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THE USE OF GRI STANDARDS IN REPORTING ON ACTIONS BEING TAKEN BY COMPANIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Summary

Objective – to show the specificity and scope of reporting on sustainable development using the GRI Standards. This is currently a significant issue because of the transparency which becomes an important paradigm for conducting business. This means that company's stakeholders are interested not only in the undertaken or declared actions for sustainable development, but also in the access to reliable and comparable information related thereto. In this perspective, GRI Standards play a significant role.

Research methodology – the classical methods of research are used in this paper, such as: the study of the subject-related literature and the analysis of the content of non-financial reports published by selected Polish and foreign companies, which have been prepared in accordance with the GRI Standards.

Result – the carried out studies have pointed at the diversified level of disclosures in the field of sustainable development, which is visible when comparisons are made between countries and within each country. They also allow one to notice the low level of the use of the GRI indicators related to Sustainable Development Goals in the reports prepared by Polish companies covered by the survey.

Originality/value – the paper has cognitive value with regards to the scope and the quality of disclosures concerning actions being taken by companies in the field of sustainable development as well as the role that GRI Standards can play in this process.

Key words: sustainable development, reporting, GRI Standards

JEL classification: M14, Q01, Q56

1. Introduction

The demand for information in various substantial and time perspectives constitutes a challenge for reporting. The effect is the constant evolution in terms of reporting the company's actions the aim of which is to beyond the financial aspect from the information policy. It takes place within the non-financial reporting which consists on measuring, disclosing and taking responsibility towards internal and

external stakeholders for results and efficiency in economic, social and environmental terms [Global Reporting Initiative, 2011, p. 3].

Non-financial reporting is a complex and multi-faceted process. Sustainable development is an essential area of companies' actions which ought to be included in reports. Regulatory institutions notice such necessity, which is visible in the solutions introduced in particular countries. They oblige the selected groups of companies to reveal information concerning social and environmental issues (also in the area of sustainable development).

As the consequence, presently more and more companies are not focused solely on providing information about financial issues. It takes place mainly within the frameworks of separate non-financial reporting. However, what is crucial is that information obtained from it ought to be of proper quality and can be used for making comparisons. It determines the activities that aim at the elaboration and strengthening of stable and widely accepted bases of the information system of companies [Śnieżek, Wiatr, 2014, p. 407] which is based on standards. In the presented perspective the GRI Standards are crucial. Their basic aim is to provide transparent and consistent principles in terms of creating reports on sustainable development and to encourage organizations to present reliable data. It is worth emphasizing that the reports elaborated in accordance with the GRI Standards are not solely the collection of the results of the activities. They also include the adopted strategy and conditionings as well as the aims of sustainable development.

The aim of the paper is to show the specificity and scope of reporting on sustainable development using the GRI Standards. The realization of this aim was possible on the basis of the literature review and the analysis of the contents of non-financial reports of selected Polish and foreign companies.

2. Reporting in the sphere of sustainable development

Providing stakeholders with transparent, consistent and clear information presenting the achievements of organizations both with regards to the financial and non-financial aspects of conducted activity determines the necessity to go beyond the frameworks of financial reporting [Michalczyk et al., 2017, p. 33]. However, it constitutes a challenge because so far financial reports which are based on standards constituted the main source of information. The reports go beyond financial information in the following ways:

1. Management commentary as a separate part (non-financial information statement).
2. Separate reporting (non-financial reports).

Of particular importance is the development of separate reporting that includes non-financial information. Such reporting is connected with revealing data concerning the company's actions dedicated for separate groups of stakeholders in the precisely defined time perspective [Wróbel, 2016, p. 85]. It means that by means of such reports companies display their economic, social and environmental impact on

the surrounding and the effects connected with it. The information constitutes the reflection of the companies' actions for sustainable development that is dictated by climate changes, the depletion of the natural resources and by the progressive degradation of the natural environment.

