
Corporate Social Responsibility in Airports: A Study of the Largest Polish Airports

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main aim of this paper is to identify and compare areas of social responsibility at the largest Polish airports, based on the ISO 26000 standard.

Approach/Methodology/Design: The article uses the prevailing literature as well as analysis and evaluation of documents, reports, and the websites of the largest Polish airports. The analysis was conducted in 2021.

Findings: The obtained results will help to indicate the most important areas of corporate social responsibility of the largest Polish airports.

Practical Implications: The results of the research can be used as a starting point for further deliberations in the area of social responsibility of airports and as a basis for developing existing and implementing new CSR practices. In the future, it is suggested to perform similar research on the presented topics in a larger group of airports.

Originality/Value: The research indicates that the largest Polish airports undertake very similar CSR activities. The exception in this case are two areas of CSR, i.e., Fair operating practices and Community involvement and development. The results of the analysis also demonstrate that Kraków Airport deserves special recognition, as it conducts active operations in all areas of CSR, as per the ISO 26000 standard. It shows that the largest Polish airports are aware of the benefits of pro-social and pro-ecological activities, as confirmed by their active involvement in CSR activities.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), airport, management, development, ISO 26000.

JEL codes: M14, Q01.

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1. Introduction

The increase of interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) is mainly related to the changes taking place in the world of enterprises. There is an observable, increasing tendency to evaluate organizations based not only on their economic activity but also on their pro-social and pro-ecological involvement. Environmental movements or organizations acting on behalf of respect for human rights are becoming ever more popular. Protests and boycotts are being raised against companies that have a negative impact on the environment or fail to respect human rights.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of globalization intensifies competition, which causes enterprises to seek out solutions aimed at shaping non-material values such as, for example, building an appropriate image in the eyes of stakeholders. Therefore, the concept of corporate social responsibility is becoming more and more popular among numerous organizations, including airports in Poland. Despite the fact that the concept is several decades old, it is only the 21st century that has brought about a sudden increase in companies' interest in CSR, as evidenced by over 1,010,000,000 results for the term Corporate Social Responsibility when searched in Google. CSR as a management strategy has become commonplace, formalized, integrated, and deeply assimilated into organizational structures, policies, and practices (Carroll, 2016). The concept of corporate social responsibility is also becoming more and more popular among entities providing transport services.

Entities operating in the transport services market carry out a number of activities aimed at achieving their assumed objectives. Various of these activities are carried out in accordance with the strategy of social responsibility, as part of the strategies implemented by, among others, air carriers, concessionaires, airports, and government agencies, also taking into account the aspect of marketing. The concept of social responsibility is also one of the elements of the investment program implemented by air transport companies (Tłoczyński, 2017).

The aim of the article is to identify and compare areas of social responsibility in the largest Polish airports. The article uses the prevailing literature as well as analysis and evaluation of documents, reports, and the websites of the largest Polish airports. The analysis was conducted in 2021.

2. Literature Review

The social concept of a company is not a new concept - its roots date back to the 1950s. The idea of corporate social responsibility has evolved over the last few decades. The literature on the subject, international reports, and other studies provide various definitions of the concept. Moreover, the enterprises themselves often try to create their own perception of corporate social responsibility, adapted to the conditions of a given economic entity. The many definitions of CSR and the issues

they discuss indicate the validity and popularity of the subject in the science of management.

Researchers representing numerous academic disciplines (e.g., organizational and management sciences, communication and marketing sciences, international relations, theory of politics) are still studying the concept of CSR and its impact on the activities of enterprises (Allen and Craig, 2016).

The concept of corporate social responsibility dates back to the idea of sustainable development, which appeared (mainly) in the USA and Western European countries in the second half of the 20th century (Charucka, 2015). It speaks of a sort of compromise between economic development, the natural environment, and society. This idea, as well as a certain pressure on the side of governments and citizens, forced entrepreneurs to, for the first time ever, include extra-economic criteria for the development of their business activity. They concluded that an attitude oriented solely on profit can lead to various conflicts with numerous social groups. Some authors suggest that CSR has its roots in morality and emphasize the corporate responsibility to remain harmless to society and the environment, while positively contributing to the welfare of society and its stakeholders (Sachs *et al.*, 2009).

