

Article

The Corporate Social Responsibility of Polish Energy Companies

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Abstract: If corporate social responsibility (CSR) is expected to work efficiently, there should be a standardised approach for implementation of the CSR concept for all businesses, including companies operating in the energy sector. Although many companies declare compliance with CSR standards, further investigation should be undertaken to evaluate if and how those standards have been applied in practice. The aim of this research is to examine the level of standardisation of the CSR activities within Polish energy companies and explore the good practices developed by those companies. The Polish energy companies have been selected for the investigation as the literature review we conducted demonstrates that there is limited research in this area and there is a knowledge gap regarding how Polish energy companies apply CSR regulation in practice. To accomplish the stated aims, the following research questions were developed: (1) What is the essence of applying the CSR concept in Polish energy companies, and at what level of development is the concept applied? (2) To what extent do Polish energy companies have a common approach to the CSR concept, and in what areas are there differences? (3) To what extent have Polish energy companies applied global CSR standards and solutions? (4) Is there a gap between the declared measures of CSR and their actual implementation in Polish energy companies? The research methodology of this study is based on a systematic literature review of the sources acquired from databases such as ProQuest, Emerald, SCOPUS and the Jagiellonian University Library. The multiple case study approach was identified as the most suitable research tool. Companies for the study were selected according to their affiliation to the energy sector and listing on the main market of the Warsaw Stock Exchange. These two assumptions allowed us to base this study on the largest Polish energy companies that have international status. Six areas of CSR annual report disclosures have been identified and used for the investigation and analysis. This research looks at similarities and difference between these six aspects of CSRs disclosed by Polish energy companies. The investigation allows us to conclude that the top three energy companies use similar tools to build their CSR strategies: formalised CSR concept, published CSR reports, disclosure of CSR information on the company website, CSR related activities offered to stakeholders, obtained CSR certificates, and CSR awards. This indicates the existence of a standardised approach to CSR across Polish energy companies.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; CSR; energy sector; disclosures



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1. Introduction

A country's economic growth strongly depends on its access to energy. The energy sector consists of five different areas: natural gas, oil and oil products, electricity, and the heat sector (heat economy) [1]. Various forecasts indicate that until 2040 the world economy will grow annually at 2.8%. Considering the predicted constant growth in energy generation effectiveness, it will result in an annual growth of the global energy sector of

1.1% per year. In addition, it is forecasted that the consumption of conventional sources (coal and crude oil) will grow slower (0.4% per year) as renewable sources (solar, wind, and geothermal energy) experience a more dynamic increase (7.4% per year). The further and more dynamic expansion of the renewable energy sources should achieve around a 20% contribution/share in the energy sector by 2040 [2].

As energy sector activities have a strong impact on the environment, it is expected that companies in that sector should apply relevant corporate social responsibility concepts in their daily operations. It is not enough just to declare such actions, but there is a need for formalised, well thought through and implemented practices, focused on three main groups of stakeholders: society, customers, and employees.

The economic changes that started in Poland in 1993 strongly impacted on the structure of the Polish energy sector. Firstly, the restructuring of national companies resulted in energy prices reaching the market price. Furthermore, the contribution of the energy sector to the GDP was impacted, and significant improvements were made to the environment because of a reduction in harmful emissions of SO₂, NO_x, particulate matter, and ashes [3]. Changes have been taking place in the energy sectors around the world such as activities aiming at reducing global warming and climate change, the growing pressure to use renewable energy, including biomass (as this will reduce the use of traditional fossil fuels), also strongly influenced changes in the Polish energy sector [4].

The draft amendment to the Polish Energy Law introduced in 2021 proposes a comprehensive solution for the development of energy storage. In a broader perspective, this should lead to the development of better ways of distributing energy and renewable energy sources such as [5]:

- smart solutions for the Polish energy sector,
- active consumer, protected consumer facilitations for businesses,
- development of energy storage—a step towards low-carbon energy,
- tidier regulations and more efficient control.

The main objective of this study was to investigate and evaluate to what extent the activities of Polish energy companies in the area of CSR are standardised and consistent with international good practices, and how these standards are implemented in practice.

2. Literature Review

The starting point of this research was the systematic literature review [6,7]. This has been conducted using ProQuest, Emerald, SCOPUS, as well as resources collected in the Jagiellonian University Library including monographs and leading Polish academic journals in this area (see Table 1). This allowed us to perform an objective evaluation and interpretation of the scientific output in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The selection was based on keywords such as 'CSR' and 'energy sector'. This has been further expanded by the auxiliary analysis using concepts of energy companies and sustainable development. The collected data were narrowed down to the list containing full reviewed texts in indicated databases. 2011 was selected as the starting date for the publication search, as it was the year when the European Union Commission defined corporate social responsibility.

Subsequently, publication such as announcements, conference presentations and book reviews were excluded. Duplicate items have been removed. Finally, the content was analysed based on abstracts, narrowing down the references to the area of management sciences.

The data collected went through a thorough analysis to systemise the currently available research findings in the literature. The quality of those sources has been evaluated and those that did not fully meet the set criteria have been rejected. The data has been systemised based on set key words that lead to the confirmation of primary cognitive knowledge gaps. It has been established that there is a lack of empirical research that discusses CSR within energy companies. The adopted methodology enables us to collect data that are significant for further development of CSR [8].