The concept of sustainable development in quality terms constitutes the proposal of a new form of conscious and responsible life having both individual and social character and based on the principle of development together with the social and natural surrounding – while taking into consideration ecological limitations and social expectations. It is based on the assumption that the main objective of actions ought not to be the maximizing of benefits, but the aspiration to create and preserve the socio-economic stability. In this aspect it appears to be crucial to use limited resources in the way that creates conditions for both the development and preservation of high standards in economic, socio-cultural and environmental terms for both particular social groups of the contemporary world and for the future generations [Rogall, 2010, p. 44].

The response to the challenges of sustainable development is the UN Agenda 2030 adopted in 2015 by the UN member states. It comprises 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and 169 interrelated tasks which are, to a large degree, based on the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) realized in the years 2000-2015. Sustainable Development Goals are intended to solve sensitive global problems chiefly by means of adjusting the macroeconomic concept of sustainable development to the economic reality that is targeted at the development of companies [Gadomska-Lila, Wasilewicz, 2016, p. 303].

From the microeconomic perspective (of a company) sustainable development means such strategy of acting that not only satisfies the current needs of the organization and its stakeholders, but also protects, sustains and reinforces man and the sources of resources that will be necessary in the future [*Business Strategy...*, 1992, p. 1]. Hence of key importance is the involvement of companies in the realization of the concept of sustainable development because only such approach enables all the undertaken actions to constitute a coordinated and logical sequence, which in a long-term perspective will contribute to the realization of the mutual vision of development [Jastrzębska, 2016, p. 40]. It is dictated by the fact that companies have considerable impact on the rate and quality of the global economic development, shape the level and conditions of employment, decide upon the value and directions of allocating funds for innovations, including the breakthrough social and ecological solutions.

Therefore, transparency becomes an important paradigm of running a business. The company's surrounding is interested not only in the undertaken or declared activities for the realization of Sustainable Development Goals, but chiefly in the effects of such actions. It determines the need to submit specific data connected with it [Global Reporting Initiative ..., 2017, p. 10; Kaputa, 2013, p. 115].

Companies may publish information on the sphere of sustainable development in various documents, among others in the report of the management board or in non-financial (social and integrated) reports. Non-financial reports are not included

in the standard, owing to which they are characterized by the freedom in the preparation process as well as by varied information scope. They are not subject to the external verification. Owing to this their reliability and comparability are reduced. Therefore, there are undertaken actions that aim at standardizing them. In this aspect particular importance is attached to the instruments elaborated by the *Global Reporting Initiative* (GRI), the independent international organization established in 1997. The regulations provided by GRI are a certain type of recommendations for the companies making reports that enable them understanding not only the requirements and principles included there, but also the entire process of social reporting [Anam, 2013, p. 71].

The activities of the *Global Reporting Initiative* include not only preparing the most accepted guidelines regarding reporting, but they also comprise active activities that are undertaken in order to support companies in achieving and submitting reports on the Sustainable Development Goals. The main assumption of the report prepared in accordance with GRI is the provision of properly balanced information on the organization's effectiveness with regards to sustainable development, both in the positive and negative aspect [Global Reporting Initiative, 2016, p. 3].

A considerable role in reporting sustainable development is attached to the document referred to as *SDG Compass* which is elaborated by GRI in cooperation with the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. It ensures, among others, the sets of applicable indicators that specify the contribution in the realization of Sustainable Development Goals. They are included in the latest standards of non-financial reporting prepared by the *Global Reporting Initiative* – GRI Standards, which constitute the updating of the GRI G4 Guidelines (table 1).

TABLE 1

**Indicators included in GRI Standards in combination
with Sustainable Development Goals**

Sustainable Development Goals	GRI indicators	
1. No poverty	103-2	The management approach and its components
	202-1	Ratios of standard entry level wage by gender compared to local minimum wage
	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts
	413-2	Operations with significant actual and potential negative impacts on local communities
2. Zero hunger	201-1	Direct economic value generated and distributed
	203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported
	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts
	411-1	Incidents of violations involving rights of indigenous peoples
	413-2	Operations with significant actual and potential negative impacts on local communities

