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CSR practice in Poland – employee dimension

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CSR practice in Poland – employee dimension / Praktyka CSR w Polsce – aspekty pracownicze

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to analyze and review the activities carried out by employees of companies in Poland in frame of corporate social responsibility (CSR), with particular emphasis on employee dimension. The analysis was conducted using secondary research method. Moreover, the article presents the analysis results of activities that were described in the Responsible Business Forum (FOB) reports

Responsible Business in Poland. Good practices. in the period 2005-2015. In Conclusions, the author presented comments on current relationships and emerging trends in the scope of activities undertaken in Polish companies in the area of practices concerning employee aspects.

KEY WORDS: CSR PRACTICE; ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE; POLAND.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the leading concepts of sustainable development. The concept is currently implemented in companies mainly at the microeconomic level [Borys & Borys, 2011]. World Business Council for Sustainable Development has defined CSR as *the company's responsibility for the impact of its actions on society* [ISO 26000, 2012]. Standardized proposals for solutions in the field of CSR have been proposed in the international standard ISO 26000, it can provide a reference point for all organizations, especially those that start their activity in this area. Both scientists and entrepreneurs engaged in the discussion on issues of social responsibility of the organization initiated a series of cognitive processes both theoretical and empirical. In addition, a constantly growing number of scientific publications in this area

suggest that the issue of CSR is important for the society of twenty-first century [Hys, 2014a; Hys, 2014b; Hys, 2015; Visser, 2010].

Theoretical considerations on the concept of CSR relate to many areas. Importantly, nowadays, these solutions are successfully transferred to the management practices. This paper analyzes one of the leading aspects of CSR practice – namely – employee aspects.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data analysis presented in the article was carried out using secondary research. It involved the analysis of existing, available data in the field of so-called good practice in CSR. The data were acquired from a variety of secondary sources such as numerous analyst reports and compilation of statistical data. In the following stage, collected data were compared and verified in

order to finally carry out the process of consolidation and inference. Data concerning examined issue were collected in relation to employees' activities carried out in the period of 2005-2015 among the companies operating in Poland.

3. KEY AREAS OF CSR

The international standard for CSR [ISO 26000] has identified seven key areas of concern: Organizational Governance, Human Rights, Labor Practices, the Environment, Fair Operating Practices, Consumer Issues, Community Involvement and Development (Fig. 1) [ISO 26000, 2012].

Figure 1. Key areas of CSR



Source: [ISO 26000, 2012: 27-33].

Key areas of CSR form a complex structure, in which each element means respectively [ISO 26000, 2012: 27-33]:

- *Organizational governance is a system by which an organization makes and implements decisions in pursuit of its objectives.* This means that the basis for effective management of the organization is to define policies, systems and procedures applicable to the working environment. Organizational governance is created, among others, by elements such as organizational culture, internal actions aimed at employees, CSR strategy and manner and type of relationship maintained with the company's stakeholders.
- *Human Rights* – the rights are the constitutive law and apply to all people. There are two basic

categories of human rights – civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

- *The labor practices* encompass all internal policies and implemented practices in relation to the employees.
- *The Environment* – in this area, optimization is carried out in order to create patterns of production and consumption, to ensure the sustainable use of resources owned or at the disposal of entrepreneurs.
- *Fair Operating Practices* address the issue of business ethics, among others, communication of the company with other organizations and institutions in both the micro and macroeconomic environment.
- *Consumer issues* relate to social responsibility and primarily concern the responsibility for implemented practices in the area of consumption, health and life of customers.
- *Community Involvement and Development* is an area, which covers, among others, community support and establishing mutually beneficial relationship with a community.

Due to the defined purpose of the article, in the following part merely practices focused on employee aspects will be considered.

4. EMPLOYEE ASPECTS – BASIC ISSUES

To elaborate on the topic of practical activities carried out by employees of companies within the field of CSR practices focused on legal issues, one should outline its main components. The analysis of the literature in this field has allowed to differentiate key factors in the employee aspects which are: recruitment and promotion of employment, disciplinary procedures and treatment of complaints, relocation of employees, termination of employment, improvement of qualifications, including training and improvement of skills, health and safety conditions, working conditions, including working hours and remuneration [Raport odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce, Dobre praktyki, 2005-2015].

