

IN THE MISSIONS AND VISIONS OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES

SPOŁECZNA ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚĆ W MISJACH I WIZJACH INSTYTUTÓW BADAWCZYCH

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ABSTRACT

The concept of scientific social responsibility is appealed to in the context of research institutes more often than the concept of corporate social responsibility. Although the objective of research institutes is largely to act on behalf of the economy, for social good, and to support social activities and innovations, little research has been done on their sense of social responsibility. The aim of this article is to identify elements of social responsibility in the mission and vision of Polish research institutes (including both formal mission and vision statements, as well as informal "declarations" to similar effect). First, a critical analysis of the literature on the subject (66) was carried out, which served as the basis for developing a critical analysis of social responsibility in research institutes. This was followed by a content analysis of 88 mission and vision statements of Polish research institutes. The results, presented using R and WordArt, indicate that the missions and vision statements of Polish research institutes rarely include elements of social responsibility, despite the fact that members of the institutes' community make such declarations. This implies the need for further research:

1) from the perspective of the institutes' employees, concerning the diagnosis of informal activities that can be qualified as socially responsible activity; 2) from the perspective of the directors of research institutes. The purpose of further research should be to prepare recommendations that can be used in the development and implementation of the institutes' strategies.

Key words: social responsibility, scientific social responsibility, CSR, research institutes, mission, vision statement





ABSTRAKT

Głównym celem działania instytutów badawczych jest wspieranie społecznych aktywności, działanie na rzecz gospodarki i dla dobra społecznego. Jest on w obszarze społecznej odpowiedzialności nauki, która jest nieco inaczej definiowana niż społeczna odpowiedzialność biznesu. Stąd celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie elementów społecznej odpowiedzialności w treści misji i wizji polskich instytutów badawczych (złożonych zarówno w postaci formalnych, jak i nieformalnych deklaracji). Do uzyskania celu wykorzystano dwie metody badawcze. Krytyczną analizę literatury przedmiotu (66), na podstawie której, opracowano kryteria analizy społecznej odpowiedzialności w instytutach badawczych oraz analizę treści misji i wizji polskich instytutów badawczych (88), dzięki której sprawdzono występowanie opracowanych kryteriów. Wyniki badań przedstawiono przy pomocy programów R oraz WordArt. W rezultacie stwierdzono, że w misjach i wizjach polskich instytutów badawczych rzadko występują elementy społecznej odpowiedzialności, mimo iż członkowie społeczności instytutów takowe działania deklarują. Oznacza to konieczność prowadzenia dalszych badań: 1. z perspektywy pracowników instytutów, dotyczących diagnozy nieformalnych działań dających się zakwalifikować jako aktywność społecznie odpowiedzialna; 2. z perspektywy kierujących instytutami badawczymi, dotyczących systemowych rozwiązań związanych z społecznie odpowiedzialną aktywnością instytutów badawczych. Rezultaty przedstawionych rozważań mogą służyć przygotowaniu rekomendacji możliwych do wykorzystania przy opracowaniu i realizacji strategii instytutów badawczych w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna odpowiedzialność, społeczna odpowiedzialność nauki, CSR, instytuty badawcze, misja, wizja

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1. Introduction

1.1. The premises of corporate social responsibility

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been steadily gaining in importance, with roots traceable back to the 1950s–70s (Bowen, 1953; Davis, 1960; Johnson, 1971). Most often it is understood as denoting a strategic management strategy (Rudnicka, 2012; Gazzola & Colombo, 2014; Dąbrowski, 2016; Pluta-Olearnik & Buda, 2023) or as a legal obligation/recommendation, stemming, for example, from environmental or human rights legislation (McGuire, 1963; United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000; Szymonek, 2011; UN Resolution, 2015) or reporting requirements (Śnieżek, 2011). The integration of social responsibility into management science has been closely related to the evolvement of the field, which has

involved "setting new standards, including in the methodology of management science" (Lisiński, 2013).