Bowen (1953) defined CSR for the first time in an article from 1953 (*The Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*). He defined the concept of social responsibility as the entrepreneur's obligation to conduct policy, make decisions, and follow such lines of action that would prove desirable as goals and values for our society. Bowen, however, associated social responsibility only with the entrepreneur, not with the company. However, in later years, Carroll (1979) transferred the application of CSR from managers to the organization itself. In addition, based on the Maslow pyramid, Carroll divided social responsibility into four types, economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. This division results from the degree of social expectations. These responsibilities reside at different levels and should be taken into account in the appropriate order.

Over the following years, up to modern times, new definitions have been created and are still being created, extended by further elements. These definitions are developed not only by scientists and researchers but also by national and international organizations and businesses. Therefore, it is worth presenting selected interpretations of the concept of CSR, by both Polish and foreign authors, formulated in the 21st century.

CSR can be understood within a broader context that includes many concepts and ideas, known by different names such as corporate responsibility, corporate accountability, business ethics, corporate citizenship, responsible entrepreneurship, and sustainable development and the environment (Lu *et al.*, 2018). The definition of corporate social responsibility states that companies must not only pursue their main goal to maximize profits but also contribute to the well-being of society through

voluntary efforts (Barauskaite and Streimikiene, 2021). CSR is also seen as an undertaking by an enterprise to maximize the positive impact and minimize the negative impact on society (Garay and Font, 2012).

According to analysis by Han *et al.* (2020), CSR is a comprehensive concept, including active social responsibility activities, passive social response, and some contributions beneficial to society. CSR can also be defined as an organization's commitment to preserve all environmental and human resources that contribute to raising the standard of living of stakeholders, for whom prosperity is an important indicator of sustainable development (Ansu-Mensah *et al.*, 2021). In turn, Aguinis (2011) defines CSR as organizational activities and policies that take into account the expectations of stakeholders as well as economic, ecological, and social aspects.

Enterprises taking the concept of corporate social responsibility into account in their strategy are guided, among other things, by financial concerns, which include income growth or obtaining savings as well as non-financial reasons, e.g., improving their image and relationship with the environment or the motivation of employees (Leoński *et al.*, 2021).

CSR is a concept based on enterprises taking into account the good of the environment, the public good, and the good of employees and other groups when developing their strategies. It is a long-term process consisting primarily of managing relationships, with particular emphasis on the type and nature of contacts with contractors and buyers - who may be of particular importance in the company's operations. It is worth noting that CSR is also based on stakeholder-oriented activities (Dobrosielska, 2019). The main areas of CSR that should be taken into account by every CSR-oriented company include the environment, customers, employees, investors (Ebert and Griffin, 2013). CSR includes companies that identify their stakeholders and incorporate their needs and values into the daily decision-making process (Okpara and Idowu, 2013).

CSR is a management concept that assumes the inclusion of social and environmental goals in the company's activities as well as shaping appropriate relationships with employees (Leoński, 2016). It is worth noting that the growing willingness of enterprises to engage in CSR is largely due to the myriad benefits that enterprises can derive when they are perceived by society as socially responsible (Du *et al.*, 2010).

In order to further analyze the concept of corporate social responsibility, it is also worth quoting the definitions formulated by international institutions and organizations. According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the 26000 standard (International Organization for Standardization, 2010) CSR means an organization's responsibility for the influence of its decisions and activity on society and the environment, by means of transparent and ethical behaviour that takes into account, among other things, the expectations of stakeholders, its legality,

the positive effect on sustainable development, and the contribution to society's well-being. The main aspects of CSR include organizational order, human rights, employment relationships, protection of the natural environment, relationships with customers, and social involvement.

To sum up, CSR aims for the sustainable development of both the internal environment of the company (employees, managers, owners) and the external social environment (recipients, co-operators, local communities, suppliers). CSR is characterized by voluntary action. Dialogue and communication also play an important role in the discussed concept, thanks to which a company can build a positive image and reputation in the eyes of both employees and customers. In their interpretation of CSR, many authors point to the orientation of its practices towards employees, the environment, and the community. The concept also displays certain long-term features, as CSR is not an isolated or sporadic practice in a company, but rather a long-term investment and a coherent management strategy. Social responsibility also means venturing beyond the applicable legal requirements and regulations.

3. Materials and Methods

An airport is defined as a separate area, on land or water (including buildings, infrastructure, and equipment located within its borders) intended, in whole or in part, for the take-off, landing, and ground or water surface traffic of aircraft used for commercial air transport operations (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe *et al.*, 2016). The management of a civil airport is a complex undertaking which can be organized in many different ways. An airport may be owned and operated by a State, by means of an air traffic control unit, which is a service provided by the State.