Sustainable Development Goals	GRI indicators	
3. Good health and well-being	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts
	305-1	Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions
	305-2	Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions
	305-3	Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions
	305-6	Emissions of ozone depleting substances (ODS)
	305-7	Nitrogen oxides (NO _x), sulphur oxides (SO _x) and other insignificant air emissions
	306-1	Water discharge by quality and destination
	306-2	Waste by type and disposal method
	306-3	Significant spills
	306-4	Transport of hazardous waste
	403-2	Types of injury and rates of injury, occupational diseases, lost days and absenteeism and number of work-related fatalities
4. Quality education	102-27	Collective knowledge of the highest governance body
	404-1	Average hours of training per year, per employee
5. Gender equality	102-22	Composition of the highest governance body and its committees
	102-24	Nominating and selecting the highest governance body
	103-2	The management approach and its components
	201-1	Direct economic value generated and distributed
	202-1	Ratios of standard entry level wage by gender compared to local minimum wage
	203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported
	401-1	New employee hires and employee turnover
	401-3	Parental leave
	404-1	Average hours of training per year, per employee
	404-3	Percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews
	405-1	Diversity of governance bodies and employees
	405-2	Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men
	406-1	Incidents of discrimination and corrective actions taken
	414-1	New suppliers that were screened using social criteria
414-2	Negative social impacts in the supply chain and actions taken	
6. Clean water and sanitation	303-1	Water withdrawal by source
	303-2	Water sources significantly affected by withdrawal of water
	303-3	Water recycled and reused
	304-1	Operational sites owned, leased, managed in, or adjacent to, protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas
	304-2	Significant impacts of activities, products and services on biodiversity
	304-3	Habitats protected or restored
	304-4	IUCN Red List species and national conservation list species with habitats in areas affected by operations
	306-1	Water discharge by quality and destination
	306-2	Waste by type and disposal method
	306-3	Significant spills
	306-5	Water bodies affected by water discharges and/or runoff

Sustainable development goals	GRI indicators	
7. Affordable and clean energy	201-1	Direct economic value generated and distributed
	203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported
	302-1	Energy consumption within the organization
	302-2	Energy consumption outside the organization
	302-3	Energy intensity
	302-4	Reduction of energy consumption
	302-5	Reductions in energy requirements of products and services
8. Decent work and economic growth	102-41	Collective bargaining agreements
	102-8	Information on employees and other workers
	103-2	The management approach and its components
	201-1	Direct economic value generated and distributed
	202-1	Ratios of standard entry level wage by gender compared to local minimum wage
	202-2	Proportion of senior management hired from the local community
	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts
	301-1	Materials used by weight or volume
	301-2	Recycled input materials used
	301-3	Reclaimed products and their packaging materials
	302-1	Energy consumption within the organization
	302-2	Energy consumption outside the organization
	302-3	Energy intensity
	302-4	Reduction of energy consumption
	302-5	Reductions in energy requirements of products and services
	303-3	Water recycled and reused
	401-1	New employee hires and employee turnover
	401-2	Benefits provided to full-time employees that are not provided to temporary or part-time employees
	401-3	Parental leave
	402-1	Minimum notice periods regarding operational changes
	403-1	Workers representation in formal joint management-worker health and safety committees
	403-2	Types of injury and rates of injury, occupational diseases, lost days and absenteeism and number of work-related fatalities
	403-3	Workers with high incidence or high risk of diseases related to their occupation
	403-4	Health and safety topics covered in formal agreements with trade unions
	404-1	Average hours of training per year, per employee
	404-2	Programs for upgrading employee skills and transition assistance programs
	404-3	Percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews
	405-1	Diversity of governance bodies and employees
	405-2	Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men
	406-1	Incidents of discrimination and corrective actions taken
	407-1	Operations and suppliers in which the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining may be at risk
408-1	Operations and suppliers at significant risk for incidents of child labor	
409-1	Operations and suppliers at significant risk for incidents of forced or compulsory labor	
414-1	New suppliers that were screened using social criteria	