Carroll's widely referenced model of CSR, which has undergone various modifications over time, lays the foundation for understanding corporate social responsibility as consisting of three partially overlapping domains: economic, legal and ethical responsibilities (Caroll, 1979; Schwartz and Carroll, 2003). The existing research streams on CSR (Dabrowski, 2016) have focused on the scope of responsibility, the circle of those to whom responsibility applies (stakeholders), and the sources of responsibility (external expectations vs. internal awareness). As a result, CSR research typically addresses three main aspects: 1) the social obligations of organizations (including towards stakeholders) (Carroll, 1999; Clarkson, 1995); 2) the ethical motivations underlying CSR practices; and 3) the management processes involved in implementing CSR. This perspective is echoed by the European Commission, which defines CSR as "the responsibility of companies for their impact on society" (EC, 2011). In this sense, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is understood to apply to all organizations, regardless of their type, nature or kind – in other words, it is also meant to apply, for example, to universities (Chen et al., 2015; Cabedo et al., 2018; Bugaj & Szarucki, 2019) and research institutes (Szulc, 2023).

In reference to scientific institutes, the concept of scientific social responsibility (SSR) operates, particularly in the Polish literature, as "a concept of governance in the sphere of conducting scientific research, the functioning of scientific institutions and managing the social impact of research." Morawska-Jancelewicz (2019) and Żemigała (2020, 2022) define SSR as "the responsibility of scientific institutions for their impact on society," effectively adapting the CSR framework outlined by the European Commission to the specific context of scientific institutions. This definition stresses the importance of SSR in ensuring that scientific research and institutions contribute positively to society – largely paralleling the broader CSR mandate across various types of organizations.

CSR is founded on the premise that an organization should consider, in its operations, the interests of various stakeholders from both its immediate and broader environment. This approach is intended to enhance and safeguard stakeholders' welfare (Jorge and Pena, 2017). In terms of wealth generation, organizational managers are encouraged to focus on the creative role of the organization's activities. This can also be extended to scientific

social responsibility (SSR) (Żemigała, 2020). On the other hand, protecting well-being requires organizations to refrain from any actions that could be detrimental to society at large (European Commission, 2011). As a result, CSR encompasses both external and internal organizational activities.

The ISO 26000 standard distinguishes seven key areas of CSR: 1) organizational governance, 2) human rights, 3) labor pratices, 4) the environment, 5) fair operating practices, 6) consumer issues, 7) community involvement and development. These have been narrowed to three main areas of activity in the context of each organization's CSR: 1) caring for customers / markets / external stakeholders; 2) caring for society / community and the environment; 3) Aacting on the basis of values, including those set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The universal nature of these areas of activity makes them applicable in analyzing the content of research institutes' mission and vision statements in order to determine their declarative stance regarding being socially responsible.

This article first reviews the existing literature on the premises of corporate social responsibility as well as how mission and vision statements reflect CSR them. The methods section then presents the criteria of social responsibility used in the subsequent analysis of the mission and vision statements of Polish research institutes. Next, the empirical section describes the findings, including the results of the content analysis of research institutes' missions and vision statements.

1.2. Polish research institutes

The Polish Act of 30 April 2010 on Research Institutes defines such entities as state organizational units, established to conduct scientific research and implementation-oriented development work. Such institutes engage in business activities, collaborate with entrepreneurs, establish scientific and industrial centers to conduct research and analysis, and disseminate their results. Research institutes may have different profiles of activity, for example, technical, natural and agricultural sciences, medical research, or the humanities.

While research institutes remain outside the public finance sector (as specified by the Polish Act of 27 August 2009 on Public Finance), their commercial activities are limited due to their statutory obligation to conduct scientific research. Sources of revenue for these institutes can include the sale

of scientific research, development work, patents, implementation work, the production of apparatus or provision of services, etc. State research institutes, however, form a distinct category; they receive earmarked subsidies from the state budget in amounts determined by the Budget Act. Cilak (2015) posits that the nature of the institutes' activities is non-commercial, whereas the Marek Dietrich Institute of Contemporary Civilization Problems (2022) stresses that the expenditures for research are insufficient.

The representative body of research institutes in Poland, the Main Council of Research Institutes (RGIB), has defined the overarching mission for such institutions, in RGIB Bulletin No. 01/2023, as "building trust in science and disseminating information about inventions and ongoing projects, especially those that, when implemented, can change the world around us for the better and improve the quality of life." This entails a certain expectation that research institutes are will adhere to the basic tenets of CSR, that is, to act for the benefit of both the economy and society.

