CORPORATE DIGITAL RESPONSIBILITY:
HOW TO DEFINE AND WHERE TO SET THE BOUNDARIES

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The evolution of corporate social responsibility has been shaped by numerous social, economic, environmental and technological factors. Digital transformation has brought about not only new opportunities, but also new challenges, risks, and threats. It has created new domains of corporate responsibility and led to the emergence of yet another term «corporate digital responsibility» (CDR).

CDR seems to be as bottomless as CSR itself and is prone to growing in all directions, encompassing new and new aspects at an accelerated rate. The term CDR started to take shape relatively recently, around 2015, although concerns regarding digital ethics have been raised since the late 90s. Despite the growing literature on CDR, the concept is still in its nascent stage and is open to different interpretations and definitions. One of the current debates is about whether to consider CDR as an extension of CSR to the impacts created by digitalization or as an independent concept. The arguments in favor of treating CDR as a separate from CSR phenomenon are based on the qualitatively different characteristics of digital technology, which include its exponential growth accompanied by disruptive innovations, malleability due to enormous number of potential uses, and pervasiveness, which calls for special sets of norms for CDR [1]. These characteristics of CDR also indicate the need for constant reviewing and revising the norms, as new unanticipated issues become evident, but such norms are doomed to lag behind the development of technology.

There are numerous definitions of CDR. The International CDR Manifesto defines it as «a set of practices and behaviours that help an organisation use data and digital technologies in ways that are perceived as socially, economically, and environmentally responsible» [2]. There have been a number of attempts to provide structure to the concept by identifying dimensions and specifying principles of CDR. The aspects of CDR include those related to data collection, storage, use, and protection, data transparency and accessibility, cybersecurity, unbiased AI, privacy, digital inclusion, digital well-being, energy consumption by data centers), e-waste, etc.

New aspects and dimensions of CDR are emerging continuously, pushing the boundaries of CDR further and further, because technological advances, in particular, those related to AI, give rise to new ethical issues and produce unintended effects that must be dealt with. Under such conditions, proactive and preventive approaches to CDR based on collective foresight become of utmost importance, as well as the shared vision regarding the ethical principles guiding digital technology.

References:
1. Lobschat L., Mueller B., Eggers F. et al. Corporate digital responsibility // Journal of Business Research. 2021. Vol. 122. Issue C. P. 875-888.
2. The International CDR Manifesto. URL: https://corporatedigitalresponsibility.net/cdr-manifesto-english (дата звернення: 01.05.2024)