Table 1. Biometric analysis based on keywords.

	Articles	Reviewed and Full Texts	In Scientific Journals (Since 2011)	Selected on the Basis of the Abstract Content Analysis
CSR				
ProQuest	49,294	48,940	41,178	1014
Emerald	4424	3958	3605	512
SCOPUS	23,603	9858	1202	241
Jagiellonian University Library	1420	1124	987	456
CSR + Europe				
ProQuest	14,529	14,377	12,003	909
EMERALD	1804	1537	1429	328
SCOPUS	471	134	14	2
Jagiellonian University Library	123	87	21	7
CSR + Poland				
ProQuest	8094	7703	2717	518
Emerald	188	173	155	47
SCOPUS	154	66	5	2
Jagiellonian University Library	1347	1285	9864	607
Energy Sector				
ProQuest	19,163	66	20	11
Emerald	844	661	142	18
SCOPUS	241	115	93	15
Jagiellonian University Library	145	114	52	10
CSR + Energy Sector				
ProQuest	649	644	608	297
Emerald	105	103	95	24
SCOPUS	53	17	5	2
Jagiellonian University Library	78	64	63	27
CSR + Poland + Energy Sector				
ProQuest	32	29	11	5
Emerald	10	10	10	3
SCOPUS	4	3	1	1
Jagiellonian University Library	27	25	14	12

Source: Self-analysis.

The idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been dated to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the forerunner of the concept of CSR is considered to be A. Carnegie, according to whom CSR is based on charity and trusteeship [9]. The modern dimension of CSR was shaped in the 1960s in the United States and the United Kingdom [10]. The origin of the CSR concept is regarded to be the 1953 H. Bowen publication of the first CSR related book “The Social Responsibilities of a Businessman”, where social responsibility was explored and principles of social responsibility were first defined [11]. It is necessary to acknowledge the contribution of Friedman, who stressed that “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits”. He stresses that business cannot be forced to have corporate social responsibilities, and this is for three reasons. Firstly, only humans can have moral responsibility for its actions, not a company. Secondly, managers’ primary responsibility is to satisfy the needs of shareholders and protect their interests. Finally, it is the state/government’s obligation to look after social issues, and it should not be part of company responsibility [12–15].

However, there is no doubt that the definition, as well as the concept itself, has changed over the years [11,16]. Entrepreneurial social responsibility, unlike today’s term CSR, was then associated with activities carried out by the entrepreneur, not the entire organisation. Entrepreneurial social responsibility was understood as the company owner’s obligation

to base his/her business decisions and policies on the principle benefits of the society as a whole [17]. In 1960, K. Davis attempted to create his own definition of social responsibility. He defined it as a series of decisions that must be taken by the enterprise, not only to improve its position on the market, but also to achieve financial benefits [16,18].

The contemporary authors define CSR slightly differently as a set of responsibilities of the organisation to protect and enhance the society in which it operates (see more: [19–22]). It can be demonstrated in relation to so-called external stakeholders who are interested in the performance of the organisation, the environment, or the society. Therefore, CSR can be broadly conceptualized as companies' commitment to benefit the welfare of society and the activities conducted (i.e., doing good) to meet societal obligations [23–25].

The European Union Commission has defined corporate social responsibility, "as the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society. CSR should be company led and public authorities can play a supporting role through a smart mix of voluntary policy measures and, where necessary, complementary regulation. Companies can become socially responsible by following the law and integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer, and human rights concerns into their business strategy and operations" [26].

"The three CSR pillars of sustainability include three social responsibilities: economic, legal, and ethical. The organizations should aim at operating "in the middle", i.e., activities should aim at fulfilling economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities simultaneously [27,28].

A. Kwiecien takes a similar approach of classifying CSR into specific categories [29]:

- sociological—reviewing of the human capital model in the organisation with the attitude of increasing the competencies of the employees.
- ethical—evaluating the activity of the enterprise, as well as key choices in the context of social standards, considering the view of local communities.
- ecological—analysing the impact of the company's current and future activities on the ecosystem, i.e., analysing both the negative effects related to production itself as well as the effects of using the produced goods by the consumer.
- economic—evaluating how income resulting from production activities or services offered is obtained.

When currently undertaking the implementation or development of an already operating CSR concept, contemporary standards must be set. CSR transforms and evolves from being a 'goodwill company' concept into becoming a 'business function', a 'strategic management' component of central importance to firm success [30–32], and a vital part of a 'firm's strategy' [33–36]. Viser points out that we now have a new approach of the CSR 2.0 concept [37]. The predecessor developed in the 1980s and 1990s known as CSR 1.0, focused mainly on making companies less harmful and improving working conditions to expand the position of the company and its image in the eyes of the local community [38]. In contrast CSR 2.0 is based on accountability, which enables companies to take the necessary actions more quickly and more efficiently. Viser distinguished five basic features that illustrate how CSR 2.0 works: [16,37,38]:

- creativity and innovation that every enterprise must have in order to survive in the market. Enterprises should pay attention to emerging consumer needs and be able to satisfy them.
- Scalability means spreading the right actions on a larger scale. Change for the better needs to happen in an ever-increasing number of companies, not just one.
- responsiveness to circumstances, i.e., in addition to noticing a problem, the ability to quickly take appropriate steps to meet constantly changing new needs.
- taking the global aspect into account, i.e., considering global aspects when taking actions on the regional/local level, as the two are now complementary.
- circularity, otherwise known as a closed cycle, that means that companies create market needs in a certain way while satisfying them at the same time.

