interactions and sustainability, this research results show minor involvement of Lithuanian business organizations in CSR practises. The findings are consistent with the data presented by the Global Compact and by the Department of Statistics of the Republic of Lithuania, that only 0.2 percent of all companies in the country declared to be aiming at social responsibility in 2013. There is a lack of the full-scale involvement of organizations into the actual activities of application of the social responsibility tools and initiatives (Ruzevičius, 2014).

Most researchers point out that the level of economic development is positively correlated with CSR and that less developed economies are unable to withstand the high standards of CSR used in its developed counterparts (Wilson, 2007). This also correlates with the results of the research conducted by Cepinskis and Sakalauskaite (2009), which have shown that the economic crisis has adversely affected socially responsible enterprises in Lithuania, whereas more than half (63%) representatives of the companies noted that they intended to cut down the expenses on corporate social responsibility during the economic crisis.

A resource-based view states that corporations in wealthier countries tend to invest more in CSR because they have more resources at their disposal (Baughn et al., 2007) and this notion is consistent with first block of ranked obstacles in Lithianian business organizations to perform CSR in this research.

The research results doesn't contradict the stakeholder approach as well, which explains that wealthier countries have consumers and citizens that demonstrate a higher demand for CSR, which leads to a higher level of social engagement of companies (Ramasamy and Hung, 2004; Tabor and Roman, 2004). Unfortunately, this particular research results reveals low level of stakeholders pressure on Lithianian business organizations to perform CSR. Other researches confirm that low level of public interest in the development of CSR is manifested in the lack of "pressure" on the public and private sector organizations (Vveinhardt et al., 2015).

The administrative staff is not directly encouraged to demonstrate initiative, therefore it appears likely that the interests of the members of the group will not be effectively met (Guzavičius and Bruneckienė, 2010). Waddock (2004) maintained that corporate social responsiveness was drawn from the experience of companies rather than from calls for more responsibility from scholars and activists, and this research findings endorse it leveraging impact, pressure and obstacles means: the averages of CSR means are higher measuring impact on businesses than obstacles to perform CSR, and especially low rates of pressure of stakeholders were found.

Furthermore, from a legal perspective, developed countries are more likely to have an advanced legal framework that regulates corporations' practices (Nwabuzor, 2005), though the legal group of stakeholders remain passive in Lithianian business organizations. Navickas and Kontautiene (2015) argues that Lithuanian companies' participation in socially responsiveness activities is determined by the politics, culture and other factors, but not by rising income of companies. "Ernst & Young Baltic" was ordered to conduct a detailed cost-benefit study of the CSR activities in selected companies in Lithuania, which resulted in the conclusion that the social responsibility initiatives of Lithuanian companies had created the average return on investment of 45 percent or economic benefits to the investing company (Ruževičius, 2014). However, according research results, economic benefits from practising CRS in Lithuanian business organizations are estimated much more reservedly.

Conclusions

The reason why Lithuanian organizations are not active in performing CSR can be disclosed by respondents' evaluations what consequences emerge in various organizational fields after CSR practices. Company image, product / service image, confidence of regulation authorities, satisfaction of owners, competitiveness and satisfaction of management are main fields where environmental actions taken make greatest changes. These fields vary depending on organization field of activity: changes in competitiveness are less and changes in satisfaction of management, long-term profit, and amount of sales are major for service companies; changes in development possibilities are less and changes in market share are major for manufacturing companies.

The most common obstacles that prevent implementing of environmental tools in companies can be seen as relatively indifferent where the main reason of passive use of CSR emerges. Trade and service companies estimate the obstacles even in lower score than manufacturing companies. Lack of financial support for implementing CSR and excessive costs of implementing environmental management tools were named as the main obstacles in all sectors. Other significant obstacles are coherent to the financial issues as well.

Results of empirical investigation revealed that the overall CSR situation in Lithuania seems to be not at the appropriate level regardless growing attention to environmental issues in scientific literature and mass media.

The research results provide information for managers, community, and other stakeholders groups on CSR issues in Lithuania: about lack of proactivity in strategies, tools and actions in business organizations to perform CSR, as business organizations do not feel any significant pressure from stakeholders to operate in socially responsible way, far from being sufficient for sustainable development of organizations as well.

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SPOŁECZNA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW: KONTEKST PRESJI INTERESARIUSZY NA LITWIE

Streszczenie: Artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań empirycznych na temat wpływu interesariuszy na litewskie organizacje gospodarcze w kwestii społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu. Teoretyczne ramy badania opierają się na narzędziu badawczym Międzynarodowy Barometr Środowiska Biznesu (IBEB) i obejmują siłę i rodzaje różnych interesariuszy, strategie organizacyjne relacje z nimi oraz skutki oddziaływania interesariuszy. Wyniki wykazały bardzo niewielki nacisk interesariuszy na organizacje biznesowe w kwestii społecznej odpowiedzialności biznesu.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu (CSR), interesariusze

企業社會責任利益相關者壓力在立陶宛的背景

摘要：本文介紹實證研究對利益相關者的影響，立陶宛企業組織的結果來執行企業社會責任。理論研究框架是基於國際商業環境晴雨表（IBEB）的研究工具，覆蓋強度和類型的不同利益相關者，與他們的關係的組織戰略，與利益相關者的影響後果。結果表明對商業組織的相當低的利益相關者的壓力來執行企業社會責任。

關鍵詞：企業社會責任（CSR），利益相關者