

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR BRD GROUPE SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE ROMANIA

Bianca Eugenia Leoveanu Soare*

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

A company's economic activities must be organized in such a way as to take into account how they will affect society, the environment and corporate governance (ESG) standards. The paper analyzes the current stage of the implementation of ESG practices within BRD Groupe Société Générale Romania, a company in the financial-banking field. The research was qualitative and consisted in the evaluation of environmental, social and governance factors by calculating a total score regarding ESG performance in fulfilling the SDGs. The findings show that there is an increasing ESG commitment in large Romanian companies, but there are still aspects that require significant improvements. The BRD company obtained a score of 44, and the most significant contribution to the achievement of the SDGs is related to the environmental pillar. The results obtained may be of interest to governments, businesses and civil society, depending on the role within the organization.

Keywords

ESG, SDG, banking sector, performance, social.

JEL Classification

G21, M14, M50, Q56

Introduction

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance has become an increasingly important factor for both investors and companies. It measures how well a company manages its impact on the environment, society and governance practices, but also its ability to create long-term value.

A key aspect of ESG performance is its alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs provide a framework for addressing the world's most pressing social and environmental issues, such as poverty, inequality, climate change and sustainable development.

* Corresponding author, **Leoveanu Soare Bianca Eugenia** – bianca.soare@eam.ase.ro

The link between ESG performance and the SDGs is crucial for companies that want to create a positive impact and contribute to a more sustainable future. By aligning their business practices with the SDGs, companies cannot only improve their ESG performance, but also drive positive social and environmental change.

This article explores the relationship between ESG performance and the SDGs and how the company can leverage this connection to create more value for stakeholders and society as a whole.

BRD is one of largest bank in Romania and operates as a universal bank that offers services to both individuals and businesses, and is also a member of the Société Générale Group, one of the leading financial services groups in Europe.

BRD Romania places a strong emphasis on environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance. The bank is committed to promoting sustainable development and responsible business practices.

In terms of environmental performance, BRD Romania has implemented a series of initiatives to reduce its carbon footprint and minimize its impact on the environment. The bank has implemented energy saving measures in its branches and offices, as well as invested in renewable energy sources. BRD Romania also promotes sustainable financing solutions for its clients, such as green loans and green bonds (https://bvb.ro/infocnt/infocnt23/BRD_20230427163336_BRD-Annual-Report-2022-EN.pdf).

Regarding the social field, BRD Romania prioritizes employee well-being and diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The bank offers training and development opportunities to its employees and promotes a culture of respect and equality. BRD Romania also supports various social initiatives and community projects aimed at improving society's well-being (<https://www.societegenerale.com/sites/default/files/documents/2023-04/diversity-and-inclusion-report-2022-en.pdf>).

Mapping the organization's sustainability practices is important for identifying opportunities for improvement to become more sustainable and socially, economically and environmentally responsible.

In terms of governance, BRD Romania adheres to high ethical standards and transparency in its operations. The bank has a strong corporate governance structure to ensure accountability and regulatory compliance. Also, BRD Romania regularly reports ESG performance to stakeholders and investors.

1. Review of the scientific literature

In recent years, the integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors into business practices has gained significant attention for its potential to drive sustainable development. Thus, it is explored the relationship between ESG performance and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the context of the Business Responsibility and Development (BRD) framework. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the 17 core sustainable development goals of the UN.

ESG practices contribute to the global effort to create a fairer, richer and more sustainable society by incorporating sustainable development, social responsibility and effective governance into company plans and investment decisions (Dwivedi, 2023).

There is an increasing number of research exploring the link between environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for businesses in developing economies. Several studies have found evidence that companies that prioritize ESG factors are more likely to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in their respective countries. Also, previous studies indicate that profitable and larger companies are more likely to exhibit better sustainability performance (Khaled et al., 2021).

The study by de Lucia et al. (2020) demonstrated a positive correlation between high ESG ratings and financial performance, indicating that companies with strong ESG practices can achieve better long-term profitability and sustainability.