CSR 1.0 and 2.0 can be viewed as consecutive stages in the evolution of CSR. CSR 1.0 is treated as a kind of introduction and is designed to lead to the creation of something

better, while CSR 2.0, as its more developed form, involves the initiation of joint actions. In addition, CSR 2.0 stresses the necessity of investigating greenwashing behaviours, the communication strategy of a company in which it overstates CSR practice and performance, when in reality the actions are rather symbolic and of little or no substance [39].

The earlier adopted CSR models were not that comprehensive and insightful when describing how a business can be socially responsible and what and how changes need to be embedded in management strategies for a CSR approach to work efficiently [40]. The new approach that has been proposed within CSR aims at how CSR can be socially constructed in a specific context [41]. The involvement strategy highlights the necessity to implement continuous stakeholder dialogue, ensuring not only that the organization “keeps abreast of its stakeholders” changing expectations, but also have a prospective influence on those expectations [42].

The indicated trends and changes lead to the conversion of the CSR concept into dynamic processes that will shape and build the mutual responsibilities of the corporation and its stakeholders—employees, customers, and society [43].

The energy sector is of particular importance in meeting these challenges because it exerts a substantial environmental impact [44]. Our literature review demonstrates that there is a growing body of research to show the impact of applying the concept of corporate social responsibility on the value of companies, including energy companies. A. Fatemi, I. Fooladi, and H. Tehranian carried out research and created a model by means of which enterprises can decide for themselves according to which criteria the expenses incurred on social responsibility will have an impact on its value [45]. M.E. Porter and M.R. Kramer developed the idea of shared value, according to which economic value affects social value [46]. On the other hand, J.W. Stoelhorst and F. Bridoux noted that a company’s ability to influence stakeholders and involve them in value creation promotes the spread of social well-being in society [47].

An enterprise that incorporates social responsibility into its activities must be aware of certain conflicts, such as production that provides employment for the local community and at the same time pollutes the environment. Due to these conflicts of interest, it is important to have clear social objectives and an action plan. This is usually a choice between external and internal responsibility. Conflicts between these two types of social responsibility are inevitable, but it is necessary to reconcile them in a balanced way and relate them to the specific conditions of the enterprise [48].

It must be stressed that, in the energy sector, stakeholders play an essential part of CSR strategy. There are specific indicators used to monitor sustainable development. The main indicator used is the Human Development Index (HDI), which provides information on the main economic and social trends of the country and represents economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. Two categories of sustainable energy development indicators have been identified [49]:

- increase in energy efficiency—this takes into account the energy intensity of GDP (primary energy/GDP, final energy/GDP); and
- increase in use of renewable energy sources—this takes into account the share of renewables in electricity generation, share of renewable in total primary energy supply, and the use of biofuels in transportation.

It should be noted that the majority of studies conducted in the field of the CSR of energy sectors have focused on the analysis of the content and the quality of sustainability reporting [50].

3. Methodology

This research was funded under the program of the Minister of Science and Higher Education titled “Regional Initiative of Excellence” in 2019–2022, project number 018/RID/2018/19.

To investigate the stated aims and objectives, a qualitative approach has been adopted (see more: [51–54]). The following research questions were formulated for this study:

- What is the essence of applying the CSR concept in Polish energy companies, and at what level of development is the concept applied?
- To what extent do Polish energy companies have a common approach to the CSR concept, and in what areas are there differences?
- To what extent have Polish energy companies applied global CSR standards and solutions?
- Is there a gap between the declared measures of CSR and their actual implementation in Polish energy companies?

Based on a systematic literature review, the multiple case study method was identified as the most suitable research tool (see more: [55–59]). Companies for the study were selected according to their affiliation with the energy sector and listing on the main market of the Warsaw Stock Exchange. These two assumptions mean that the subject of the study was the largest Polish energy companies that have an international presence.

The sample for this research has been carefully chosen to allow the application of both a literal replication (where results confirm one another), as well as theoretical replication (where results differ, but for predictable reasons). These assumptions permit us to collect a compact and consistent set of data as they originate from numerous sources. Such an approach allows for triangulation to be conducted. The amount of identified case study repetition is discretionary and does not constitute any rule. The choice of cases used for evaluation was based on the subjective assessment of the companies in the aspect of similarity and competitiveness [60].

The research was based on the existing experience of researchers in the evaluation of companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

The first stage of this research was to organise and prepare the data for analysis. This included sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information. This was followed by an analysis of the overall depth, credibility, and usefulness of the information. The validation of the accuracy of the data was performed in several stages, starting from evaluation of all the data based on their significance for the research process. Then, codification was conducted by assigning categories and grouping the sources [60].

The data for analysis was obtained from carefully selected sources such as annual reports, companies’ websites, press releases, and internal documents. The next step was to validate all the results according to the common significance of the specific information in terms of CSR.

