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THE IMPORTANCE OF ESG FOR ENTERPRISES AND SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TRENDS

The growing complexity of global trends creates new challenges for both enterprises and society, with the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) concept becoming a strategic framework for managing uncertainty and supporting sustainable development. The aim of the paper is to analyse the importance of ESG in the context of global trends and to point out its benefits and limits in shaping a stable and competitive economic environment. The research methodology is based on a bibliographic and scientometric analysis using the Web of Science and Scopus databases. The analysis identified key concepts and clusters related to ESG and their links to megatrends such as climate change, digitalization, globalization, and demographic challenges. The results show that ESG represents a key framework that connects environmental, social, and governance factors and increases the ability of enterprises to respond to global changes. The conclusions confirm that the application of ESG principles contributes to reducing risks, seizing opportunities, and long-term sustainability in an era of global transformation.

Keywords: strategic foresight, network analysis, transformation, social responsibility, digitalization

1. INTRODUCTION

The world economy and society at the beginning of the 21st century are undergoing fundamental transformations that are changing the current technological, economic and development paradigms. Globalization, as the dominant process of recent decades, is facing growing challenges associated with geopolitical instability, environmental threats and the need for sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability, but also the resilience, of global supply chains, while the Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the risks associated with security and geopolitical dependence. The future of globalization is therefore uncertain, and the expected slowdown in growth, innovation and poverty reduction may have significant consequences for individual sectors and countries.

In this context, the concept of ESG comes to the fore, representing a framework that allows businesses and societies to respond to global challenges while strengthening their long-

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term competitiveness and resilience. ESG factors are not only a response to climate and social challenges but are increasingly becoming a strategic element of economic management. They allow to mitigate risks arising from the concentration of critical resources, strengthen trust between stakeholders and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

The aim of the scientific paper is to analyse the importance of ESG in the context of global trends, identify its benefits and limits for enterprises and society, and highlight its role in shaping a sustainable and stable economic environment in the 21st century.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF GLOBAL TRENDS

Global trends represent fundamental social, economic, technological and political changes that shape the long-term development of society and the business environment. Their dynamics are closely linked to an environment characterized by turbulence, uncertainty, novelty and ambiguity, which significantly complicates the prediction of their future direction. In recent years, therefore, the importance of strategic foresight methodologies has been growing, which allow for the systematic analysis of emerging changes and better preparation for their consequences.

The concept of megatrends, introduced into the professional discussion by John Naisbitt (1984), has become an important analytical tool for capturing long-term transformation processes. Global trends allow businesses, societies and policymakers to identify key development lines that affect economic growth, social structures and technological progress. Current definitions point out that these are gradual, but often explosive trajectories of change that can fundamentally affect the functioning of companies (Hajkowicz, 2015).

This approach is particularly important for the field of researching the significance of ESG in the context of global trends. ESG factors are formed and applied precisely in an environment influenced by megatrends, such as climate change, technological transformation, demographic movements or changing geopolitical relations. Objective and systematic identification of these trends is therefore essential in order to assess their impact on businesses, society and economic management.

For the purposes of this study, a bibliographic analysis is used, which allows us to follow the development of scientific discourse in the field of global trends and ESG. This approach provides a theoretical framework on the basis of which it is possible to identify the main research directions, verify the accuracy of existing knowledge and create space for future applications of ESG in the context of global challenges.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of this study is based on a combination of bibliographic and scientometric analysis, which allows for a systematic examination of the development of scientific discourse on global trends and ESG. This approach was chosen to capture the complex connections between key concepts and identify their significance for businesses and society in the context of dynamic global challenges. The choice of this methodology reflects the need not only to analyse the content of scientific papers, but also to understand the structures that shape current knowledge in this area.

The primary data source was the renowned bibliographic databases Web of Science and Scopus, which provide a broad and verified overview of scientific publications. The analysis included papers published in the period 2010–2024, while papers related to key concepts such as ESG, sustainability, global trends, megatrends, climate change, innovation, digitalization, social responsibility and governance were monitored. The selection of papers

was based on keywords and the data was subsequently filtered to remove duplicates and irrelevant records. A bibliographical analysis was used to process the obtained data, focusing on monitoring the frequency of occurrence of individual terms, their co-occurrence and mutual links. This approach made it possible to reveal which topics and categories are most often interconnected and what place the ESG concept occupies in the discourse.

The analysis was supplemented with scientometric indicators that provided information on the productivity of authors, institutions and countries, as well as on citation links and intellectual structures of research. Specialized software tools (e.g. VOSviewer, Bibliometrix) were used to visualize and identify thematic clusters, which allow for mapping citation networks and creating clusters of terms. The analysis procedure included several steps: collection of publications, cleaning and filtering of data, processing of bibliographical and citation relations, network analysis of terms and interpretation of the results in relation to the importance of ESG for businesses and society. It should be emphasized that the research is limited by the selection of databases and the keywords used, which may affect the completeness of the captured discourse. The analysis was conducted mainly on the basis of publications in English and Slovak, which may lead to a smaller representation of research from other language areas. Despite these limitations, the chosen methodology provides a sufficiently robust framework for examining the significance of ESG in the context of global trends and creates a basis for formulating conclusions and recommendations for further research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bibliographic analysis is aimed at highlighting the relationships between the concepts used and confirming the aspects investigated, which the authors considered to be the essence of their research. Bibliographic analysis also helps to create a scientometric environment of research specifics, such as systematic reviews and meta-analyses in a specific field, while providing insight into publication trends and author productivity. This analysis is used by authors all over the world and allows for the quantification of bibliometric performance indicators, identifying important authors, organizations, countries, sources and intellectual structures in a specific field based on renowned databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and others. For the above reasons, we applied this analysis to the object of our research within the framework of our own study.