According to a report by the World Economic Forum (2021), organizations that prioritize ESG considerations tend to attract investment, enhance their reputation and mitigate risks related to environmental and social issues. Some investors are moving towards sustainable and ESG investment by selecting ESG indices (GSDR, 2023).

Some papers highlight the role of businesses in promoting the SDGs, pointing out that aligning corporate strategies with the SDGs can stimulate innovation, foster inclusive growth and address global challenges such as climate change and poverty (Zhou et al., 2023).

In some studies, the importance of engaging the private sector in achieving the SDGs is highlighted, underlining the need for companies to integrate sustainability principles into their core operations and value chains (Boffo & Patalano, 2020).

Research by (Arvidsson & Dumay, 2022; Serafeim, 2015) highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement and transparency in the implementation of ESG practices within BRD, highlighting the role of corporate governance in fostering sustainable business practices.

Research by Zhang and Chen (2023) provided empirical evidence on how the implementation of ESG considerations within companies promotes the integration of environmental, social and economic performance and the achievement of a win-win situation with environmental, social and economic effects and how businesses can gain the trust of stakeholders, including governments and investors.

In conclusion, the literature supports the idea that improving ESG performance within BRD can have a positive impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Future research should focus on measuring and quantifying the specific contributions of ESG practices to sustainable development outcomes in the BRD context, ultimately guiding businesses towards more sustainable and responsible practices.

A study by Khan (2022) examined the relationship between ESG performance and the SDGs and found that companies with higher ESG scores were more likely to align their business practices with the SDGs, particularly in areas such as reducing poverty, gender equality and clean energy. The authors suggest that integrating ESG considerations into business strategies can help firms contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Another study by Ahmed et al. (2019) also explored the link between ESG and the SDGs in the context of Bangladesh. The authors found that companies with strong ESG

performance are more likely to have a positive impact on society and the environment as measured by their contribution to the SDGs. The study highlights the potential for Bangladesh businesses to align their ESG efforts with the SDGs to create shared value for both society and shareholders.

Overall, the scientific literature suggests that there is a strong link between ESG and SDG. Companies that prioritize ESG factors are more likely to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, creating positive social and environmental impacts in the process. As such, integrating ESG considerations into business strategies can help firms drive sustainable development and create long-term value for all stakeholders.

2. Research methodology

Thus, in order to achieve the purpose of this study and to carry out an analysis of the relationship from the present case study, the data were collected using the Refinitiv Eikon platform, for the company BRD Romania (from the banking-financial sector), the data being taken for the year 2021. To carry out the analysis, the mapping of sustainability practices reflected by ESG indicators, in relation to the 17 SDGs, was applied. The research also included the calculation of a total score based on the impact of ESG performance in pursuit of the SDGs.

Mapping also provides a solution for firms to identify where the SDGs are connected to their ESG performance and consequently to tangibly measure their progress towards achieving the SDGs by assessing ESG scores/core measures or calculating different sets of indices. In order to apply the mapping of sustainability practices reflected by ESG indicators, certain steps were followed: the identification of ESG indicators relevant to the organization's field of activity, the collection of data on the organization's sustainability practices according to the identified ESG indicators (the impact on environment, commitment to the community or measures of transparency and integrity in governance). The collected data were subsequently analyzed to understand the level of compliance of the organization with the selected ESG indicators. For each SDG target that could be identified, a score of 1 was assigned (for certain SDG indicators, more indicators were mapped), and for the missing ones the score was 0, and finally the total score was calculated by summing. The results help to identify possible measures to improve and increase sustainability performance. Monitoring these indicators is important as their impact on the organization's performance in the field of sustainability contributes to the adjustment of the strategy according to the results.

3. Results and discussions

The present study highlights the main results for BRD Groupe Société Générale, where each of the 17 SDGs were mapped to ESG indicators (Table 1).

The Group's aim is to establish a culture of responsibility and the strictest control and compliance framework in the banking sector (<https://www.societegenerale.com/en/news/>). Also, the BRD Group incorporates the principles of human rights, working conditions and the fight against corruption in all its operations and promotes these principles throughout its value chain. In addition, the BRD Group supports and contributes to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), recognizing their importance in addressing the biggest social challenges globally (<https://www.brd.ro/>).