The validation involved numerous stages. Firstly, the data for the analysis were arranged by the selected case studies and then divided depending on the source of information they came from. Secondly, all acquired general information was reviewed and the common meaning of individual pieces of information was evaluated and was followed by a detailed analysis of the information obtained in the context of previously posed research questions and individual case studies. The abovementioned procedure enhanced the accuracy of results since it combines information from various sources, and leads to allocation of data to specific categories in the CSR concept. The acquired results have a flexible structure with an emphasis on individual interpretations [55–59].

The convergence of the various data sources in the reports followed by an analysis of data collected allowed us to acknowledge that the application of the triangulation method improved the accuracy of the research. The obtained results are of a flexible nature, with an emphasis placed on the individual interpretation of data and expression of the complexity of issues companies are facing when trying to embed CSR [60].

The final stage of data analysis was the interpretation of obtained results through an evaluation of their significance. Those results were benchmarked with the information acquired during the literature review. The logic of matching patterns has been applied, which involved the comparison of the patterns of the case studies with theoretical solutions. The adoption of such research methodology can, in the future, enable the creation of proposals for good practices for CSR [52–54].

The last stage in the research was the presentation of findings using the qualitative narrative approach that was complemented by visual tables. An interpretation of the findings has been presented, followed by conclusions and recommendation for researchers, managers, and lawmakers.

4. Data Presentation

Three companies were selected for the study, which met the following three criteria:

- the company belongs to the WIG30 index (it is published based on the value of the stock portfolio of the 30 biggest and most liquid companies from the WSE Main Market),
- the company belongs to WIG ENERGIA index (it is a sector sub-index of WIG index. It includes companies that fulfil the underlying criteria and are assigned to the energy sector),
- the company belongs to the WIG ESG index (it is published on the basis of the value of share portfolio of companies considered socially responsible, i.e., companies that follow socially responsible business principles, in particular environmental, social, economic and corporate governance issues).

WIG-Energia index is calculated by the WSE from 4 January 2010 and its base date is 31 December 2009. This index portfolio includes companies that are part of the WIG index and that belong to the energy sector. WIG-Energia index portfolio may include only companies that belong to the WIG index and have at least 10% of free float shares and the value of such shares is higher than 1 million EUR. In addition, the index may not include companies from the Alert List (e.g., companies in bankruptcy) and companies classified in the Lower Liquidity Space (due to low turnover of their shares on the stock exchange). Therefore, the mere fact that a company from the energy sector is listed on the WSE is not sufficient for it to be included in the index.

Based on the disclosed CSR information by Polish listed companies, the following areas have been selected for detailed investigation (see Table 2):

1. Existence of formalised CSR concept.
2. Existence and frequency of CSR reports.
3. Location and accessibility CSR discloser (tab) on the company website.
4. Activities offered to stakeholders (employees, customers, and local communities).
5. Obtained CSR certificates or standards.
6. Received CSR awards.

Table 2. Comparison of CSR disclosures among Energy companies listed on Warsaw Stock Exchange.