During the Congress "Science for Society" (June 3–5, 2023), the RGIB presented a study entitled "Decalogue – the future of research institutes in Poland," which includes four guidelines for research institutes in the context of scientific social responsibility. These address the expectations and needs of Polish society as a stakeholder, focusing on breakthrough innovations, the modernization and the rational use of research potential, as well as the dissemination and popularization of ongoing research findings. The principles laid out in the "Decalogue" are intended to be reflected in the missions and vision statements of research institutes.

2. Research methods and tools

Based on the literature review, CSR elements were identified and adopted as criteria for analyzing the content of the mission and vision statements across various organizations, including research institutes, as follows:

- 1. Demonstration of features indicating:
 - a. care for customers/markets/external stakeholders,
 - b. care for society/community and environmental factors,
 - c. acting on the basis of values, including those set forth in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- 2. The occurrence of keywords relevant to CSR.

In order to determine which keywords should be prioritized (and adopt criteria for further analysis of the content of the mission and vision statements), the earlier critical and systematic analysis of the specialized literature was further supplemented with bibliometric techniques. These included keyword co-occurrence (Przytuła, 2023) and a relational technique for examining relationships within the data included in the publications (Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021).

On 5 November 2023, the specialized literature was searched again using the same keywords as above. The results of the search (66 items) were exported to the software package R. The dataset comprised items published between 2006 and 2023, including 44 articles, 10 chapters in monographs, 10 conference publications, and 2 books prepared by a total of 168 authors. These publications were categorized by discipline: 42 under Business, Management and Accounting, 24 under Social Sciences and 20 under Economics, Econometrics and Finance (with the assumption that the authors decided in which category their article would be placed, with option to select multiple categories). This was followed by an analysis of the keywords indicated by the authors and the content of the abstracts. Figure 1 shows the 10 leading words/phrases listed by the authors of the analyzed publications. They highlight the relationship of CSR to such concepts as ethics, community engagement, and competitive advantage.

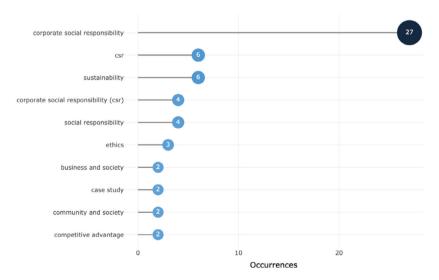


Figure 1. Analysis of keywords indicated by publication authors.

Drawn up in R software (n=66).

Content analysis of the abstracts, at the level of single phrases, did not identify new, relevant keywords recommended for analyzing the content of the mission and vision statements, nor did it identify specific components of social responsibility or the context of the research being conducted. In contrast, an analysis at the level of phrases consisting of two (Figure 2) or three words showed that despite narrowing the search, the abstracts studied were mostly about the mission and vision statements and/or social responsibility of financial institutions.

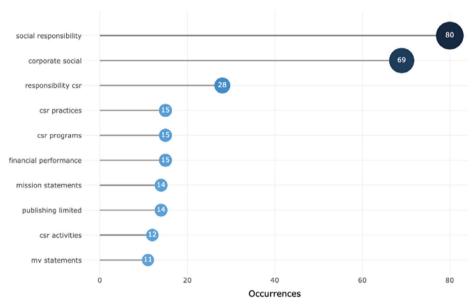


Figure 2. Analysis of words found in publication abstracts (bigram). Drawn up in R software (*n*=66).

In conclusion, the criteria derived from the literature review were retained for analyzing the content of the mission and vision statements of research institutes. The method applied involved critical analysis of the content of research institutes' mission and vision statements, guided by the conclusions of the systematic literature review. Using WordArt, the occurrence of relevant words in communication about social responsibility was also verified.

4. Results – analysis of the content of the missions and vision statements of research institutes

An analysis of the websites of 88 research institutes was conducted from July to October 2023. Of these, 86 were presented on the RGIB website (https://www.rgib.org.pl/index.php/baza-ib/baza-instytutow). An additional two (the Łukasiewicz Research Network - Łódz Institute of Technology and the Łukasiewicz Research Network - Polish Center for Technology Development) were listed in the index of institutes forming the Łukasiewicz Research Network (https://lukasiewicz.gov.pl/instytuty-lista/). The website of the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics was found to be not operational at the time of the study and was therefore not included in the analysis. The institutes' websites were analyzed for formal mission and vision statements and documents relating to development strategies. In cases where this information was not found, the institutes' Public Information Bulletin (BIP) pages were additionally reviewed, and then documents relating to development strategies were searched for by typing the institute's name and the phrase "development strategy" (in Polish) into Google. In the case of the Educational Research Institute, the resources of its intranet were used.