The BRD Global Open Investment Fund, one of the 12 Managed Funds, encourages environmental and social aspects in its investments and seeks that the issuers in which it invests, either directly or indirectly, adopt good governance practices.

In 2021, BRD concluded a volume of transactions of over 500 million euros, including the largest green credit and the first issue of bonds linked to sustainability objectives at the Bucharest Stock Exchange, for which BRD was the sole coordinator (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

BRD Life insurance S.A., part of the Société Générale Group and the Sogecap Group, chooses its clients and service providers in accordance with environmental, social, ethical and governance principles. Climate-related events generated by climate change or society's response to such change, social issues (such as inequality, inclusion, labor relations, investment in human capital, accident prevention, changing customer behaviour, etc.) and/or governance issues (such as significant and recurring violations of international agreements, corruption, product quality and safety, sales practices, etc.) can contribute to increasing sustainability risks. Business sectors considered drivers of sustainable development include energy efficiency, energy transition, waste management, water treatment, sustainable mobility, regenerative/circular economy companies, green real estate developments or acquisitions, and social impact finance (<https://www.brd.ro/en/about-brd/>).

In the case of the studied company, no information was reported regarding SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero hunger).

Regarding SDG 3 (good health and well-being), the company pursues targets 3.8 and 3.9. This goal, which includes a substantial reduction in the number of deaths and illnesses caused by water and soil pollution and contamination, is addressed through various projects that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

BRD Group aims to create a safe and healthy working environment for employees, so that they can perform their tasks effectively and respond correctly to the needs of customers. Within the BRD Group, specific procedures are implemented to ensure the physical security and psychological well-being of employees.

BRD also provides its employees with various facilities in special situations, such as death and disability, hospitalization caused by accidents or diseases, allowances for serious and incurable diseases, and temporary incapacity due to work accidents. In addition, BRD also offers life insurance that covers occupational accidents or diseases, convalescence periods after hospitalization (maximum 15 days per year), permanent disability as a result of an accident, as well as permanent and total disability of degrees I and II from any cause. In 2021, the number of work accidents decreased from two to one (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf). Regarding the freedom of association policy, the bank has a collective labor agreement with its employees.

Within the bank's ESG strategy, another crucial objective is to maintain and constantly increase responsible employer standards. Thus, BRD assumes the responsibility of providing a work environment in which employees can capitalize on their full potential and contribute to the success of the organization.

BRD - Groupe Société Générale donated 1.7 million lei for the medical sector during the pandemic to provide hospitals with medical protective equipment, Covid-19 tests, disinfectants and medical equipment.

According to SDG 4 (Quality Education), target 4.3, refers to ensuring equal access for all women and all men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

BRD supported entrepreneurs from various counties in Romania by establishing new partnerships with companies, especially to reduce business risks. In this sense, the organization supported seminars on various topics such as financing solutions, saving and international development, bringing specialists from BRD, who chose to offer solutions for practical problems that may arise in the context of import-export transactions and beyond. The main topic addressed was that of structural funds.

BRD's social impact increased in the area of cultural projects. Through the Foundation9 and the Lumea9 sustainability platform, were organized events, contemporary art, exhibitions, debates, workshops and projects in culture, art, film, music, environment, tech, education, sport, among which we mention (<https://www.brd.ro/>):