An airport may also be owned privately or by the local community, employing its own air traffic control service, but operating within the national airport network and the national air traffic control system. An airport can also be managed by a state-owned institution or by local authorities, with an air traffic control service provided by governmental authorities, an institution headed by governmental authorities, or another state-owned organization (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2015).

There are many airports operating in the Polish aviation market. In 2021, 65 entities were listed in the register of civil aerodromes kept by the Civil Aviation Authority (Civil Aviation Authority, 2021), of which 14 were certified public airports - holding a certificate issued in accordance with the requirements set out in Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 of 12 February 2014, laying down requirements and administrative procedures related to aerodromes in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The certified airports include Chopin Airport in Warsaw, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk - Lech Wałęsa Airport, Katowice - Pyrzowice, Kraków - Balice, Łódź, Poznań - Ławice, Rzeszów -

Jasionka, Szczecin – Goleniów, Warsaw/Modlin, Wrocław – Strachowice, Zielona Góra – Babimost, Lublin, and Olsztyn-Mazury. In 2020, Polish airports handled 14.5 million passengers, i.e., 70% less than in the previous year. The last time a similar decrease in passenger traffic occurred was 15 years ago (Civil Aviation Authority, 2021). This situation was caused by the pandemic and the efforts to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. While passenger traffic was revived partly in the summer months, with a peak in August, the arrival of a second, much more extensive wave of the pandemic at the end of October had a very negative impact on the level of interest in air travel in the last quarter of that year. This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

Table 1. Ten largest airports in Poland, based on the numbers of passengers.

Name of airport and number of passengers		2020	2019
1	Warszawa - Chopin	5 473 224	18 844 591
2	Kraków Balice	2 588 970	8 402 859
3	Gdańsk, Lech Wałęsa Airport	1 697 406	5 361 134
4	Katowice - Pyżowice	1 437 876	4 843 650
5	Wrocław – Strachowice	1 003 066	3 543 398
6	Warszawa - Modlin	870 831	3 104 277
7	Poznań - Ławica	652 833	2 372 184
8	Rzeszów – Jasionka	234 355	769 252
9	Szczecin - Goleniów	185 848	580 479
10	Bydgoszcz	124 545	413 472

Source: Own study.

When writing the article, it was decided to analyze the three largest airports in Poland, in terms of CSR and the ISO 26000 standard. The study covered the years 2020-2021. According to the reports of the Civil Aviation Authority in Poland, the largest airport in Poland is F. Chopin in Warszawa, which served a total of about 5.5 million passengers in 2020, almost 13.4 million less than in 2019. The second largest Polish airport in Poland is The Jan Paweł II Kraków-Balice Airport, with almost 2.6 million passengers served in 2020, i.e., 5.8 million fewer than in 2019. Third place is occupied by the Lech Wałęsa Gdańsk Airport, which served about 1.6 million passengers (Civil Aviation Authority, 2021).

However, it should be noted that not all entities implement CSR strategies to the same extent. Therefore, it is worth paying particular attention to the top airports and their approach to the concept of corporate social responsibility. The research covers the content on the official websites of the three largest airports in Poland, in order to analyze their degree of involvement in CSR. Furthermore, the main areas of CSR in the studied airports were identified on the basis of ISO 26000.

4. Research Results

Airports implementing corporate social responsibility target both external and internal stakeholders. In order to comprehensively analyze the activities of socially responsible major Polish airports, it was decided to assign CSR concepts to individual areas in accordance with the ISO 26000 standard, introduced by the International Organization for Standardization, i.e., organizational order, human rights, labour relations, environmental protection, market practices, relations with consumers, and social involvement. It is worth noting that all the largest airports in Poland whose activities were analyzed, implemented the concept of corporate social responsibility.

For areas compliant with the ISO 26000 standard, the pro-social and pro-ecological activities of the three largest airports in Poland, i.e., F. Chopin Airport in Warsaw, John Paul II Kraków-Balice Airport, and Lech Wałęsa in Gdańsk Airports, in Table 2., the "x" symbol indicates the CSR practices implemented by the Polish airports selected for research. Obtaining the data related to CSR was associated with some difficulties as there are no CSR tabs on the websites of the Warsaw and Gdańsk airports, with only scarce information about CSR activities available.