Comparison Areas	Enea Group	PGE	Tauron
<p>existence of formalised CSR concept existence and frequency of CSR reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The industry's "Declaration on Sustainable Development and Responsible Business" was signed in 2009. In June 2010, an analysis of Enea S.A.'s social involvement activities in 2007–2009 and the needs of local communities for which it feels responsible was conducted for the first time. The results of this analysis were published in the document "Close to communities. Review of Enea SA's social involvement in 2007–2009". In 2011 it joined the Global Compact—a UN international initiative for corporate social responsibility and supporting sustainable development. In 2012 the company commenced the process of CSR reporting—it published the industry's first "ENEA Capital Group CSR Report 2011" and adopted an annual reporting cycle, rebuilding it in subsequent years into sustainable development reports. Since 2013, the Group has been publishing CSR reports according to the international Global Reporting Initiative standard: GRI G4, at the "Core" application level. Reports are prepared exclusively online on a dedicated, interactive website. When choosing this form of reporting, Enea was guided by the environmental impact of the decision, i.e., saving paper and forest resources and, to a large extent, the convenience of Stakeholders provided by the ease of access to the publication for users around the globe. <p>The current sustainability report was published on 12 August 2020. The report is a summary of our efforts to balance economic growth with energy security, enhancing quality of life and caring for the environment. The report for the first time relates the projects implemented by Enea to the 5 commitments it has made to implement the 17 SDGs of the UN Agenda 2030: No. 4 "Good quality education", No. 5 "Gender equality", No. 7 "Clean and accessible energy", No. 8 "Economic growth and decent work" and No. 11 "Sustainable cities and communities. The publication, prepared in accordance with the international non-financial reporting standards GRI Standards".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR principles are implemented throughout the entire energy value chain: from extraction, through generation, distribution and sales. Social responsibility was one of the company's development directions in the update of PGE CG's business strategy until 2020. On 19 October 2020, PGE published a new Group strategy until 2030 with an outlook to 2050. The company presented the Group's transformation plan and the path to decarbonisation of generation and announced the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Until 2018, information on activities social engagement was included as part of the issuance of the "Management Report". However, from 2019 onwards, a single comprehensive report is being produced across all areas of activity—the PGE CG Integrated Report. The non-financial part of the annual report is to emphasise the importance of corporate social responsibility in the company's operations. The new approach to reporting is another step in the PGE Group's consistently implemented direction of development of corporate social responsibility. <p>In 2008, it joined the Global Compact, the United Nations' international initiative for corporate social responsibility and the promotion of sustainable development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAURON Group's Sustainability Strategy 2017–2025 It is based on 5 directions: two of them, "Customer and customer focus" and "Reliability and quality of delivery of products and services to customers", are leading, the other three are supporting directions and include: 'Occupational safety, ethical culture and employee involvement', 'Environmental protection' and 'Socio-business partnership'. Within the framework of the directions, 19 commitments were adopted, each of which was assigned measures and initiatives. TAURON Group's Code of Responsible Business—the basis for the adoption of the Code was the conviction that responsible and transparent business behaviour, based on respect for the law and consideration of stakeholders' needs, is a prerequisite for sustainable development. TAURON Group Environmental Policy—responsible impact on the environment and use of its resources in line with the principles of sustainable development. TAURON Group Climate Policy—effective prevention of climate change and sustainable development <p>Since 2017, one comprehensive report has been prepared on all areas of the Group's activity—the Integrated Report, which allows to clearly show the relations and dependencies between the financial and non-financial aspects of the activities of all the Group's companies. It constitutes a comprehensive and transparent document presenting the company's activities, its business model, strategy, most significant changes, opportunities, and risks, as well as results from the perspective of all stakeholder groups. Combining financial data with non-financial aspects of the company is also intended to show the potential achieved through synergies between the core business and non-business activities.</p>
<p>CSR tab on the company website</p>	<p>Yes, but only at the bottom of the page when you scroll down, there is a separate tab in the right-hand corner—all dedicated to CSR, with a wealth of content on the subject.</p>	<p>Yes—Sustainable Business tab at the top of the page—describing environmental, social and corporate governance management.</p>	<p>No—The CSR information is located in the "About TAURON" Tab, at the very bottom of the main page, in the bottom right-hand corner and is subtitled "TAURON Group's Code of Responsible Business" as well as in the "TAURON for the Environment" and "Work at TAURON" sections</p>

Table 2. Cont.

Comparison Areas	Enea Group	PGE	Tauron
Stakeholders (employees, customers and local communities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enea Group Code of Ethics has been developed. It describes ethical values and principles of conduct which indicate how to behave in business situations towards customers, business partners, shareholders, local communities, and colleagues. The Enea Group advocates open dialogue with all its Stakeholders. It is keen to get to know opinions on its operations, but also pays attention to inform its surroundings about events taking place at the Group. It adjusts the form and methods of communication to the expectations of all stakeholder groups. Enea Group creates an organisational culture based on common values considering the law and expectations of all stakeholder groups. "We act in accordance with applicable laws and internal procedures. Respect the views of employees and provide them with equal opportunities and equal treatment. Observes the principles of diversity management-no differentiation is made on the basis of gender, race, nationality, disability, age, sexual identity, union membership, ethnic or social origin, religion or political beliefs (Policy Against Bullying and Discrimination and Other Unacceptable Behaviour). Creates favourable working conditions and development opportunities for employees, focusing in this area on employee satisfaction surveys, skills and competence development, diversity of motivation, workplace comfort and safety (The Procedure for Implementation of Human Capital Development Measures in Enea Group, The Principles of Adaptation in Enea Group, The Principles of Parting with Employees in Enea Centrum Sp. z o.o., Health Protection Programme). Performs the terms of contracts signed with Clients with best care. Pays special attention to the quality of products and services offered-an important element is also the provision of modern and environmentally friendly solutions adapted to the conditions and environment in which they are used; therefore, the Company continuously develops new products and invests in infrastructure. Enea initiatives for customers and local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees can count on competitive salaries compared to the local market and stable employment. It guarantees its employees additional benefits-recreation outside work and health care ("Energy for Health!", Health Care closer to the patient). Children of employees can participate in organised half-schools, after school activities and holiday camps. Employee Friendly Employer-promoting and implementing high employment standards, engaging employees through various forms of dialogue and communication and involvement in direct activities. Initiatives and programmes supporting occupational health and safety: establishment of the OHS Council of Energa Group, training of OHS services and social labour inspectors of Energa Group, information campaign "Planning tomorrow?" "Safety Hour. Training projects are conducted to develop employees' competences, ensuring the implementation of strategic objectives. Co-financing of education at universities, MBA studies, post-graduate studies and secondary schools. Employees benefit from specialised training, language courses and industry conferences. Employees have access to training on an equal basis and thus can develop at every stage of their career path. Development initiatives and programmes: Succession Plan, Technical Academy, Experts Programme, Age Management Concept, Internal Trainer Development Programme, Bona Fide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAURON Group employees are a key stakeholder group—the key importance is stress to ensure their safety in the workplace, priority is given to promoting health and safety principles in each of the companies and striving for zero accidents. the development of employees organised through activities via The TAURON Group Open University and competitions in the Innovation Zone and in the Tauron network-employees' ideas for improvements competitions. Tauron is an employer open to diversity, creating a work environmentally friendly to everyone (Code of Business Ethics of the Group, Compliance Programme in the TAURON Group, Anti-Bullying Policy in the TAURON Group companies) Development of employee volunteering Organisation of information and integration events (roadshows, family picnics, special events) Reliability and quality of product and service delivery to customers ensuring security of energy supply to our customers and building a range of products and services tailored to their expectations. Building a comprehensive customer communication platform to continually improve the level of satisfaction with our products and services by obtaining comprehensive information. strong emphasis on the area of research, development, and innovation-activities are carried out with the aim of establishing lasting cooperation with start-ups and implementing the most profitable ideas. The Group promotes an innovative organisational culture aimed at involving employees in proposing innovative projects and initiatives. Participation in several initiatives aimed at minimising the negative impact of its activities on the environment. The Group successfully optimises resource management processes (water, raw materials) and pursues an active waste management policy. An important role in environmental protection is also played by pro-environmental education carried out by individual Group companies-targeted both at children and adults.