- Neo Art Connect – founded together with Galateca and the Neo Art Romania Cultural Foundation, being the first network, national platform and art and science festival;
- SoNoRo Conac – BRD supports chamber music concerts, by association with various Romanian architectural works;
- The Stradivarius Tour, patronized by the violinist Alexandru Tomescu. Object of a partnership since 2015 the tour reached 16 sold-out concerts in 15 towns.
- Scena9, Scoala9 and Minecraft platforms continued to carry out projects in the field of culture, education and technology journalism
- BRD First Tech Challenge – the national robotics championship for high school students, supported by BRD since 2016;
- Innovation Labs – the longest-running pre-accelerator entrepreneurial education program with university tradition and national footprint, dedicated to tech startups; In 2021 it has reached over 61 successful teams across the country with a value of over €200 million;
- Innovators for Children – mentoring offered by BRD for start-ups, facilitating networking and offering business-related consultancy;
- Applied Data Science Center – is an R&D center founded with the support of BRD, focused on applied research in the field of artificial intelligence;
- Complex Information System Lab – a research and development laboratory dedicated to start-ups that develop hardware products, offering mentorship, training and technical support for projects in a more advanced area;
- How to Web Conference – is the event where entrepreneurs, investors, product developers, specialists and technology enthusiasts attend to discover the latest methods of innovation and connect with other professionals in the technology industry;
- Supporting the performance as an official partner of the Romanian Handball Federation;

- GO Scholarship – initiated by the Sports HUB team, a project started from the desire to offer the best to young athletes (14-18 years old), in addition to sports and educational training;
- "Neinvinșii" - an editorial project that presents important moments from the lives and careers of some of the most important Romanian athletes, in partnership with Lead.ro;
- The "Maria" International Wheelchair Basketball Tournament from Oradea - the longest-running event dedicated to the adapted basketball game in Romania;
- International tennis tournaments for people with disabilities from Pitesti and Bucharest;
- Day V – one of the largest corporate volunteer programs; a marketplace for a cause, where BRD employees can choose where to contribute time, skills, money, ideas and energy;
- The road to money – BRD's financial education podcast.

To support education and inclusion, in 2021, BRD funded Alfabetar, a digital platform with over 10 participating NGOs with resources for teachers, developed by the Association for Values in Education. In addition, School9, another education journalism platform that aims to contribute to the modernization of pre-university education, had over 1.5 million readers in 2021.

In addition, BRD facilitated 55 individual coaching sessions and 80 webinars provided to employees within the "We Connect" program.

Regarding SDG 5 (Gender equality) targets 5.1 and 5.5 aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, but also to ensure the full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities in holding leadership positions. Within the Group, any form of direct or indirect discrimination against an employee is prohibited. Compliance with this principle is regulated by a specific internal regulation that also includes the description of the alert mechanism. Various projects and measures are implemented at Group level to promote among all employees the importance of diversity and equal opportunities. BRD launched the Open Studio program (a series of open discussions) that addresses issues related to diversity.

In 2021, according to the sustainability report, 5038 women and 1640 men were employed in BRD.

BRD's business objectives are doubled by key HR efforts, as being a responsible employer means encouraging and supporting diversity and gender equity.

In the case of SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), BRD Groupe Société Générale is pursuing target 6.4 regarding the substantial increase in water use efficiency in all sectors and ensuring a sustainable process of capturing and supplying drinking water, in order to face the deficit of water and to substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity. The key objectives in water management are the reduction of water consumption, the efficient use of water and the appropriate treatment of waste water in accordance with the water efficiency policy and the defined water efficiency objectives. In 2021 compared to 2018, BRD significantly reduced water consumption to 48,079 m³ from 65,761 m³ (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

Regarding SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 are identified. Regarding the target related to increasing the share of renewable energy in the global

energy mix (target 7.2), a part of BRD's electricity consumption comes from renewable sources. Also, according to the Climate Assessment for Financial Institutions, investment loans supported energy efficiency projects (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

Considering the doubling of the global energy efficiency improvement rate (target 7.3), the bank aims to purchase green energy for the bank's premises, starting from 2021, but also adopts measures that contribute to the reduction of energy consumption, in accordance with the environmental policy of the bank.

Regarding its own operations, BRD saved 700,000 kWh of energy between 2016 and 2021 through the energy efficiency program. In terms of reducing the impact of its own operations, BRD managed to save 150,000 kWh annually by simply replacing and optimizing the UPSs in the BRD Tower (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf). Starting with 2012, BRD implements, at its headquarters in Bucharest, an energy efficiency program that consists in optimizing the LED lighting system.