Sustainable development goals	GRI indicators	
	414-2	Negative social impacts in the supply chain and actions taken
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	201-1	Direct economic value generated and distributed
	203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported
10. Reduced inequalities	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts
	405-2	Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men
11. Sustainable cities and communities	203-1	Infrastructure investments and services supported
12. Responsible consumption and production	204-1	Proportion of spending on local suppliers
	301-1	Materials used by weight or volume
	301-2	Recycled input materials used
	301-3	Reclaimed products and their packaging materials
	302-1	Energy consumption within the organization
	302-2	Energy consumption outside the organization
	302-3	Energy intensity
	302-4	Reduction of energy consumption
	302-5	Reductions in energy requirements of products and services
	303-3	Water recycled and reused
	305-1	Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions
	305-2	Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions
	305-3	Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions
	305-6	Emissions of ozone depleting substances (ODS)
	305-7	Nitrogen oxides (NO _x), sulphur oxides (SO _x) and other insignificant air emissions
	13. Climate action	201-2
302-1		Energy consumption within the organization
302-2		Energy consumption outside the organization
302-3		Energy intensity
302-4		Reduction of energy consumption
302-5		Reductions in energy requirements of products and services
305-1		Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions
305-2		Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions
305-3		Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions
305-4		GHG emissions intensity
305-5		Reduction of GHG emissions
305-6		Emissions of ozone depleting substances (ODS)
305-7		Nitrogen oxides (NO _x), sulphur oxides (SO _x) and other insignificant air emissions

Sustainable development goals	GRI indicators	
14. Life below water	304-1	Operational sites owned, leased, managed in, or adjacent to, protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas
	304-2	Significant impacts of activities, products and services on biodiversity
	304-3	Habitats protected or restored
	304-4	IUCN Red List species and national conservation list species with habitats in areas affected by operations
	305-1	Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions
	305-2	Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions
	305-3	Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions
	305-4	GHG emissions intensity
	305-5	Reduction of GHG emissions
	305-7	Nitrogen oxides (NO _x), sulphur oxides (SO _x) and other insignificant air emissions
	306-1	Water discharge by quality and destination
	306-3	Significant spills
15. Life on land	304-1	Operational sites owned, leased, managed in, or adjacent to, protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas
	304-2	Significant impacts of activities, products and services on biodiversity
	304-3	Habitats protected or restored
	304-4	IUCN Red List species and national conservation list species with habitats in areas affected by operations
	305-1	Direct (Scope 1) GHG emissions
	305-2	Energy indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions
	305-3	Other indirect (Scope 3) GHG emissions
	305-4	GHG emissions intensity
	305-5	Reduction of GHG emissions
	305-7	Nitrogen oxides (NO _x), sulphur oxides (SO _x) and other insignificant air emissions
	306-3	Significant spills
	306-5	Water bodies affected by water discharges and/or runoff
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	102-16	Values, principles, standards, and norms of behavior
	102-17	Mechanisms for advice and concerns about ethics
	102-21	Consulting stakeholders on economic, environmental, and social topics
	102-22	Composition of the highest governance body and its committees
	102-23	Chair of the highest governance body
	102-24	Nominating and selecting the highest governance body
	102-25	Conflicts of interest
	102-29	Identifying and managing economic, environmental and social impacts
	102-37	Stakeholders' involvement in remuneration
	103-2	The management approach and its components
	205-1	Operations assessed for risks related to corruption
	205-2	Communication and training about anti-corruption policies and procedures
	205-3	Confirmed incidents of corruption and actions taken
	206-1	Legal actions for anti-competitive behavior, anti-trust and monopoly practices
	307-1	Non-compliance with environmental laws and regulations
	406-1	Incidents of discrimination and corrective actions taken
	408-1	Operations and suppliers at significant risk for incidents of child labor
	410-1	Security personnel trained in human rights policies or procedures

Sustainable development goals	GRI indicators	
	414-1	New suppliers that were screened using social criteria
	414-2	Negative social impacts in the supply chain and actions taken
	415-1	Political contributions
	416-2	Incidence of non-compliance concerning the health and safety impacts of products and services
	417-1	Requirements for product and service information and labeling
	417-2	Incidents of non-compliance concerning product and service information and labeling
	418-1	Substantiated complaints concerning breaches of consumer privacy and losses of consumer data
	419-1	Non-compliance with laws and regulations in the social and economic area
17. Partnerships for the goals	203-2	Significant indirect economic impacts

Source: own elaboration on the basis of: [SDG Compass. Linking the SDGs and GRI..., pp. 2-41].