Table 2. Cont.

Comparison Areas	Enea Group	PGE	Tauron
	<p>Development of the loyalty programme Shopping Zone by extending and making more attractive the product offer and providing access to the Shopping Zone for new segments of customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation with the Association of Energy Trading in the educational campaign “It’s not a joke-choose wisely. Check who offers you electricity and gas”, aimed at warning customers against dishonest sellers. The educational campaign “Check who is offering you energy before you sign a contract”. Support for customers who felt cheated by other electricity sellers. Preparing a special product offer for them. <p>Enea Foundation-the Foundation has implemented hundreds of initiatives and projects for nearly 120,000 beneficiaries. Each year, the Foundation runs its own pro-social projects and supports hundreds of actions initiated by public utility entities operating in the following areas: education of children and young people, promotion of sport and healthy lifestyle, health protection, culture and development of communities and local communities.since 2017, it has been a strategic partner of the Responsible Business Forum-this partnership allows for the exchange of experience, knowledge and the building of multifaceted relationships between the companies that the Forum brings together. In addition, the Responsible Business Forum publishes each year the Report “Responsible Business in Poland. Good practices”, which is the largest review of socially responsible business activities in Poland in a given year. For several years, examples of Enea Group activities have been among the practices described in the Report. In addition, Enea invites representatives of the Forum to meetings raising the competence of employee volunteering coordinators and volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building lasting relationships with customers, based on fair practices, transparency, and openness, and increasing accessibility of the services provided to the public. Continuous efforts to improve energy efficiency, as well as effective attention to environmental issues. Supporting the communities in which Energa Group companies operate and building social partnerships, charitable activities. Managing the organisation with respect to standards and principles influencing the way of implementing the objectives of the Strategy for Sustainable Development and Responsible Business. Customer service with the highest standards and a friendly way of preparing offers, as well as building lasting relationships with customers based on mutual trust. Appropriate marketing communication and facilitating consumers’ access to products and services. Digitisation of the customer service process. The company supports employee assistance initiatives during which funds are raised by participating in assistance programmes or fundraising for a specific purpose, donating blood, collecting items for the needy, helping animal shelters, transferring 1% of tax. <p>Numerous projects are carried out, such as supporting educational, cultural, health and sports initiatives, as well as those that strengthen the sense of connection and national community: opening the only museum in the country that can illustrate over a century-long history of the Polish electric power industry, organizing a football tournament for children, sponsoring the national football team, supporting culture under the Energa Patronage programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TAURON Group’s programme to combat low emissions, also in the context of promoting electromobility, under its pro-environmental activities. The TAURON Group pay special attention to establishing long-term relations with the Company’s immediate environment, i.e., social partners, local communities, regional and local administration, and suppliers. The TAURON Foundation plays an important role in building relations with local communities. In the area of partnership with academic centres, the focus is on establishing new relationships with research centres, patronage agreements with schools, and promoting the professions of energy technician, electrical and mechanical technician, and mining technician. <p>Dialogue with stakeholders is based mainly on regular meetings and consultations, expanding cooperation with local professional organisations and further cooperation with Social Welfare Centres to develop guidelines for joint activities.</p>

Table 2. Cont.