The BRD Group is also committed to improving the fuel efficiency of its fleet by reducing car trips and introducing electric cars within the fleet. In 2021, BRD applied for eco-vouchers within the "Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in transport, by promoting clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles 2020-2024". Through this program, 4 cars were purchased (2 fully electric and 2 hybrid) (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

Regarding SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), BRD monitors progress towards the objective of protecting workers' rights and promoting safe and healthy working environments for all employees, as stipulated in targets 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, as well as for the promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for both women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, along with ensuring equal pay for work of similar value.

Related to SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) BRD achieved target 9.3 - increasing the access of small industrial and other enterprises, especially from developing countries, to financial services, including accessible credit through SME lending in the amount of 3,379,591 thousand lei in 2021, approximately 1.2 million lei more than in 2019.

Regarding SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), target 10.3 related to Ensuring equal opportunities and reducing inequality of results is targeted. The Group contributes to the construction of sustainable and inclusive development models to enable the emergence of new factors of sustainable growth. In this regard, the Group joined the Financial Initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP FI), the 2018 COP24 Environment Summit, the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UN PRI).

Regarding SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and economies), BRD discloses information relevant to the objective of reducing the negative environmental impact of cities, paying particular attention to air quality and municipal waste management (11.1, 11.2, 11.6). BRD Life insurance S.A., integrated in the Société Générale Group and the Sogecap Group, directs its corporate goal towards building a sustainable future through

responsible and innovative financial solutions, in collaboration with its employees. The Group is involved in promoting greener and more inclusive development models, thus facilitating the emergence of new engines of sustainable growth. The strategic plan is based on two main lines of action: combating climate change by focusing on the energy transition and promoting sustainable cities, which includes aspects such as green mobility, circular economy and sustainable construction.

BRD's carbon footprint reduction goals are achieved through investments in equipment and more environmentally friendly infrastructure.

Recycled waste decreased to 212,360 kg during 2020-2021. The total waste generated decreased significantly (55%) in the period 2020-2021 reaching 185,200 kg from 414,430 kg in 2018-2019 (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

In all the companies within the BRD Group, the selective collection of waste is implemented, and in some offices there is a household waste compactor. The entire amount of cardboard and paper waste generated is recovered. According to the sustainability report in 2021, the company reduced the amount of paper waste by over 22,000 kg. BRD has implemented a program for the collection and recycling of waste from electrical and electronic equipment, in partnership with the Recolamp and Ateliere fără Frontiere (AFF) associations. In 2021, BRD delivered free of charge 80 kg of light bulbs to Recolamp and 5.2 tons of electrical and electronic waste to Ateliere fără Frontiere and other WEEE waste collectors (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

The management of E&S risks associated with activities is complemented by actions to identify business opportunities with positive impact and funding. BRD is ready to support clients and transactions that aim for a net positive impact on the environment or that are engaged in sustainable business development. In 2021, €500 million of sustainable transactions were structured.

In the case of SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), the bank claims that it aims to support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity (12.1, 12.2, 12.4). Since 2017, the bank has partnered with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to offer green loans to individuals, either for the purchase of energy-efficient residential properties or for goods.

Regarding SDG 13 (Climate action), the company aims to strengthen resilience and adaptability to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries (13.1). Through activities related to environmental, social and climate risk assessment, as well as sustainable financing and ESG investments, the BRD Group can play a major role in the transition to a responsible, low-carbon economy and contribute to the protection of the environment by including environmental, social and climate risk assessment at product and transaction level (<https://www.brd.ro/>).

The manager of the investment funds, Société Générale Private Wealth Management SA, analyzes ESG (environmental, social and governance) criteria in the investment process. It takes into account various exclusion criteria, such as greenhouse gas emissions and the exclusion of emitters under international sanctions, as well as investment in the arms industry. ESG ratings are also used to assess sustainability risks on the return on backed assets.

One of the actions with a major impact for Romania to being more sustainable was the organization of the Climate Change Summit conference, which captivated the attention of almost 800,000 participants.

BRD manages its direct climate impact through its own operations, and for its corporate client activities, climate risk is part of the Environmental and Social (E&S) risk management process approved by the Management Committee, which covers the risk assessment of customers and transactions, within the defined scope of application (<https://www.brd.ro/>).