The exception is Kraków airport, which has extensive information on the CSR policy and publishes annual reports in this regard and is the only regional airport in Poland that currently reports non-financial data. Kraków Airport Sustainability Reports present the activities of Jan Paweł II Kraków-Balice based on the Global Reporting Initiative version G4 international standard for non-financial reporting, including a sector supplement dedicated specifically to the aviation industry. The first report in the history of Kraków airport was published in January 2018. It should be added that in 2012, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the implementation of the common organization of the markets in agricultural products and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009. Chopin Airport in Warsaw was the first airport in Poland to publish a CSR report; however, no such reports were published in the following years.

Table 2. Polish airports and areas of CSR in 2020 and 2021

Areas of CSR	Warsaw Chopin Airport	Gdansk Lech Walesa Airport	Kraków Jan Paweł II Airport
Organizational governance	x	x	x
Human rights	x	x	x
Labor practices	x	x	x
The environment	x	x	x
Fair operating practices			x
Consumer issues	x	x	x

Community involvement and development		x	x
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Source: Own study.

All of the surveyed airports implemented CSR practices in the areas of Organizational governance, Human rights, Labor practices, The environment, and Consumer issues. In the area of Fair operating practices, socially responsible activities were carried out only by the airport in Kraków. However, the area of Community involvement and development was identifiable in the case of airports in both Gdańsk and Kraków.

The most popular practices in the field of Organizational governance are reliable information, facts and figures presented on the official websites of all airports. Transparency of actions taken occurs in all the airports surveyed. Building interaction with the recipient on the basis of transparency, i.e., the broadly understood transparency and openness of activities, universal access to information, and insight into the services provided, is a credible activity, a value desired by all stakeholders. Other tools implemented by all these airports were regulations and codes. In the case of Kraków Airport, this is the Code of Ethics, presenting basic standards, values, and ideas recognized as common by the Kraków Airport community. On the other hand, Chopin Airport in Warsaw implemented the Code of Good Conduct for Ground Crews, while Gdańsk Airport implemented the regulations for the provision of services.

In the case of human rights, the tool used by all surveyed airports was assistance on departure and arrival of disabled persons. Airports provide a range of facilities related to serving disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility (including the provision of adequate infrastructure). All disabled persons traveling from the largest airports in Poland have the opportunity to use free of charge assistance at the airport, from the point of arrival, through all check-in procedures, until seated - and upon arrival. In addition, all three major airports prohibit discrimination against the above-mentioned persons at any stage of air travel.

Work practices carried out by the surveyed airports were mainly related to ensuring safety in the workplace. Gdańsk Airport has signed a security declaration to ensure the highest standards of airport operations safety, one of the main assumptions of which is to reduce the risk of accidents and incidents during the provision of services. All the analyzed aerodromes have a Safety Management System – SMS in place, created on the basis of the regulations of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Another good practice in this area is the Airport Rescue and Firefighting Service operating at the airport in Kraków - the first unit of this type in Poland within the National Rescue and Firefighting System. This provides it with the opportunity to offer assistance during accidents and incidents also outside the airport. Employee

volunteering is another interesting initiative in the field of work practices. This activity is only available to Kraków Airport employees. The "Support Volunteers" program aims to support the pro-social attitude of airport employees, who devote their free time and energy and use their skills to help others. The aim of the program is to award grants to the best projects submitted by Kraków Airport employees, addressed to public institutions or non-governmental organizations. In addition, all the airports covered by the analysis paid great attention to the development of human capital and the training system.

Another area of CSR (according to ISO 26000) is the environment. In this area, the most popular practices carried out by all three airports are related to noise protection and monitoring. Airports have foreseen and implemented a number of additional technical, technological, and organizational activities related to the limitation of range of airborne noise. Airports have modern air noise monitoring systems; furthermore, the noise analysis methodology meets the requirements of the Regulation of the Minister of the Environment. It is worth noting that, within the sphere of activities in the area of special environment, Kraków Airport stands out as the first airport in Poland with an electric car charging station. In addition, the airport has created two "Map of the dying world" educational zones, located in the terminal. Their role is to educate about sustainable development, responsible travel, biodiversity, and endangered species of fauna and flora.

The largest Polish airports also carry out activities in the area of consumer-related issues. Rules of travel changed in 2020 due to the Corona Virus pandemic. All the airports surveyed have tried to ensure that their passengers can travel safely and comfortably, with numerous procedures and devices promoting social distancing and hygiene protection being implemented. Interesting practices in this area are, for example, a free mobile application equipped with, among other things, intuitive navigation through the terminal, information useful during travel, notifications of changes in flight status.