Comparison Areas	Enea Group	PGE	Tauron
<p>CSR certificates or standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of conformity of the Integrated Management System with the requirements of the standards: PN-EN ISO 9001:2015, PN-EN ISO 14001:2015, PN-N-18001:2004. <p>In 2011, Enea Group joined the Global Compact—an international UN initiative for corporate social responsibility and supporting sustainable development. Thus, Enea Group took up the challenge addressed to business to follow 10 fundamental principles in its operations in the field of human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption and to promote corporate social responsibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2008, it has actively participated in the UN Secretary-General’s Global Compact initiative. It is the world’s largest corporate responsibility and human rights initiative. Involvement in the Global Compact means that the PGE Group has adopted 10 principles, including the effective prevention of employment discrimination, elimination of all human rights violations by the company, a preventive approach to environmental protection and prevention of corruption. <p>Since 2004, the Company has applied and continuously improved its certified Integrated Quality Management System compliant with the EN ISO 9001 standard, the Environmental Management System compliant with the EN ISO 14001 standard, and since 2012 the Occupational Health and Safety Management System compliant with the PN-N 18001 standard.</p>	<p>Seven areas of ISO 26000: organisational governance, human rights, labour practices, the environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues, community involvement and community development.</p>
<p>CSR awards (for the years 2019–2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Silver CSR Leaf Award awarded by POLITYKA journal-awarded to companies for conducting activities in line with the principles of CSR. • Diamond Patron of Bydgoszcz Sport title awarded by the City of Bydgoszcz. • The title of Patron of Wielkopolska Sport, won in the 62nd edition of the poll of Głos Wielkopolski. • Diamond of Top Industry 2019 in the Innovation of the Year category for the use of virtual reality to train Technical Services Employees, awarded by Executive Club. <p>It is annually appreciated in the study “ESG analysis of companies in Poland”, organised, among others, by the Association of Stock Exchange Issuers among all companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and is among the top three companies in the international industry in the category “public utility companies”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CSR Leaf Award awarded by POLITYKA weekly journal-awarded to companies for conducting activities in line with the principles of CSR. • Winner of the Governor of Łódź Economic Award in the category: “Corporate governance and corporate social responsibility. <p>Winner of the “Trustworthy Employer” competition for the Employee Volunteering Programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CSR Leaf Award awarded by POLITYKA-awarded to companies for conducting activities in line with the principles of CSR. • CSR initiatives undertaken by the TAURON Group are highly rated by experts—the prestigious report “Responsible Business in Poland 2019. Good practices” lists as many as 25 items from the organisation <p>Winner of the Two Hours for the Family competition organised by the Humanities Institute for the “impressive development of the 2h4family /2h4human campaign and use of all its potential.</p>

Source: own analysis.

5. Data Analysis

The analysis of corporate social responsibility activities of the Polish energy companies, and the comparison of the results with international references from a systematic literature review clearly demonstrate that PGE Capital Group is the largest company in Poland in the energy sector in terms of revenue and generated profit. Thanks to the combination of its own fuel resources and energy generation, as well as its ownership of distribution networks, PGE guarantees safe and stable electricity supply to over five million customers. The Enea Group, on the other hand, comes in second in the Polish energy market in terms of electricity generation, managing the full value chain on the electricity market: from fuel, through electricity generation, distribution, sales and customer service. The Tauron Group is one of the largest business entities in Poland and one of the largest energy holdings in Central and Eastern Europe. It operates in all areas of the energy market—from coal mining, through electricity and heat production, distribution, and sales, to customer service. On a smaller scale, the holding is also involved in the wholesale of fuels and related products (coal and biomass trading). In 2014, Tauron also entered the gas fuel trading market. The CSR activities undertaken by these three entities can therefore be considered the leading lines of Polish energy companies.

Creating a CSR strategy in all three companies is based on setting CSR objectives, with PGE having published a new strategy until 2030 with an outlook until 2050. The objective is to be the leader in modernising the energy sector. Its mission, on the other hand, is to provide energy for a secure future. According to its long-term vision, PGE is to become the leader of sustainable energy transformation in Poland. The company's vision translates into the strategic priorities, which include generating environmentally friendly energy and providing modern energy services. The company presented the Group's transformation plan and the path towards decarbonisation of generation and announced the goal of achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

The activities of the Tauron Group are based on the Sustainability Strategy 2017–2025. It is based on five directions. Two of them, "customer and customer focus" and "reliability and quality of product and service delivery to customers", are leading, while the other three play a supporting role ("occupational safety, ethical culture and employee involvement", "environmental protection" and "socio-business partnership").

Enea, on the other hand, has so far only declared to maintain an open dialogue with all its stakeholders. It pursues the objective of finding out about opinions on its operations, informs the environment about events taking place within the group and adjusts the form and manner of communication to stakeholders' expectations. Enea creates an organisational culture based on shared values that considers the law and the expectations of Stakeholders. It conducts itself in compliance with applicable laws and internal procedures.

To Enea's advantage, its similarities with PGE should be pointed out. Both companies joined the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations (the Global Compact), an international UN initiative for corporate social responsibility and the promotion of sustainable development. PGE Group has actively participated in the Initiative since 2008. Enea has been a member of the Global Compact since 2011. Commitment to the Global Compact means the adoption of 10 principles, including, among others, effective anti-discrimination in employment, elimination of all human rights violations by the company, a preventive approach to environmental protection, and anti-corruption.

All three companies' emphasise the role of their employees in their CSR approach. They consider employees to be the most important group of stakeholders in their CSR concepts. PGE is applying the "Employee Friendly Employer" programme and its implementation manifests itself in the promotion and execution of high employment standards, involvement of employees in various forms of dialogue and communication, and engagement in direct actions. As part of the programme, training projects are carried out to develop employees' competences, ensuring the implementation of strategic objectives, e.g., co-financing of education at universities, MBA programmes, postgraduate programmes, and secondary schools. In addition, employees benefit from specialised training, language

training, and industry conferences. They have access to training on an equal basis, and thus have the opportunity to develop at every stage of their career path. Initiatives and programmes supporting development are implemented through, e.g., succession plans, technical academies, experts programmes, age management concepts, internal trainers development programmes, etc. Enea respects employees' views and provides them with equal opportunities and equal treatment. It respects the principles of diversity management—no differentiation is made regarding gender, race, nationality, disability, age, sexual identity, union membership, ethnic or social origin, religion, or political belief. The Policy for Counteracting Mobbing and Discrimination and Other Unacceptable Behaviour is applied across the group.

