

CORPORATE SOCIAL PRACTICES AND RELATED DISCLOSURES: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT

With the introduction of the Directive 2014/95/EU, non-financial disclosure on corporate social responsibility (CSR) became officially a corporate accounting and reporting issue. As a result, large public interest entities (PIEs) with an average of 500 employees or more, are required to disclose information about their practices with regard to environmental matters, social and employee-related issues, respect for human rights, and anti-corruption and bribery. In our project, we focus on corporate social practices, which we understand as social initiatives that are sustainable and have the potential for a significant positive impact on society. The goal of our research is to explore the ways how stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of the corporate social practice and related non-financial disclosures and how this process has changed over time.

The project will examine three crucial aspects related to:

1. the changes in stakeholders' engagement (Do different stakeholders engage in the implementation of social practices in companies? If so, how and why? What are the key issues and key challenges related to stakeholders' engagement? What are the main means used by companies to engage stakeholders? How has the engagement changed over time?)
2. non-financial performance measurement from the internal and external perspective of the companies (Do stakeholders influence non-financial key performance indicators (KPIs) used in the organization for internal and external purposes? If so, how and why? How has the influence changed over time?)
3. the role of communication channels in the stakeholder's engagement (Can the new (internet-based) channels of communication (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) affect the interaction between companies and stakeholders and how can they influence the stakeholders' dialogue about social practices? How have the channels of communication and the communication modes changed over time?)

Our sample will consist of large PIEs operating in Poland required to provide non-financial disclosures according to the new accounting law. The research method will consist in the multiple, qualitative and comparative case study. The data collected for the case studies will come from various sources including archival information, semi-structured interviews as well as content analysis of corporate reports, corporate websites and internet-based communication channels.

This research project is intended to make four important contributions. First, in the broader sense, the study contributes to our understanding of changes in the way how various stakeholders are engaged in the implementation of social practices and related reporting. Second, this research project points to the possible influence of stakeholders on the design and evolution of performance measurement system as well as on the choice of non-financial key performance indicators (KPIs). Third, we aim to contribute to deeper understanding of how to communicate information about the company's social engagement through internet based communication channels to its stakeholders more effectively. And fourth, the context of this study may be of particular interest when investigating stakeholders' engagement, as it may add new insights regarding the development of stakeholders' activism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) - a context that is under-researched and a region that is still undergoing social transition.

The research project is expected to produce both academic and non-academic outputs. Results of this project will be presented at various international conferences and submitted to highly ranked international journals, with the aim to contribute to research studies published up to date. The non-academic results of this project will facilitate addressing the problems of communication on social activities faced by companies.