Of 88 research institutes, 44 had mission statements. Only 16 had vision statements (in addition to mission statements). In the absence of a mission and/or vision statement, the content of website tabs presenting the institute or its quality policies were analyzed (23 institutes). In summary: 67 research institutes had statements of some kind (hereinafter referred to as "declarations") that indicated, either directly or indirectly, they indeed had an adopted mission. A total of 11 research institutes did not indicate that they had either a mission or vision statement. The results of the analysis of the content of research institutes' "declarations" in the context of the specified criteria are presented in Table 1.

A total of 38 research institutes met the adopted criteria indicating socially responsible activities in their "declarations" (i.e., 58% of the institutes that published either director indirect "declarations" in this regard, and 43% of all those surveyed). However, indirect "declarations" (implicit rather than explicit statements of mission or vision), which the content analysis was extended to include, were found to indicate the social responsibility of research institutes only to a small degree, whereas this aspect was more clearly evident in content explicitly referred to as a mission or a vision statement.

Table 1. Occurrence of social responsibility criteria in the "declarations" of research institutes

		Number of institutes whose statements/declarations exhibited the expected characteristics		
	Criteria	Directly, in mission and/or vision statements	In indirect "declarations"	Total
1	Caring for customers/markets/external stakeholders	12	1	13
2	Caring for social/community and environmental factors	13	4	17
3	Acting on the basis of values, including those identified in the UN Sustainable Development Goals	6	2	8
	TOTAL (number)	31	7	38
	TOTAL % institutes having "declarations" (67)	46%	10%	58%
	TOTAL % of all institutes (88)	35%	8%	43%

The most frequently occurring Polish words in the content of all the analyzed "declarations" of research institutes are shown in Figure 3. All single words that are not relevant to the analysis (such as *nie* "not", *też* "also", *i* "and", etc.) have been removed.

The word that stands out most in Figure 3 is *rozwój* "development" (appearing the case-form *rozwoju* "of development") which appears in the examined "declarations" in the context of "research development" and "scientific development," making it a CSR-specific word when referring to scientific social responsibility. In second place is the word *ochrona* "protection" (appearing the case-form *ochrony* "of protection"), which closely relates to the name and profile of the activities of many institutes and

should not be equated with a declaration of social responsibility (e.g., the Institute for Plant Protection – PIB, the Central Laboratory for Radiation Protection, the Central Institute for Labor Protection – PIB, the Institute for Environmental Protection – PIB, etc.). This also largely applies to the word *środowisko* "environment." The word *nauka* "science" appears in the cloud in a few variants (*naukowy* "scientific," *nauki* "of science," *nauk* "of sciences") and, overall, it is the most common word (79%). This is understandable, given the scientific profile of research institutes (Table 2).



Figure 3. Word cloud of the statements and "declarations" of research institutes.

Drawn up in WordArt.

Table 2. Share of words important in defining social responsibility in the "declarations" of research institutes

	Institutes with the given word in their "declarations"				
Word	Number of institutes	% of institutes with declarations (67)	% of all institutes (88)		
rozwój "development"	26	39%	30%		
środowisko "environment"	25	37%	28%		
nauka/naukowy "science/scientific"	53	79%	60%		

An important take-away for research institutes in the context of social responsibility is the need to emphasize their importance to society and the development of science. A clearly defined mission and vision statement for each institute should reflect this purpose, highlighting their contributions to societal well-being and scientific progress. Due to the specific nature of their activities, institutes specializing in research on the environment should also refer in their mission and vision statements to the goals of sustainable development.

5. Conclusion and discussion of the research results

This study focused on a specific group (88) of research institutions in Poland, whose primary objective is to conduct specialized research and analyses (the Polish Act of 30 April 2010 on Research Institutes), but also to build societal trust in science and to disseminate research results (RGIB). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that these research institutes should apply the principles of scientific social responsibility (SSR) in their activities. The formal expression of the idea of SSR should be reflected in the content of the mission and vision statements depicting their market aspirations, values, and commitments to stakeholders (Obłój, 2007; Witek-Crabb, 2008; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Panasiewicz, 2015). However, the review of such mission and vision statements reported herein (in addition to less direct website "declarations" to the same effect) evidenced a lack of readiness on the part of research institutes to formally declare their commitment to CSR principles. While it cannot be ruled out that CSR/SSR activities are implemented in an informal way, determined to a certain degree by the purpose of establishing a research institute, this study has shed light in how these commitments are expressed in formal mission and vision statements.