Employees of the TAURON Group are key stakeholders, which manifests itself in ensuring their safety in the workplace. Priority is given to promoting health and safety principles in each part of the companies and striving for total absence of accidents.

The TAURON Group's development of employees is delivered by organizing Open University classes, employees' innovation and idea competitions within the Innovation Zone and in the TAURON Network. Moreover, TAURON as an employer is open to address diversity and create a friendly work environment for everyone. To achieve these goals, the company created a Group Code of Business Ethics, Compliance Programme, and Anti-Bullying Policy.

The other two stakeholder groups, customers, and the local environment, are also valued by the companies, although no longer in such a formalised way. The TAURON Group attach particular importance to establishing long-term relations with the company's immediate environment, social partners, local communities, regional and local administration, and suppliers. It builds efficient relations with local communities, and partnership with academic centres through establishing cooperation with research centres and contributing to the flow of innovations from the R&D area to the economy. Dialogue with stakeholders is mainly based on regular meetings and consultations, expanding cooperation with local industry organisations, and local social organisations. On the other hand, Enea has been a strategic partner of the Responsible Business Forum since 2017. This partnership allows for the exchange of experience, knowledge, and building multi-faceted relationships between companies that the Forum brings together. ENEA also holds a certificate of conformity of the Integrated Management System with the requirements of the standards: PN-EN ISO 9001:2015, PN-EN ISO 14001:2015, PN-N-18001:2004. Since 2004, PGE has applied a certified Integrated Quality Management System compliant with EN ISO 9001, Environmental compliant with EN ISO 14001, and since 2012 Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) compliant with PN-N 18001.

Although all companies report their CSR activities and plans annually, only Enea's CSR reporting systems have been based on the international Global Reporting Initiative standard GRI G4 at the "Core" application level since 2013. This reporting that is based on international standards allows for the transparent assessment of companies' CSR activities, and this is lacking in both PGE and Tauron.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This research allows us to identify three areas that needs of to be considered by managers, researchers, and lawmakers. The theoretical implication that gives opportunities for further research, the practical implication indicates where new laws and regulations can be put place or developed further, and the managerial implications should be brought to the attention of managers to help them make better uses of their resources.

From a theoretical point of view, it needs to be recognised that this research has a number of limitations that could lead to further studies. Firstly, only the top three companies have been included in this study, so the research could be further expanded by including in the sample additional companies from WIG ENERGIA. Secondly, the time frame (investigated period) could be extended to explore if there are any changes in CSR

strategies and discourse over the years. In addition, the ESG quantitative indicators could be analysed to look at the different angles of CSR within the energy sector.

Practical aspects of this research demonstrate that the lawmakers have to be aware that although there are a number of similarities, there is still lack of consistency in CSR disclosures by Polish energy companies. This leads to the assumption that there is a growing need for more detailed regulation and uniformity. In addition, one of the first aspects that needs to be addressed is guidance on how to properly formulate and incorporate CSR strategies, so that it enables us to meet the needs of stakeholders over a long period of time. Some advice and examples of good practices should be provided by regulators to support companies in the design process. The effective implementation of the strategy is key, so more training should be provided for staff responsible for the strategy design and implementation so they can be upskilled and assure successful implementation and further development. In addition, often activities of enterprises related to social responsibility are not planned, and entrepreneurs do not know how to initiate them. In larger enterprises, if possible, it should be recommended that implementation and execution of socially responsible activities should be handled by separate units.

Many managers struggle with efficient implementation of CSR strategies and processes. They are sometimes not aware that it is not only them who needs to put effort into protecting the environment as such, but also their employees, as they will be implementing relevant CSR process and strategies. Effort should be made to attract and retain the best employees through appropriate support and development. Managers need to support diversity (non-discrimination) as well as to recognise employees' strengths and use this as an asset and build on it. However, it can be challenging to recognise that the employee is the most valuable part of the enterprise, as the form in which CSR activities are carried out will largely depend on the employee. Today, therefore, the aim of the board of directors is no longer simply to maximise profit, but also to increase the competitiveness of their companies. This should be carried out by caring for the environment and investing in environmentally friendly technology, protecting the interests of their stakeholders, and maintaining good relations with the community. Therefore, the CSR should be viewed not as a separate element, but as a new concept integrated within company strategy and a way of conducting business.

The research shows that the examined Polish energy companies are implementing various practices within the CSR concept aimed at the welfare of the environment and society. It should be remembered that they are for profit organisations, so one of the primary objectives of their activities remains the profit maximisation. Additionally, the impact of CSR on the value and financial results of the company is easy to measure from the perspective of the incurred costs, while the benefits resulting from it are not so obvious, as their effects are visible and recognised after longer period of time (see research: [61–64]). Hence, in order for a company to operate correctly, according to the principles of CSR, it is necessary to make a profit so that the organisation can, among other things, meet the expectations of its stakeholders.

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