

# ASPECTS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES ACADEMY OF GEN. M.R.ŠTEFÁNIK, LIPTOVSKÝ MIKULÁŠ, SLOVAKIA

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*The article deals with the issue of socially responsible behaviour in organizations, while the main emphasis is on the social responsibility of universities. The first part of the article briefly describes the concept of social responsibility and the second part presents a case study on the current state of activities related to socially responsible behaviour within the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M. R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš. CSR activities which were implemented at the Armed Forces Academy of gen. M. R. Štefánik can be an example of good practice for other universities in Slovakia and abroad.*

**Key words:** *university social responsibility, armed forces academy, sustainable growth and development, organization performance, social environment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of universities is to provide public services, especially higher education and research. Since colleges can be considered the top centres of education and creative activities we can say that when following their specific missions, universities contribute to the enhancement of an overall welfare of society and citizens' quality of life.

Besides the basic tasks, however, universities should play an active role in the social discussion on ethical questions and also significantly contribute to the achievement of “*Sustainable Development of Society*”. The issues of sustaining progress in all areas of human society activities regarding the next generations have come into the limelight lately. People want to live in a better world that is safer, cleaner, sustainable and fairer at the same time.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) modified for universities as “University Social Responsibility” (USR), is part of the activities related to the basic requirements of sustainable growth and development

Profit or non-profit organizations all over the world are aware of the need of responsible social behavior because social responsibility has become one of the most important factors of their evaluation. The performance of an organization in relation to the social environment has become a critical part of the evaluation of the total performance. In the competitive environment of universities this applies also for the behavior of public universities including military academies.

## 2. DEFINING ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The concept of organizational social responsibility has been developing in practice for a while. However, in theory there still is not a unified definition of it. Typically, all activities developed in accordance with the mentioned concept are based on willingness and not a standardized framework. The legislation does not require implementation of CSR activities.

H.R. Bowen is considered the “father” of the idea of social

responsibility. In 1953 he published a book titled *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, where he states that the “*businessman’s commitments include decisions to perform such activities which are required according to the aims and values of the society.*” [1]

The social responsibility of companies could be defined as [2]: “*continuous commitment of companies to behave ethically, contribute to the economic growth, advocate the enhancement of the employees’ and their families’ life quality, as well as the quality of life of community at local level and of society as a whole*”.

The European Committee defines CSR as follows: “*Corporate Social Responsibility refers to voluntary integration of social and ecological views into the every-day corporate operations and relations with their stakeholders*”.

The aim of a company, applying CSR is not just profit maximization, but also contributing to the sustainable development of the whole society according to the 3-P principle: “*people (social activities), profit (economical activity) and planet (environmental activity)*” [3].

It is necessary to state that the idea of social responsibility does not relate only to the profit-oriented companies. More and more often the term also encompasses business ethics, corporate governance, corporate social investment, corporate social performance, socially responsible behavior of organizations [4]. From an institutional point of view subjects respecting the CSR principles can be divided into the following groups [1]: organizations owned by global corporations; organizations owned by individuals (small and medium enterprises); organizations owned by state; public administration organizations.

According to the requirements of the practice the CSR principles can (and in case of universities should) be applied in all types of organizations.

Based on the concept of corporate social responsibility it is possible to develop a concept of social responsibility of universities, respecting the particularities of this type of subjects. According to

Tetřevová [1] USR then represents “the responsibility of universities to advocate and apply a set of CSR rules and values when performing their own key activities, such as education, research, public involvement and institutional management”. We can say that it is a kind of an amendment to the statutory responsibility, a situation in which university managers and employees behave in a specific way to meet their own objectives as well as the objectives of the university and they contribute to meeting the needs and objectives of all stakeholders.

Although the concept of social responsibility is based on willingness, since 2011 the STN ISO 26000 Guidance on social responsibility has been used in Slovak Republic. It was launched according to the international standardization ISO 26000. This standardization provides guidance on compliance with the principles of social responsibility; it includes the main areas and issues related to social responsibility and also the ways to implement social responsibility within an organization. The standardization can be applied in all types of organization regardless of their size and location, including non-governmental organizations, as well as profit organizations, because every organization influences society and environment. The standardization is designed to help organizations that are willing to achieve mutual trust among the stakeholders by improving, following and implementing social responsibility. This standardization provides guidelines for integration of socially responsible behavior within an existing organizational strategy, systems, practice and processes and it determines the results and improvements when implementing it.