In frame of practices focused on employment, one can mention following: cooperation with employees' organizations, employees representation, and participation in collective agreement, social dialogue and tripartite consultations aimed at solving all contentious social issues related to employment. Therefore, employee aspects concern all direct or indirect relations between the employer-employee that exist in companies.

4.1. EMPLOYEE ASPECTS – PRESENTATION OF KEY DATA

The analysis of available reports that collected and described the practices carried out by employees of

the organization operating in Poland performed in the view of employee aspects initiated preparation of the following statement (table 1).

Table 1. Good practices in the area of CSR aspects of the work

Categories of CSR practices \ Years	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Σ
ethics in business	7	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
equal opportunities and diversity	1	1	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	8
creation/maintenance of jobs	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
internal communication/ dialogue with employees	2	1	0	3	1	1	1	6	5	3	0	23
employee involvement in company management/employee participation	2	2	0	1	2	2	4	0	3	5	6	27
education/training and development	1	0	4	2	3	4	9	10	9	14	23	79
corporate volunteering	4	6	2	1	16	16	16	10	15	13	12	111
private and professional life/parent-friendly company	0	1	1	3	2	1	4	4	4	9	4	33
health and safety/employee health/health and active lifestyle	1	0	0	0	3	1	7	7	13	8	23	63
preventive care	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
flexible working hours	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
recruitment/recruitment and adaptation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	3	10
management standards	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
safety at work	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	12	7	14	22	75
adaptation and integration/employee integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	3	7	8	29
counteracting abuse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	8
work-life balance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	1	2	10
employee support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	4	12
Number of practices:	21	14	9	16	31	32	66	61	67	84	113	514
The number of companies carrying out the practice in general:	18	12	8	16	30	29	48	44	43	42	55	345

Source: own study based on [Raport odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce, Dobre praktyki, 2005–2015].

In the analyzed period, i.e. in the years 2005–2015 Responsible Business Forum reports¹, collected and illustrated 514 practices carried out by employees of 345 companies² based in the Republic of Poland in the framework of one of seven core areas of CSR, i.e. the area of labor practices. As the practices have different character they were assigned according to 18 criteria, which include: ethics in business, equal opportunities and diversity, creation/maintenance of jobs, internal communication/dialogue with employees, employee involvement in company management/employee

participation, education/training and development, corporate volunteering, private and professional life/parent – friendly company, health and safety/employee health/health and active lifestyle, preventive care, flexible working hours, recruitment/recruitment and adaptation, management standards, safety at work, adaptation and integration/employee integration, counteracting abuse, work-life balance and employee support. Certain criteria have a double name – this is due to the fact that their name undergone transformation with time.

Based on elemental analysis of data one can notice that the most popular form of activity within the CSR is corporate volunteering, education /training and development, safety at work/health and safety /

¹ FOB – Responsible Business Forum

² This is the number of companies implementing practices in general. It should be noted that many of these companies continue operations in following years – is repeated. Therefore, the actual number of companies actively participating in the activities of CSR is lower.

employee health/health and active lifestyle. In contrast, the least frequently performed forms of activity are the management standards, flexible forms of work, preventive care, creation/maintenance of jobs, equal opportunities and diversity and counteracting abuse.

Also of interest are observations concerning the period in which the practices were performed. There are many practices that were systematically implemented in companies (e.g. “corporate volunteering”), additionally those that were performed only in certain years were recognized (e.g. “ethics in business” – activities realized only in 2005–2006 and 2009), or those occurring quite incidentally (e.g., “management standards” in 2013).

4.2. EMPLOYEE ASPECTS – DATA ANALYSIS

An issue that requires extensive comment is a number and type of category in frame of which all described CSR practices have been assigned. Interpretation of quantitative data gathered in Table 1 allows the observation of the following phenomena: the number and the type of category in which CSR activities aimed at employees were distinguished, have changed over time. Although there is no classification of these groups for more homogenous thematic groups, the author has noticed the similarities and relationships occurring between them. In response to observed phenomenon, the author while classifying the relationships occurring among these categories suggested the introduction of thematic groups for related categories. The basis for allocation of the thematic groups is convergence of the objectives and effects of particular criteria (table 2).