No information was reported regarding SDG 14 (Life below water) and SDG 15 (Life on land). However, related to environmental and biodiversity activities, the company launched the BRD Fund for Forests in 2019. BRD Group companies have been involved in a program to monitor and protect a valuable forest in the Sibiu area, together with the WWF Romania Foundation and a reforestation initiative in Deleni, Iași County, on an area of 60 hectares, part of an association with several entities from France and Romania (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

In relation to SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), the bank pursues SDG targets 16.3, 16.5 and 16.6. Regarding the target related to the reduction of corruption and bribery (16.5), BRD supports corruption and bribery prevention practices. Also, the bank seeks to comply with the independence and ethics requirements of the Council for International Ethical Standards for Accountants. In addition, whistleblower protection is in place and employees have the right to report any treatment that may be considered discriminatory, with the HR department being informed in a timely manner. On the topic of corporate governance, the targets are related to the development of efficient, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (16.6) (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

The bank has a staff training program which includes ABC (Anti-Bribery and Corruption) learning and a training session dedicated to staff who are most exposed to corruption and bribery risks and requires its staff to be vigilant and enforce the zero tolerance policy on corruption, including through prompt reporting of incidents and whistleblowing channels (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

Regarding SDG 17 (Partnership for the goals), BRD focuses on strengthening the global partnership for sustainable development, through collaboration with various stakeholders who contribute and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals (17.16).

In 2019, the Group adhered to the Katowice commitment to align financing portfolios with global climate goals and joined, as the first French bank, the Climate Bond Partner Program, an international network of financial actors working with climate bonds to guide investments towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. In the same year, SG Group signed the Poseidon Principles promoting low carbon emissions for the global maritime industry by integrating climate objectives into portfolio management and bank lending decisions (https://www.brd.ro/_files/documents/BRD_SR2021_RO_1.pdf).

Table no. 1. Score of ESG and SDG link for BRD Groupe Société Générale in 2021

SDG	Targets	ESG Pillars	ESG Indicators	Score
1	-	Human rights (S) Workforce (S)	Policy Human Rights Salary Gap	0
2	-	Product responsibility (S)	Product Access Low Price	0
3	3.6	Workforce (S)	Employees Health & Safety Team	4
	3.8	Workforce (S)	Health & Safety Policy	
	3.9	Emissions (E)	Total CO2 Equivalent Emissions Waste Recycled to Total Waste	
4	4.3	Workforce (S)	Training and Development Policy	1
5	5.1.	Workforce (S)	Women Employees Targets Diversity and Opportunity	3
	5.5	Workforce (S)	Women Managers	
6	6.4	Resource use (E)	Policy Water Efficiency Targets Water Efficiency Water Use	3
7	7.1.	Resource use (E)	Total Renewable Energy To Energy Use	5
	7.2	Environmental innovation (E)	Renewable/Clean Energy Products Fossil Fuel Divestment Policy	
	7.3	Resource Use (E)	Policy Energy Efficiency Targets Energy Efficiency	
8	8.5	Workforce (S)	Employees With Disabilities	3
	8.7	Human rights (S)	Policy Forced Labor	
	8.8	Human rights (S)	Policy Human Rights	
9	9.3	Community (S)	Community Lending and Investments	1
10	10.3	Community (S)	Policy Community Involvement Targets Diversity and Opportunity	2
11	11.1	Resource use (E)	Green Buildings	7

	11.2	Emissions (E)	Staff Transportation Impact Reduction	
	11.6	Emissions (E)	Total CO2 Equivalent Emissions To Revenues USD in million CO2 Equivalent Emissions Indirect, Scope 3 To Revenues USD in million Waste Recycled To Total Waste e-Waste Reduction Environmental Restoration Initiatives	
12	12.1	Environmental innovation (E)	Environmental Products Renewable/Clean Energy Products	5
	12.2	Resource use (E)	Policy Water Efficiency	
	12.4	Emissions (E)	Policy Emissions Targets Emissions	
13	13.1	Emissions (E)	Climate Change Commercial Risks Opportunities	1
14	-	-	-	0
15	-	-	-	0
16	16.3	Community (S)	Policy Fair Competition	7
	16.5	Community (S)	Policy Bribery and Corruption Policy Business Ethics Improvement Tools Business Ethics Whistleblower Protection	
	16.6	Management (G)	Board Structure Policy Board Functions Policy	
17	17.16	Emissions (E)	Environmental Partnerships	2
	-		Env Supply Chain Partnership Termination	
Total				44