The indicators included in the *SDG Compass* document enable companies not only the selection of the most adequate measures that facilitate informing the stakeholders on the actions taken in order to achieve sustainable development goals. Additionally, they show in what way companies may measure and manage these actions and also place the idea of sustainable development in the centre of the realized business strategies [SDG Compass. *The guide for business ...*, p. 2].

More importantly, the purpose of *SDG Compass* is not to burden companies with new reporting frameworks in the area of sustainable development. It is supposed to be a joint platform for analyzing and communicating the interrelated activities while using the previously applied instruments, but in the new way that conforms to the latest Sustainable Development Goals [Global Compact Poland, 2016, p. 45].

3. The diagnosis of using the GRI Standards with reference to Sustainable Development Goals

Presently in Poland more than 80% of non-financial reports are prepared on the basis of the Sustainability Reporting Framework prepared by *Global Reporting Initiative* (GRI). Most frequently the recommendations in the GRI G4 version are used for that purpose. Additionally, it needs emphasizing that some companies decide to prepare reports on the basis of the latest GRI Standards which on 1 July 2018 replaced the GRI G4 guidelines. In comparison with the previous version they are more comprehensible, have better structure and it is easier to apply them [Sikacz, 2017, p. 152]. In the most holistic way they present the economic, social and environmental aspects of the activity and provide information on both the positive and negative impact of an organization in the realization of the concept of sustainable development. The entities using GRI Standards are three companies comprised by

the RESPECT index: The Bank Millennium SA, JSW SA and Inter Cars SA (table 2).¹

TABLE 2
The presence of indicators referring to the Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals	Millennium Bank (2017 Financial and Social Report)	JSW (2017 Sustainable Development Report)	Inter Cars (Report on non-financial information for 2017)
1. No poverty	103-2	103-2; 413-2	103-2; 202-1
2. Zero hunger	201-1; 203-1	413-2;	201-1;
3. Good health and well-being	305-1; 306-2; 403-2	306-1; 306-2; 403-2; 403-3	306-2
4. Quality education	404-1	×	404-1
5. Gender equality	103-2; 201-1; 203-1; 401-1; 401-3; 404-1; 404-3; 405-1; 405-2 406-1	103-2; 401-1; 401-3	103-2; 201-1; 202-1; 401-1; 404-1; 404-3; 406-1
6. Clean water and sanitation	303-1; 306-2	306-1; 306-2	306-2
7. Affordable and clean energy	201-1; 203-1; 302-1; 302-4	302-1;	302-1; 302-3; 302-4
8. Decent work and economic growth	102-41; 102-8; 103-2; 201-1; 202-2; 203-2; 301-1; 302-1; 302-4; 401-1; 401-2; 401-3; 403-2; 404-1; 404-2; 404-3; 405-1; 405-2; 406-1	102-41; 102-8; 103-2; 302-1; 401-3; 402-1; 403-1; 403-2	102-41; 102-8; 103-2; 201-1; 202-1; 202-2; 302-1; 302-3; 302-4; 401-1; 404-1; 404-3
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	201-1; 203-1	×	201-1
10. Reduced inequalities	405-2	×	×
11. Sustainable cities and communities	203-1	×	×
12. Responsible consumption and production	204-1; 301-1; 302-1; 302-4; 305-1; 306-2 417-1	302-1; 306-1; 306-2; 306-3	302-1; 302-3; 302-4
13. Climate action	302-1; 302-4; 305-1	302-1	302-1; 302-3; 302-4

¹ The selection of these entities results not only from the fact that in the process of non-financial reporting they use the latest GRI Standards. Another important reason is that the documents prepared by them include information that presents the activity of these companies in 2017.

Sustainable Development Goals	Millennium Bank (2017 Financial and Social Report)	JSW (2017 Sustainable Development Report)	Inter Cars (Report on non-financial information for 2017)
14. Life below water	305-1	306-1	×
15. Life on land	305-1	×	×
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions	102-16; 102-17; 102-25; 103-2; 205-1; 205-2; 205-3; 206-1; 307-1; 406-1; 415-1; 417-1; 418-1; 419-1	102-16; 103-2; 205-3; 419-1	102-16; 103-2; 205-3; 206-1; 406-1
17. Partnerships for the goals	×	×	×

Source: own elaboration on the basis of: [*Raport finansowy i społeczny...*, 2017; *Raport Zrównoważonego Rozwoju*, 2017; *Sprawozdanie na temat informacji niefinansowych...*, 2017].