According to STN ISO 26000, social responsibility is related to seven key areas: administration and management of the organization; human rights; personnel management; environment; correct behavior of the organization; consumer affairs; involvement in the community and community development. However, authors dealing with social responsibility define its key areas more or less differently as presented in the table below.

**Table no. 1.** Areas of social responsibility  
Source: author's own selection

Carroll [5]	economic, legal, ethical, philanthropic	
Petříková [2]	economic, ecological	social,
Paulová [6]	economic, (internal and external), environmental	social
Pavlík, Bělčík, Kunz [3]	economic, environmental	social,
Tetřevová [1]	economical, environmental, philanthropic	social, ethical,
McElhaney [7]	company, sector, world	community,
Steinerová, Makovski [8]	market, environment, local environment	working community,

An important activity of organizations implementing socially responsible behavior is communication (internal and external) on implementing individual principles of socially responsible behavior in practice. They inform the outside world as well as the internal environment of the organization about their activities in form of various reports and news, while their goal is to improve the awareness of the public regarding the fulfilment of social obligations and enhancing the image of the organization.

The benefits resulting from the implementation of socially responsible behavior within public organizations can be divided into moral and economic. Non-financial effects are for example: improvement of public services, enhancing credibility and reputation of the organization, enhancing the transparency of decisions taken, preserving natural resources, enhancing human capital, enhancing organizational structure, etc.

Among the economic benefits we can include better access to sources (public organizations can gain additional extra-budgetary funds from various donors, sponsors, EU sources, etc. due to enhanced credibility), reducing the expenses by accepting principles of good ecological practice, enhancing the employees' performance by boosting their motivation, confidence and competence.

### 3. ARMED FORCES ACADEMY OF GEN. M. R. STEFÁNIK'S ACTIVITIES REGARDING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR. CASE STUDY

The Armed Forces Academy of GEN. Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš is a state school of higher education founded and run under by Act No. 455/2004 Coll. It is a military school of higher education educating providing academic input especially to professionals of the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic. The academy independently and freely performs educational, scientific, research, development and other creative activities which are in line with its main objective and the laws of Slovak Republic. It is an institution under the subordination of the Slovak Ministry of Defence and hence financed by the state budget. To provide for all activities it conducts it also uses financial sources from the so-called "business activities" (like ... organizing training courses, seminars and conferences) and from the projects granted by the European Union.

The main mission of the academy is to educate, and train students within the higher education system and for lifelong learning, to develop their character, knowledge, creativity and boost their motivation to serve their country. The declared values of the academy are: Sapientia (wisdom), Bonum (the highest good), and Patria (homeland).

Although the socially responsible behavior within the Armed

Forces Academy has not yet been institutionally regulated by an internal standard, activities are not conceptually evaluated and the academy does not publish reports on its own social responsibility, the activities performed in the field are really quite vast. Due to the limited content of this article the author presents just a few selected activities by aggregating the key areas of the concept to be found in specialized literature.

The **economic area** is concerned with: transparency when using financial sources, use of electronic auctions for the procurement of goods and services; protection of intellectual property, correct relations with suppliers (i.e. timely reimbursement of invoices).

In the **environmental area** the main issues are: requiring low energy intensity devices and equipment in public procurement, active waste sorting, taking care of the campus, reducing energy consumption within buildings by reconstructions, reducing natural gas consumption, participation in maintenance works at the military cemetery "Háj Nicovô".

Social responsibility in terms of **human rights** refers to: equal treatment and non-discrimination within the staff hiring process, transparency of admission procedures.

In the social area, the concept covers the following: the opportunity to work flexible hours, paid leave of employees is increased by one week beyond the law, employer contributions to supplement retirement savings, employer allows the use of sports facilities free of charge to employees, their families and pensioners, employer provides severance package and retirement benefits beyond the statutory conditions, employer organizes meetings with pensioners, employer provides a financial contribution for children summer camps, employer supports lifelong learning, employees are awarded commemorative certificate and honours, employer organizes different sport and social events for employees.

**Philanthropy**, the last area, employees collect clothes, toys, books for children's homes, Catholic and Lutheran charitable organizations.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Modern society universities represent institutions from which we expect socially responsible behavior. The good news is that the activities of the Armed Forces Academy that fall under the socially responsible behavior are quite far-reaching and we expect them to reach even further in future. A suitable way of presenting them is the compilation and publication of The Report on Social Responsibility of AFA, which could inspire other universities in Slovakia or abroad. This procedure would also enhance the image of the military educational institution in front of its internal and external stakeholders.

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