



Anna Korecka

Summary of doctoral dissertation

Environmental information disclosed in reports of mining companies

Informacje środowiskowe ujawniane w raportach przedsiębiorstw wydobywczych

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1) Reasons for the choice of the dissertation topic

The continuing process of globalization and the development of economic and environmental social awareness directly affects the importance and function of information in the economic area. According to R. Żelazny's approach, in the field of economic sciences' information "is a special type of economic good which value in use is limiting uncertainty and fulfilling the potential function of a primary resource for the category of knowledge" (Żelazny, 2011, p. 168). Whereas, the information itself is the center of a complex series of relations between enterprises and a wide and heterogeneous group of stakeholders representing diverse interests and goals (Boston, Grosu, Iancu, 2009, p. 168).

Accurate and timely delivered information is one of the key trust building factors both inside (management staff - employees) and outside the unit (business - environment). In other words, the information determines the belief of the recipients that the organization will not act against, but in their favor, it will be credible, and its behavior will remain predictable and consistent with commonly accepted standards (Paliszkiewicz, 2014, p. 410). The attitude of business entities focused on the value of functioning not only for present but also future generations is becoming more and more common. Nevertheless, the ability to assess the impact of an individual on the environment is conditioned by access to reliable and useful information not only on the economic but also environmental and social dimensions (Zuchewicz, 2013, p. 251).

Trust is one of the key social aspects of business activity, which has also recently gained special value in accounting considerations. It is perceived as the foundation of the existence of accounting and largely related to the issue of credibility, and hence also the usefulness of information (Marzec, 2017, p. 243-244). R. Mattessich drew attention to the importance of the strategic and information paradigm in accounting. According to this paradigm, the main task of accounting is to provide data to many recipients, whose information purposes often vary widely.

Increasingly, in the literature on the subject, one can meet the term of socially responsible accounting, obliging enterprises to settle accounts with stakeholders on the

manner and results of business operations (Samelak, 2013, p. 197). The assumptions underlying the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) are of particular importance in relation to entities whose operation implies direct interference with the natural environment, which is what we are dealing with in mining enterprises.

The scope of information obligations of enterprises towards stakeholders was partly regulated by law, which gave them the rank of legislation in force. However, legal regulations are not the only determinants of information provided to stakeholders by business enterprise. Especially among enterprises significantly interfering with the natural environment, which leads to intensification of social concerns, there is a tendency to make voluntary disclosures. Non-mandatory disclosures relate to the often assumed future situation of the entity, which is to increase the credibility of the reports published. Nevertheless, the few references to the obligation to report environmental information in mandatory regulations, as well as the multitude and variety of optional guidelines significantly reduces the comparability of information characterizing the enterprise-environment relationship disclosed to stakeholders.

2) Research problem , purpose of the dissertation

In connection with the presented problem outline regarding environmental information reporting, a research problem for science arose, which boils down to determining the scope and method of disclosing environmental information contained in annual reports prepared by companies extracting shale gas.

The main purpose of the dissertation is to develop a model of disclosing environmental information in the annual reports of mining enterprises on the example of entities holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland.

For achieving the main purpose, the following specific objectives have been developed:

1. Identification of the concept of environmental information and environmental costs based on national and international legal regulations,
2. Presenting the place of environmental information in modern accounting theory, stakeholder theory and the concept of corporate social responsibility,
3. Identification of the scope of environmental information in annual reports prepared by shale gas extraction companies in the United States and Poland,
4. Identification of the scope of environmental information in non-mandatory reports prepared by shale gas extraction companies in the United States and Poland,
5. Identifying significant reporting areas from the point of view of reporting environmental information by shale gas extraction companies,
6. Indication of the place and manner of disclosing environmental information in the annual reports of entities holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland.

3) Subject and object of dissertation

The object of the dissertation is environmental information contained in the annual reports of shale gas extraction companies.

The subject are companies holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland and companies extracting shale gas in the United States.

4) Dissertation structure

The thesis consisting of three main chapters, introduction and ending is closed with a list of tables, charts, drawings and bibliography.

The first chapter refers to the concept of environmental information and environmental costs, indicating their essence and sources with particular emphasis on the accounting system. In addition, starting from the normative-ethical approach and the sustainable development paradigm, through the concept of the triple bottom line (TBL), the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the legitimacy theory, the lack of reasonability in considering environmental information was outlined in isolation from accounting theory.

The second chapter analyzes the annual reports of shale gas extraction companies in the US and Poland, indicating a possible difference in meeting the information needs of recipients of environmental information. In this part of the dissertation, environmental information that stakeholders can obtain based on optional reports prepared by doctoral thesis's objects using specific regulations and standards is also presented.

The last chapter of the dissertation refers to two main issues. First, it indicates reporting areas that American literature on the subject has identified as significant from the point of view of reporting environmental information. Secondly, the considerations contained in this chapter refer to the suggested place and proposed method of disclosing environmental information, which resulted in the author's proposition of a model for presenting environmental information focused on enterprises extracting shale gas in Poland.

Conclusions of the doctoral thesis based on the results of annual reports and the literature on the subject analysis covering the problematic scope resulted in included postulates at the end of the dissertation towards the national legislator, as well as issues that could be the basis for further research in the field of disclosure of environmental information.

5) Final conclusions

The considerations contained in this dissertation focus on the aspect of disclosing environmental information in mining companies' reports. The final effect of the doctoral thesis is a proposal of a practical nature that reflects the achievement of the main purpose of the

dissertation, which is to develop a model for disclosing environmental information in the annual reports of mining companies on the example of enterprises holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland.

The model for disclosing environmental information for companies extracting shale gas in Poland is a proposal aimed at improving the usability of current annual reports for users interested in the impact of enterprises on the natural environment.

The considerations contained in this doctoral dissertation have allowed the following postulates to be drawn from the national legislator:

- no regulations obliging entities holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland to disclose a specific set of comparable information on the environmental consequences of their economic activity,
- lack of universal access to information on environmental risk related to the mining activities of entities holding licenses for exploration and extraction of shale gas in Poland,
- no obligation to make disclosures regarding the connections between the inevitable, intensive interference in the environment and the current, future and potential financial standing of the said analyzed enterprises,
- no obligation to disclose financial and non-financial environmental information in a comprehensive manner in one place of the annual report made available to stakeholders.

6) Literature

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