Our systematic literature review and critical analysis evidenced a research gap concerning social responsibility in Polish research institutes. This was based on searches in a broader context (using searches for the terms "mission," "vision," "corporate social responsibility" in Polish); hence it applied to various companies and organizations, not just research institutes. The analysis did not clearly identify how research institutes express their social responsibility – most likely due to the specific nature of research institutes and the fact that when talking about the social responsibility of such institutes, the emphasis should be on responsibility in the context of the research conducted and the impact of science on society (SSR).

Our critical content analysis of research institutes' missions and vision statements turned out to be - in a sense - incomplete by design, as only 16 of the institutes examined (18%) had posted both a mission and a vision statement. In this situation, mission statements alone (28 institutes) were also accepted for analysis, as well as statements to a similar effect ("declarations"), presented in such website tabs as: "about us," "activities," etc. (23 institutes). The criteria for analyzing the content of the mission and vision statements, adopted based on the critical and analytical analysis of specialized literature, provided an opportunity to look at these institutes' "declarations" from multiple perspectives. It was identified that 58% of these "declarations" met the criteria relating to the purpose and nature of the "declaration." Most institutes expressed concern for social and/or environmental factors, but only 8 referred to sustainability goals. Thirteen of the institutes presented target beneficiaries, indicating the following: society, future generations, businesses and patients (by institutes with a medical profile). Criteria based on the occurrence of keywords in the "declarations" confirmed that the research institutes referred to CSR rather casually. The only word actually occurring frequently was nauka "science" (79%, including various grammatical forms). Further research on declarations and activities relating to CSR at research institutes should include an analysis of all strategy documents.

Our findings could be seen as aligning somewhat with the study by Mansi et al. (2017), who found that companies with low turnover do not focus on CSR in their mission and vision statements – a relationship that may perhaps also apply to research institutes with limited revenue opportunities. On the other hand, the relationship described by Joshi et al. (2023), that is, an increase in the use CSR keywords related to a business profile associated with the mining industry, was not found to be evident in our study. The Polish research institutes examined, including those relating to the mining industry, paid little attention to expressing their social responsibility through the content of their mission and vision statements.

A key recommendation for directors of research institutes is to present stakeholders with a formulated mission and vision statement that demonstrates their institute's philosophy relating to scientific social responsibility. Taking into account the modern view of corporate reporting (Śnieżek, 2016) and legal recommendations (ISO 26000 Standard; UN Millennium Declaration), it is also necessary to include the sustainable

development goals that the institute's activities aim to achieve in the mission and/or vision statement. A clear statement incorporating CSR would be an unequivocally positive message to the public, attesting to the institute's commitment. For employees, in turn, it would serve as a clear indication the direction of the organization's activities.

6. Summary

The concept of SSR and its functioning in research institutes is a topic worthy of further research, especially given the role of research institutes in the context of the development of science and its impact on society. Future research should also explore the informal activities of research institute employees that qualify as socially responsible practices. Additionally, investigating existing international practices in this area could provide insights and lead to the formulation of more recommendations for research institute directors, in Poland and elsewhere.

Our analysis of the content of mission and vision statements, based on the adopted criteria, revealed that only a small percentage (18%) of Polish research institutes have made clear declarations with a strong emphasis on social responsibility. This is evident, among other things, in the absence of the phrase "social responsibility" in mission and vision statements. The occasional use of words suggesting concern for stakeholders (society) or the environment indicates potential for stronger future declarations.

Given that mission and vision statements are fundamental tools of strategic management, the low number of such declarations suggests a lack of awareness among research institutes regarding the importance of these statements. This likely reflects a broader lack of recognition of the need to formally express a commitment to social responsibility.

For research institutes, it is crucial to highlight the societal significance of their activities in the context of SSR. Moreover, there is a need to clearly define the direction of their future development, which should be articulated through well-crafted mission and vision statements for each institute.

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