

## How is Corporate Social Responsibility Meant: Analysis of 100 Definitions

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**Abstract.** One of the ways how to boost competitiveness is to use the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept. The term "Corporate Social Responsibility", although it is discussed for more than half a century, currently has no universally applicable and uniform global definition. The aim of the paper is to analyze one hundred definitions from different authors, to find the most common words in them and to create a universal definition. According to literature review, social responsibility is based on volunteering, stakeholders and integration of individual pillars. Pillars are supposed to be economic, social, environmental, legal, philanthropic and ethical. However, volunteering is currently on thin ice due to the European Union regulation.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Definition, Voluntary.

### 1 Introduction

The present time is characterized by constant and rapid changes. This development dynamics brings many challenges but also the challenges faced by management. Due to the highly turbulent business environment, achieving, shaping, and above all, maintaining the competitiveness of an enterprise with a very challenging task.

One of the ways how to boost competitiveness is to use the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept. This topic is being increasingly discussed. The competitors and the community are more interesting in company's behaving to their clients, environmental and social, staff and to the needs of community. Prosperous enterprises do not concentrate only on making profits. Interest in social responsibility is highly increasing in the Czech Republic, and the number of companies using this concept is growing.

There are currently various competitions where social responsibility is measured according to various indicators. New interests and expectations are emerging from consumers, citizens and investors, growing interest in the impacts of economic activities on the environment, and media and modern communication technologies, including social networks, enforce the transparency of business activities.

## 2 Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility

### 2.1 Current Status

Social responsibility has been the subject of several studies over the last few decades [5,7,22]. It has evolved from the philanthropic activities of executives and has gradually become a valuable component of the management of all stakeholders [24,31]. Involvement in socially responsible activities permeates different types of businesses in different sectors and countries.

The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" or CSR, although it is discussed for more than half a century, currently has no generally and universally valid definition. In accordance with [16] it could be because CSR is based on voluntariness. The concept has no defined limits and there is a wide space for discussion and for a broad comprehension by various stakeholders. [27] states that the explanation of CSR has diverse meaning for diverse individual involved parties, who should be analyzed for their significance – see e.g. [29].

The aim of the paper is to present one hundred definitions from different authors, to find the most common words in them and to create a universal definition.

### 2.2 Literature Review

In the Table 1 there are analyzed several definitions of CSR.

**Table 1.** Definitions of corporate social responsibility.

<i>Author</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Carroll (1999)	<i>interconnection</i> of four core areas – <i>economic</i> , <i>legal</i> , <i>ethic</i> and <i>voluntary</i> (later <i>philanthropy</i> )
Franc et al. (2006)	an overarching concept that encompasses topics ranging from <i>environmental</i> protection to <i>employment rights</i> , anti-discrimination, community work, transparency to <i>socially</i> responsible investment policy
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (Kotler and Lee, 2005)	the continuous obligation of companies to act <i>ethically</i> and to strive for <i>economically</i> sustainable growth and supporting the improvement of the quality of life of <i>staff</i> and their family members equally local community
Marková (2011)	such an undertaking's activity in which the undertaking behaves responsibly beyond the <i>legal</i> standards, which is not uncommon but permanent
Business Leaders Forum (Kunz, 2012)	the <i>voluntary</i> obligation of enterprises to act responsibly in the context of their activities both in the <i>ekological</i> and in the <i>society</i> in which they deal
Kislingerová and Nový (2005)	one of the objectives of corporate governance, deals with the impact of business behavior on its surroundings and the whole of <i>society</i> ,

	and understands the firm as a sub-company that has certain tasks in the company
Kalousová (2005)	a concept that primarily emphasizes respecting business value levels - towards <i>staff</i> , <i>suppliers</i> , <i>clients</i> , etc., and to the <i>environment</i> in which companies operate and influence their business - the <i>environment</i> , <i>people</i> and <i>organizations</i> in the community
Commission of the European Communities (2001)	a concept in which companies <i>connect social</i> and <i>ecological</i> interests in their business activities and in their cooperation with their <i>stakeholders</i> on a <i>voluntary</i> principle
Kuldová (2010)	<i>voluntary</i> determination of high ethical standards, efforts to minimize negative impacts on the <i>environment</i> , care for <i>employees</i> , maintaining good admissions, and contributing to support the region in which they operate
World Business Council for Sustainable Development (1999)	the enterprise's obligation to secure the sustainable economic development, working with <i>staff</i> , their family members, the <i>local community</i> and <i>society</i> at large to better their life quality
European Union (Kunz, 2012)	<i>voluntary connection</i> of <i>social</i> and <i>ecological</i> attentions to day-to-day enterprise operations and connections with business <i>stakeholders</i>
Čaník et al. (2006)	the concept whereby the company <i>voluntarily</i> supposes co-responsibility for the welfare and sustainable expansion of modern society while awaiting to ensure profitability and <i>competitiveness</i>
Kunz (2012)	a modern business concept that formulates the company's focus on retentive goals and intervenes in all areas of the enterprises' activities, socially responsible companies, while working in their function, try hard not only to cover traditional <i>economic</i> objectives but also to satisfy the <i>social</i> and <i>ecological</i> aspects of their operations
Jakubíková (2013)	the <i>voluntary</i> enterprises' obligation to operate responsibly to the <i>environment</i> and the business in which they run
Petříková (2008)	all operations that fulfill all the <i>legitimate</i> requirements beyond and also the operations by which the enterprises try to comprehend and gratify all <i>stakeholders</i> in <i>society</i>
The Corporate Social Responsibility Newswire Services (Kotler and Lee, 2009)	<i>integrating</i> corporate practices and values in such a way that they include the interests of all <i>stakeholders</i> including <i>consumers</i> , <i>employees</i> , <i>investors</i> and the <i>environment</i>
Tetřevová (2017)	such behavior of <i>managers</i> and other <i>employees</i> of the company, which respects not only the <i>economic</i> and technical interests of the company but also the interests of all corporate <i>stakeholders</i> , being implemented <i>voluntarily</i> beyond the <i>law</i> and contractual arrangements and merging with all corporate activities