The essential thematic group proposed by the author is called “management”, where following criteria were assigned: business ethics, management standards, and involvement of employees in management /employee participation, equal opportunities and diversity and counteracting abuse in the workplace. The management of the organization understood as a creation of the mission, goals, strategies, company policy or direction of its development, belongs to the role of managers. However, they also create the culture of organization. Standards of behavior apply to all ethical and moral aspects of the company. Its scope includes clear and stable company policy, which defines standards of accountability for quality and amount of work performed by each employee in the company, as well as for equality and fair treatment of all employees. Engaging all employees in the process of co-creation of company’s market value induces a sense of shared responsibility for the company. This, in turn, creates goodwill, perceived by all stakeholders.

Table 2. Good practices in the area of CSR aspects of the work

Categories of CSR practices	number of practices	
	total	the group
management		
involvement of employees in management / employee participation	27	56
business ethics	12	
equal opportunities and diversity	8	
counteracting abuse in the workplace	8	
management standards	1	
private and professional relations		
private and professional life/parent-friendly company	33	68
internal communication/dialogue with employees	23	
work-life balance	10	
flexible working hours	2	
development		
corporate volunteering	111	190
education/training, employee development	79	
safety and prevention		
safety at work	75	200
health, and safety/employee health/health and active lifestyle	63	
adaptation and integration	29	
employee support	12	
recruitment and adaptation	10	
creation/maintenance of job	7	
preventive care	4	
Total number of practices:	514	

Source: own study.

“Private and professional relations” is the second thematic group selected during data analysis. This group includes internal communication/dialogue with employees, private and professional life/parent-friendly company, work-life balance and flexible working hours. The psychophysical balance of employees constitutes the efficiency and effectiveness of their work. Therefore, the managers in order to ensure a balance between private and professional life should create and shape the company’s policy taking into account the employees’ needs.

The next important group of CSR activities focused on employee aspects is “development”. Within this thematic group, one can find education/training, employee development, and corporate volunteering. The company can function successfully on the market only when its development is consistent with the market development. It is connected with development of employees’ skills, but also their self-development, enabling them to initiate actions for others. Launching activities related to corporate volunteering allows employees to derive

satisfaction. This in turn translates into motivation and mobilization at workplace and reinforces the positive relationship between employee and employer.

The last but not least thematic group is “safety and prevention”. In this group following actions implemented under CSR were included: creation/maintenance of job, safety at work, health, and safety/employee health/health and active lifestyle, preventive care, employee support, adaptation and integration/employee integration and recruitment and adaptation. This group addresses issues focusing its attention on safety and prevention of work at every stage - from recruitment, through forms of integration and required support. It is also crucial to understand safety and prevention comprehensively – as it concerns psychophysical safety of any employee.

Data analysis showed that predominantly CSR practices focused on employee aspects in the area of “safety and prevention” and “development” are implemented in companies. Managers are aware of the impact of safety issues and employees self-development on the efficiency and effectiveness of their work. Importantly, activities satisfying the needs of employees, both tangible and intangible in these areas are performed. Particularly noteworthy are also those activities that allow employees to pursue higher needs (transcendental). The satisfaction of tangible and intangible aspects of the work releases additional amounts of energy of employees, which in turn determines the development of company. Managers understanding this relationship, develop other activities that reinforce and perpetuate the relationship between

the employee and the employer. These include private and professional relationships and management. Creation and adaptation of the existing collective consciousness and shared responsibility for the market value of the company, as well as creation and consolidation of good practices affect the development of corporate identity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The company is a special type of community in which there is an individual microscopic world. The greatest wealth of any company is knowledge, skills and commitment of all employees. It seems that actions in the field of CSR should firstly include employees, to be able to influence the diffusion of developed standards primarily among them.

Companies intending to cope with competition are aimed at optimization in a holistic way, to create work systems based on high efficiency, which requires a comprehensive approach to the management, especially human resources management. Inspiring employees, investing in their development, motivation to achieve the company’s goals, creating safe working conditions and friendly relations among employees and good atmosphere of cooperation sets the standard for any company that wants to remain on the market. Observing the trends in the world in terms of enterprise development – it seems that investing in employees is the direction of a conscious and voluntary evolution of any organization whose aim is to develop.

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