The analysis of the contents of the reports in fact does not entitle one to make more general conclusions on the level of reporting companies in terms of the realization of Sustainable Development Goals while using the GRI Standards. However, it presents the general tendencies in this aspect.

The analyzed reports were prepared on the basis of the core conformity level of the presented contents with the framework reporting rules specified in the GRI Standards. It does not compel the companies submitting their reports to reveal all the indicators that refer to Sustainable Development Goals. This fact was reflected in the number of GRI indicators reported by particular companies.

The priority reporting areas include: *Gender equality*, *Decent work and economic growth*, *Responsible consumption and production* as well as *Peace, justice and strong institutions*. The most frequently reported indicators connected with these areas include:

- GRI 102-8: information on employees and other workers,
- GRI 102-16: values, principles, standards, and norms of behavior,
- GRI 102-41: collective bargaining agreements,
- GRI 103-2: the management approach and its components,
- GRI 205-3: confirmed incidents of corruption and actions taken,
- GRI 302-1: energy consumption within the organization,
- GRI 401-1: new employee hires and employee turnover.

In terms of reporting sustainable development companies draw the least attention to such areas as: *Partnerships for the goals*, *Life on land*, *Sustainable cities and communities*, *Reduced inequalities* and *Quality education*. The reason of it may be the fact that not all the Goals must have the same importance from the perspective of particular companies. It depends on the specific character of the branch or on the type of the conducted economic activity. Another reason may lie in the fact that these entities have still not elaborated internal procedures enabling the identification, measurement and reporting of the aspects referring to all the Sustainable Development Goals.

Additionally, the conducted analysis shows the diverse scope of information revealed by particular companies. The report prepared by Millennium Bank lacks indicators that refer solely to one Sustainable Development Goal. In case of reports of JSW and Inter Cars it is difficult to find indicators that would be connected with six and five areas specified in Agenda 2030.

Hence one may assume that the analyzed companies to a low degree use the indicators included in which enable measuring and reporting Sustainable Development Goals. It is visible in comparisons of them with other companies from European countries that prepared their non-financial reports for 2017 on the basis of the GRI Standards (table 3).

TABLE 3
The levels of using GRI indicators connected with Sustainable Development Goals (%)

Com- pany	Sustainable Development Goals																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Austria																	
Palfinger	50	40	42	50	60	0	71	66	50	50	0	40	69	33	33	69	100
AMAG Metall	25	20	33	50	47	36	43	43	50	0	0	40	39	33	33	23	0
Switzerland																	
Partners Group	0	40	0	50	33	0	29	20	100	0	100	5	0	0	0	12	0
Swiss Post	75	40	5	50	80	0	86	80	50	50	0	50	100	50	50	50	0
Germany																	
SAP SE	50	40	67	50	40	0	86	60	50	100	100	55	92	50	50	35	100
ZEISS Group	50	60	33	50	53	18	57	43	100	0	100	20	46	25	25	62	0
Covestro	25	20	58	0	47	27	57	43	50	0	0	50	62	42	42	66	0
TAKKT AG	50	80	58	100	80	27	74	100	100	100	100	50	69	58	58	96	0
BMW Group	50	60	67	100	87	0	100	77	100	100	100	65	100	50	50	65	100
Wirtschafts- betriebe Duisburg – AöR	75	60	58	50	67	27	57	63	50	100	100	50	39	25	25	35	100
Spain																	
Enagas S.A.	75	60	92	100	80	100	86	74	50	50	0	69	100	100	100	77	0
Accenture Spain	100	80	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	95	100	100	100	81	100
Esade Business	25	20	17	50	40	18	43	40	50	0	0	80	15	0	0	12	0
Poland																	
Millennium Bank	25	40	25	50	67	18	57	54	100	50	100	35	23	8	8	54	0
JSW	50	20	33	0	20	18	14	23	0	0	0	20	7	8	0	15	0
Inter Cars	50	20	8	50	47	9	43	34	50	0	0	15	23	0	0	19	0
Finland																	
Tokmani	25	20	50	0	53	9	43	49	50	50	0	40	46	42	42	65	0
Sato Oyj	50	60	42	50	53	18	57	37	100	50	0	35	46	33	33	42	0