Jones (1980)	the term that companies have a commitment to component groups in <i>society</i> other than <i>stockholders</i> and beyond that ordered by <i>law</i> or union contract, marking that a limit can go beyond simple property
Putnová (2004)	such conduct of businesses when they take into consideration the necessities of their inside and outside <i>environments</i> to widely assist to the overall melioration of the condition of <i>society</i> both within and beyond their businesslike operations
Dytrt (2006)	the <i>voluntary integration</i> of <i>social</i> and <i>environmental</i> considerations in synergy with <i>stakeholders</i> in business activities

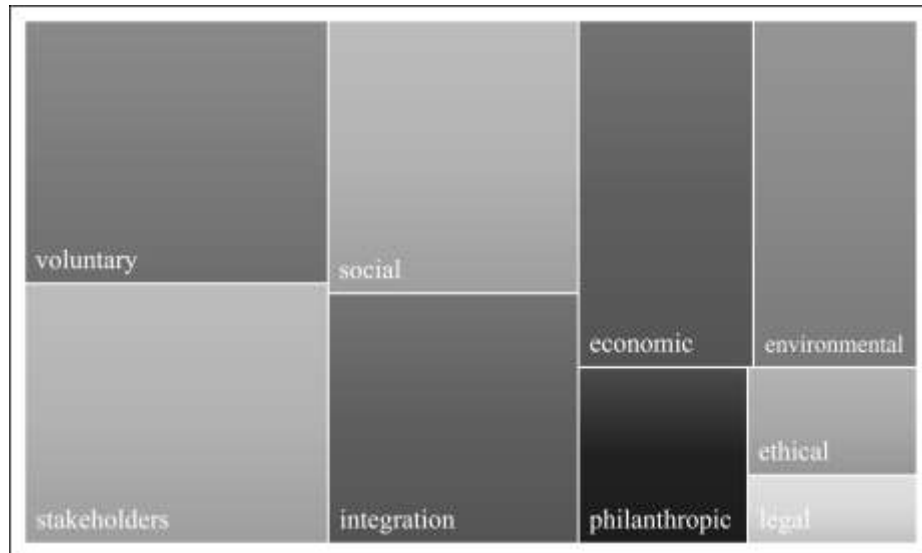
### 3 Methodology and Results

There were analyzed and then synthesized one hundred definitions of corporate social responsibility and found the most frequent words. The above definitions are by no mean a exhaustive bibliography of investigation on Corporate Social Responsibility definitions, but this paper illustrates the selection of methodological approaches used. Firstly, the definitions of CSR were assembled through the literature review. Secondly, these definitions were analyzed, and the most common words were determined. In the end, our own explanation of CSR was defined.

The most frequent words are highlighted in definitions mentioned above. We will consider some words as synonyms for simplification:

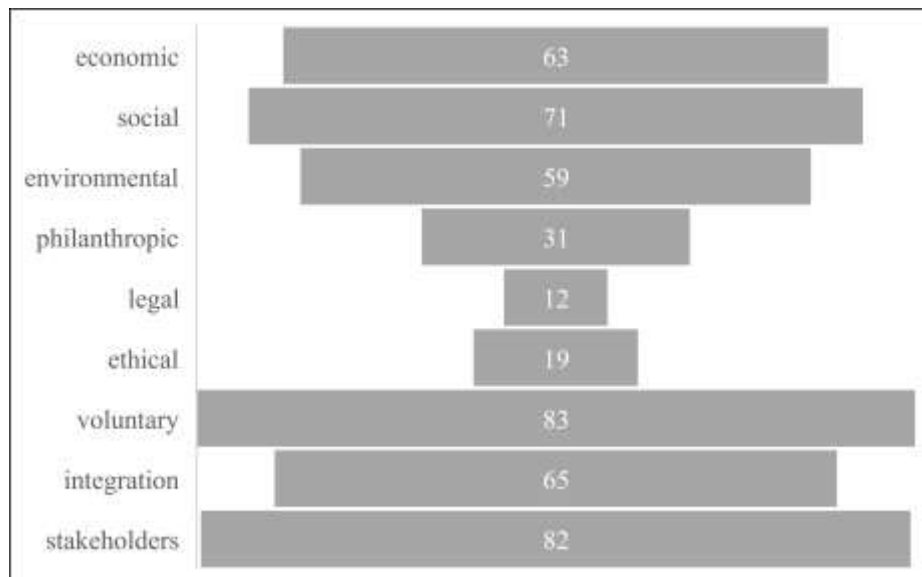
- economic = profits, competitiveness
- social = community, society,
- environmental = ecological,
- philanthropic = beneficent, charitable, community,
- legal = statutory, legitimate, rightful, law,
- voluntary = optional, beyond the law, unasked,
- integration = connection, interconnection, link, interaction,
- stakeholders = employees, suppliers, interested parties.

It was used a tool Tree map (see Fig. 1), which offers an interesting way to visualize a hierarchy of data. With it, data for different categories could be compared, such as the most common (frequent) words in definitions of CSR. The biggest part of tree map was filled with words voluntary, stakeholders, social and integration.



**Fig. 1.** Tree map of the most common words.

Another graph (see Fig. 2) shows the frequency of used words in definitions. The least used word is “legal” (12 %) and “ethical” (19 %). The most frequency pillar is “social” (71 %) and 83 % of authors think that CSR is based on voluntariness.



**Fig. 2.** Frequency of used words.

It was interesting to see if there are any correlations between words. Observations have revealed that if the word "environment" appears in the definition, the word "social" will often appear. If the word "philanthropic" appears in the definition, there is no word "legal" or "ethical".

Integration of various parts – economic, social, ecological/environmental, ethical, legal, etc., has various meaning by different authors. Some of them state that corporate social responsibility is based on only two or three pillars, some of them prefer more areas. This is based on how widely CSR is explained by authors. Theories about three parts (called three-bottom-line) include economic, social and environmental pillar and are comparable with socially responsible concept 3P, specifically people-planet-profit.

Using detailed examination, analyzing and then synthesizing the definitions from the literature review, the authors concluded that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an optional concept of socially responsible conduct beyond the legitimate commitments of the company that integrates the social, environmental and economic part and therefore it satisfies the objectives of all the interested parties.

## **4 Discussion**

Dalshrud [9] analyzed 37 definitions of CSR and resulted the five primary parts that were the most usual in the definitions (no less than 80%), but there is no mention of integration:

- environmental,
- social,
- economic,
- stakeholders,
- volunteering.

It can be argued that this paper focuses more complexly on definitions and is not limited to just five areas.

But is the concept of corporate social responsibility voluntary? Since 1st January 2017, large companies have a new legal obligation under EU Directive 2014/95/EU to make public their impact on society and the environment. This is so-called non-financial reporting.

Large enterprises covered by this obligation are enterprises with 500 or more employees, a net turnover of EUR 40 million or a balance sheet total of EUR 20 million and are public interest entities (governed by the law of a Member State and traded on stock exchanges, credit institutions and insurance companies).

Directive 2014/95/EU on the disclosure of non-financial information requires companies to disclose in their annual reports information relating to [21]:

- environmental areas,
- social and employment issues,
- respect for human rights,
- combating corruption and bribery,

- diversity and policies within the company's administrative, management and supervisory bodies.

The reporting itself can be based on several methodologies, the most complex of which are GRI and ISO 26000 pillars.

The objective of non-financial reporting is to achieve a higher level of transparency of social and environmental information provided by businesses in all sectors. Regular reporting should help businesses identify sustainability risks and increase consumer and investor confidence. Although this obligation does not apply to all companies, it could help improve access to responsible business as well as the right insight into CSR. CSR would no longer be voluntary in the case of a general obligation to report.

## 5 Conclusions

CSR, basically, is the economic, managerial, moral and in part political concept. It is a way for the management of the enterprise to take responsibility for the environmental and social impacts of their business activities.

The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" or CSR has no universally applicable and uniform global definition. Different authors have different meanings. In this paper one hundred definitions were analyzed. The most frequency words are voluntary (83 %), stakeholders (82 %), social (71 %) integration (65 %) and economic (63 %).

By detailed examination, analyzing and then synthesizing the definitions from the literature review, the authors concluded that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an optional concept of socially responsible conduct beyond the legitimate commitments of the company that integrates the social, environmental and economic part and therefore it satisfies the objectives of all the interested parties.

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