In 2020 and 2021, the application was also used to communicate current information on COVID-19. Other amenities for customers include facilities for travellers with children, located in the terminal (family rooms equipped with a feeding chair, baby changing tables, microwave ovens to heat food for children). An interesting solution is also a dog-walking enclosure, equipped with facilities including an auto-filling water station and a set of play equipment for animals, which is located at Kraków Airport.

The airports in Gdańsk and Krakow were involved in the area of "Community, involvement and development". This was usually implemented through organization and participation in various types of actions and charity programs supporting the local community. Gdańsk Airport supports many cultural and artistic institutions and projects, e.g., by sponsoring the Musical Theater in Gdynia, supporting and holding patronage over the State Art Gallery in Sopot, the National Museum in Gdańsk, and

the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk. In turn, Kraków Airport annually organizes a Christmas aid event featuring a fundraiser, with the proceeds going towards the purchase of articles, furniture, and equipment for families in need. In addition, the "Rh Wings" Honorary Blood Donors Club operates on the premises of Kraków Airport. In the case of Okęcie airport in Warsaw, there was no information about activities in the area of "Community, involvement and development" in the years 2020-2021.

In the area of honest organizational practices, only Gdańsk airport was active, carrying out activities related mainly to counteracting corruption and promoting fair competition and social responsibility among stakeholders. In Promoting fair operating practices, the airport applied the rules set out in the Tenant's Manual equally to all tenants of Kraków Airport.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of the article was to identify and compare the main CSR areas of the largest airports in Poland, with the three largest airports in Poland analyzed. The selection of airports was based on the data from the Civil Aviation Authority in Poland. The analysis of literature, official reports, and documents provided by those three airports demonstrated that the largest Polish airports undertake very similar CSR activities. The exception in this case are two areas of CSR, i.e., Fair operating practices and Community involvement and development, with the selected airports undertaking no active operations in these areas. It seems, however, that the largest Polish airports are aware of the benefits that they can achieve thanks to pro-social and pro-ecological activities.

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Kraków Airport deserves special recognition for being active in all 7 areas of CSR (Organizational Governance, Human Rights, Labor practices, The environment, Consumer issues, Fair operating practices, and Community involvement and development). The airport in Gdańsk implements CSR in 6 out of 7 areas (Organizational governance, Human rights, Labor practices, The environment, Consumer issues, Community involvement and development), and the airport in Warsaw - 5 out of 7 (Organizational governance, Human rights, Labor practices, The environment, Consumer issues).

It appears that the weakness in the CSR concept in the studied airports is demonstrated by the lack of processes for reporting pro-ecological and pro-social activities, as only one airport publishes annual CSR reports (Kraków), paying particular attention to ethical, environmental, social, safety, and employment issues. The implementation of the reporting process at other airports could bring additional benefits, both to them and their stakeholders. It is worth noting that - for the stakeholders - the report constitutes a database of information on the activities of a given airport. Thanks to social reporting, the airport's activities become more transparent and clear, and stakeholders can receive feedback on the services

provided. Active communication with stakeholders may enable airports to better identify their needs and thus identify the strengths and weaknesses of a given airport.

It should be noted that, in the case of two of the three largest Polish airports (Warsaw and Gdańsk), there is no comprehensive information regarding CSR activities provided on their official websites. These airports did not have CSR tabs on their websites; only fragmented information about individual socially responsible activities could be found. A good solution for airports would be to implement new channels of communication with stakeholders in the field of CSR. It has to be emphasized that communication plays a significant role in the concept of corporate social responsibility. Each airport has a wide range of tools at its disposal, thanks to which it can communicate with stakeholders - e.g., a website, intranet, conferences, social media, etc. Information on socially responsible activities should be communicated in such a way as to reach the largest possible audience. Meanwhile, in the case of two surveyed airports, it is difficult to find information about CSR on their websites. It seems that a website is an ideal medium to post information about CSR activities carried out by a given airport.

To sum up, the largest Polish airports are entities that take into account various aspects of CSR in their activities and are not limited to one area. The conducted study demonstrated that Polish airports adhere to ethical principles, take care of safety, and feel responsible for their activities, taking into account the needs of stakeholders, both external and internal. These airports are managed in accordance with the standards and principles of corporate social responsibility. In addition, these entities share common values described in the codes of ethics and regulations addressed to both external and internal stakeholders.

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