Source: own research

The results of this study highlight the fact that, within the BRD Groupe Société Générale company, the environmental pillar (56.8%) contributes the most to the SDGs, followed by the social pillar (38.7%) and the governance pillar (4.5%). In the case of the environmental pillar, the highest score is recorded by Emissions (13), followed by Resource use (8) and environmental innovation (4). As regards the social pillar, Community (8), Workforce (7) and Human rights (2) recorded the most points.

Regarding governance, this pillar contributed the least to achieving the SDGs with a score of 2.

In terms of challenges, implementing ESG practices often requires investments in new technologies, systems, and employee training, which can pose financial challenges for organizations like BRD. The development of green finance mechanisms, such as green bonds and sustainability-linked loans, can mobilize capital towards ESG projects. Governments, financial institutions, and multilateral organizations can play a crucial role in providing incentives and creating enabling environments for green finance initiatives.

Conclusions

Through meticulous analysis and examination, this study has provided significant insights into how ESG practices influence the achievement of SDGs, thereby contributing to sustainable development initiatives. The research results show that, in Romania, BRD Groupe Société Générale obtained a score of 44. The biggest contribution to achieving the SDGs refers to the environmental pillar, especially the emissions, resource use and environmental innovation.

ESG performance is linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but gives different importance to each of the three ESG pillars. The findings highlight the importance of integrating ESG principles into business operations to drive positive impact on environmental conservation, social equity and governance integrity. BRD Group Société Générale Romania's commitment to ESG initiatives not only aligns with global sustainability goals, but also enhances its reputation as a responsible corporate citizen. By actively pursuing ESG goals, the organization can catalyze progress towards the SDGs, leading to positive change in the operational sphere and beyond.

This research highlights the benefits of ESG integration, including increasing stakeholder trust and resilience to emerging challenges. As BRD Group Société Générale Romania navigates the complexities of a rapidly evolving business landscape, prioritizing ESG considerations becomes a strategic imperative for long-term success and relevance. By adopting ESG principles, the organization not only fulfills its corporate responsibility, but also contributes significantly to global sustainability efforts, thus shaping a more inclusive, equitable and resilient future for future generations.

Future prospects may include BRD could align ESG practices with their core business strategies, embedding sustainability considerations into decision-making processes at all levels of the organization. Increased collaboration with stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, communities, and consumers, can help companies better understand local challenges and priorities. By involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, companies can build trust, mitigate risks, and identify opportunities for shared value creation. By addressing the challenges and embracing future opportunities, businesses can not only mitigate risks and enhance resilience but also unlock new avenues for sustainable growth and value creation in the long run.

Further research can be done by extending the analysis to a larger number of banks, so as to gain a more comprehensive perspective on ESG practices in the banking sector.

This approach could provide valuable insights into the variations that exist between financial institutions, as well as the identification of relevant trends and patterns. Also, comparing the ESG performance of several banks could highlight best practices and serve as a catalyst for improving sustainability practices across the banking industry.

In conclusion, the research findings have brought to light the intricate relationship between ESG performance and Sustainable Development Goals for BRD Group Société Générale Romania. The study has revealed how the company's activities in various sectors are deeply interconnected with the three pillars of ESG. By aligning corporate practices with the Sustainable Development Goals, BRD Group Société Générale Romania has not only demonstrated its commitment to sustainability but has also shown its proactive approach towards addressing critical global challenges. As we move towards a more sustainable future, it is imperative for companies to continue prioritizing ESG performance and integrating the principles of sustainable development into their core business strategies.

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