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SGH

The field of management sciences

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**Non-financial reporting as a source for assessment of social
and ecological commitment of corporates**

Abstract of PhD dissertation

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ABSTRACT

In the last 20 years we have seen a very dynamic growth of the concept of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. As part of this development, there is a discussion about the role of the enterprise in the modern world. It takes place both in the world of science, at the level of countries, for example in the European Union or at the UN forum, and among business practitioners. Today, numerous authors indicate that the concept of sustainable development is a new paradigm of enterprise management. The company, acting in accordance with it, strengthens its competitive advantage by creating new values for stakeholders. Within the European Union, this discussion led to the adoption of the Nonfinancial Disclosure Reporting Directive (NFRD), which introduced the obligation to publish non-financial reports by large entities or public interest groups. This obligation resulted in an abrupt increase in the number of non-financial reports published by Polish enterprises. The review of the literature shows that the current research on non-financial reports of Polish enterprises focuses mainly on the scope of disclosures, their compliance with formal requirements, good practices and applied reporting standards. To the best of the author's knowledge, there are no publications dealing with the subject of assessment of the social and ecological commitment of Polish enterprises that are based on the non-financial statements disclosed by them. The dissertation attempted to fill this gap.

Objectives of the dissertation

The main objective of the dissertation is the assessment of the social and ecological commitment of enterprises, based on the information disclosed by them in their non-financial reports and to obtain answers to the research questions.

Research questions posed.

1. What is the scope of disclosures regarding social and ecological commitment included in non-financial reports and how did it change in the research period?
2. How did the degree of social and ecological commitment of enterprises change in the research period?
3. What is the quality of non-financial reports and how did it change in the research period?
4. What is the comparability of non-financial reports of individual enterprises and how did it change in the research period?

The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion.

The first chapter presents the origins and development of non-financial reporting. It is a form of communication between enterprises and stakeholders, serving to present achievements in social and environmental areas. Based on selected theories of the enterprise, the motivations of enterprises to engage in social and environmental issues and disclose it in the form of non-financial reports are explained. The European Union is a world leader in stimulating the development of non-financial reporting through legal regulations. Adoption of the NFRD Directive by the EU was the trigger for this work. Therefore, the origins and development of mandatory non-financial reporting, based on legal acts and EU documents, are also presented.

The second chapter presents the concepts of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, given that the social and ecological involvement of enterprises is a practical manifestation of their implementation of these two concepts. The first modern definition of sustainable development was presented in the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, operating at the United Nations. Therefore, the development of this concept is presented both on the basis of the literature on the subject and UN documents.

The third chapter is devoted to the review of the literature on the subject in terms of scientific achievements regarding the assessment of social and ecological commitment of enterprises and the study of the quality of reports. The most commonly used methods have been identified and described. From the point of view of this dissertation, the most important of them were: indices and rankings, analysis of the content of corporate documents and ratio analysis.

The fourth chapter describes the group of companies selected for the study together with the criteria for their selection. It also contains a description of the data collection and analysis process and the methods used to conduct the study. To assess social and ecological commitment, the method of the Canadian company Corporate Knights (CK) was chosen. As an auxiliary tool, the method for assessing the quality of non-financial reports by P. Hąbek and R. Wolniak was used.

The fifth chapter contains the results of the conducted research: assessment of the social and ecological commitment of companies based on the CK method and verification of the quality of non-financial reports using the CK and P. Hąbek and R. Wolniak methods. Inductive reasoning was used in order to obtain answers to the posed research questions. A comparison of Polish companies with data concerning foreign companies made available to Corporate

Knights was also described. The chapter discusses the results and describes the identified limitations and directions for future research. The summary concludes the results of the literature review and research.

In the author's opinion, this work allowed to fill the cognitive gap by:

1. systematising knowledge on methods of assessment social and environmental protection of enterprises, based on information contained in non-financial reports,
2. systematising knowledge on the methods of examining the quality of non-financial reports,
3. indication of universal methods and their practical application within the conducted research,
4. obtaining answers to the research questions posed,
5. expanding knowledge on how Polish enterprises have adapted to the obligation to disclose non-financial information (non-financial reports).

Thus, in the author's opinion, the aim of the dissertation has been achieved. At the same time, however, the author believes that issues related to the social and ecological commitment of enterprises and the subject of non-financial reporting should be the subject of further research.