Com- pany	Sustainable Development Goals																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Citycon	50	20	67	50	60	46	57	49	50	50	0	45	62	50	50	81	0
Great Britain																	
Grainger PLC	75	80	42	100	60	0	100	43	100	50	100	40	85	42	42	43	100
Conva-Tec	0	20	50	50	47	36	71	46	50	50	0	55	69	33	33	77	0
The Netherlands																	
DSM	75	80	100	100	93	100	86	86	100	100	100	95	92	100	100	73	100
ING Group	25	60	42	50	40	0	100	31	100	100	100	45	100	50	50	46	100

Source: own elaboration on the basis of: [GRI Sustainability Disclosure Database...; *Raport finansowy i społeczny...*, 2017; *Raport Zrównoważonego Rozwoju...*, 2017; *Sprawozdanie na temat informacji niefinansowych...*, 2017].

The presented companies are characterized by diverse level of using GRI indicators referring to certain Sustainable Development Goals which may be observed while making comparison both between particular countries and inside those countries. Despite these differences the conducted analysis enables the indication of countries that are most characteristic in this aspect, i.e.: the Netherlands, Spain and Germany.

The comparison of Polish companies with the companies from other European countries is not favorable in this aspect. One may observe that only in the report prepared by Millennium Bank the level of using GRI indicators that coincide with particular Sustainable Development Goals may be compared with the results achieved by most entities from other countries. An entirely different situation regards other analyzed Polish companies. It results from the fact that JSW and Inter Cars are the only entities (apart from AMAG Metall from Austria) where the degree of using GRI indicators with regards to each among 17 Sustainable Development Goals was not higher than 50%. It can be somehow justified by the fact that the reports for 2017 are the first documents of this type that were prepared by both companies.

On the basis of the prepared analysis one may observe that while it is difficult to point at the priority Sustainable Development Goals that would be mutual for the companies from all the analyzed countries, there is no problem with specifying the areas to which entities attach least importance. They concern mostly the same issues that are overlooked also by Polish companies (*Partnerships for the goals, Sustainable cities and communities, Clean water and sanitation, as well as Reduced inequalities*).

4. Conclusions

The realization of Sustainable Development Goals requires a number of actions to be taken by companies. However, in the times of the information society it is not satisfactory. What is crucial as well is the measurement and submitting of data connected with it. It enables the limitation of the information asymmetry on the market, whereas from the perspective of companies it creates the possibility to assess

whether the undertaken activities constitute the reflection of major economic, environmental and social impacts.

Communication on the activities of companies in the sphere of sustainable development takes place mainly in the form of non-financial reporting. Since these reports are not regulated by regulations they differ from one another not only in terms of the scope, but also as regards the quality and transparency. Companies prepare reports using their own principles regarding reporting or they use the national, EU or international guidelines/standards. Therefore, large importance is attached to the creation of credible frameworks for reporting on the issues related to sustainable development that would be on a global scale and would guarantee the consistency of languages and indicators. In this aspect a particular role may be played by the latest GRI Standards – Standards of Reporting on Sustainable Development that constitute a reliable instrument for a large group of stakeholders. The new format of GRI Standards will enable the introduction of further changes resulting from dynamic development in the sphere of reporting on sustainable development by means of:

- updating individual standards from particular spheres where necessary,
- introducing clear distinction between requirements, recommendations and guidelines, which will enable easier implementation of Standards,
- improving the quality of the technical contents of Standards in order to eliminate ambiguity and contradictory interpretations for the reporting entities and for information recipients.

Undoubtedly, basing non-financial reports on GRI Standards will improve their reliability. They will be also more strategic and concentrated as well as easier to interpret for the interested groups of stakeholders.

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