4.1 Societal dimension

Based on our analysis, we identified that several themes – such as "sustainability", "innovation", "future", "globalization", "management", "government", "technology" and "climate change" – regularly appear in different disciplines and significantly intersect. Their common denominator is that they are directly related to the ESG concept, which is today a key framework for assessing the impacts of global trends on businesses and society.

Although the specific combinations of terms differ in individual definitions of megatrends, the most common defining characteristic remains their impact on sustainable development (Bernhard et al., 2023; Bojovic & McGregor, 2023; Gaudig et al., 2021). We decided to confirm this view with our own research, which analyses the importance of ESG as a central element in the current global discourse and its connection with the main megatrends.

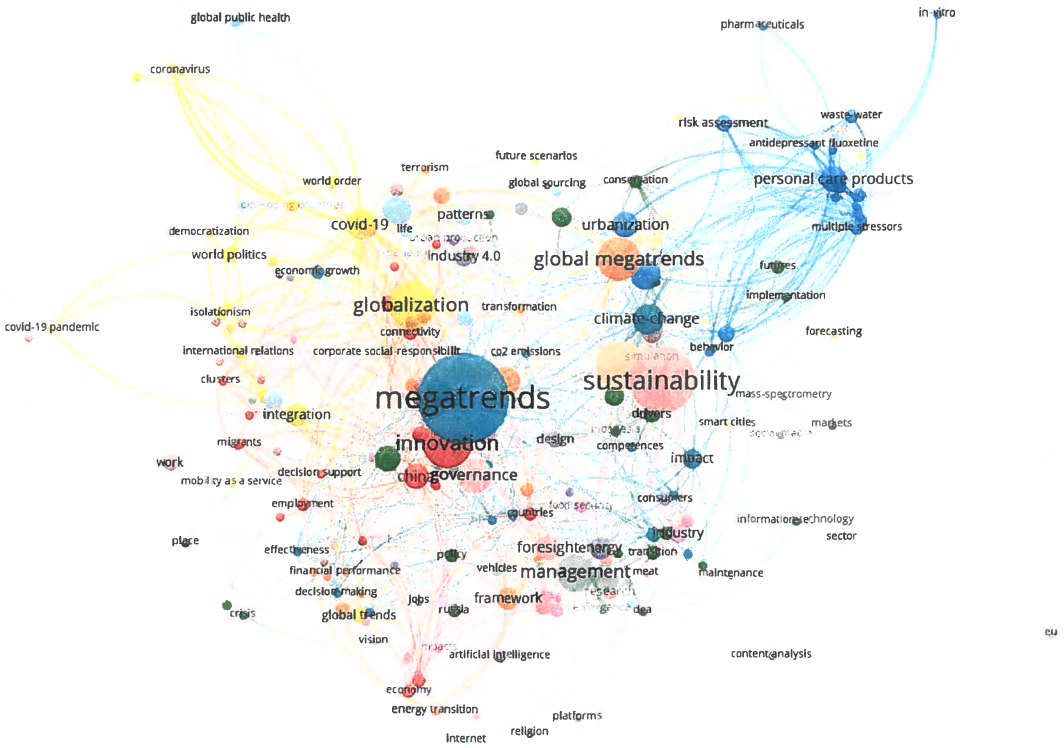


Figure 1. All-societal characteristics
Source: Author's own processing based on Web of Science data (2025).

Current global trends shape a dynamic and complex environment in which businesses and society must constantly adapt. In this context, ESG factors become a key framework that helps to understand and effectively respond to these challenges. Each trend or topic represents a certain node in the network of connections, the size of which reflects its importance and frequency of occurrence in discussions. The dense network of relationships and interactions between these nodes illustrates the synergistic effects and mutual influence of individual areas.

Since 2019, COVID-19 has been included among the key global factors, which is associated with concepts such as "global health" and "world politics". The pandemic has shown that health cannot be perceived in isolation – it has fundamental economic, political and social consequences. The ESG framework emphasizes the need for responsible management and the ability of enterprises to respond to crises with regard to their social impact.

The area of personal care and pharmaceuticals also plays a significant role, reflecting changing consumer behaviour and the growing emphasis on health. Similarly, key themes include climate change, sustainability and urbanization, which demonstrate the need to integrate environmental goals into corporate strategies and public policies. ESG offers a way to combine economic interests with the need for environmental adaptation.

Another important trend is digital transformation, represented by terms such as "information technology" or "artificial intelligence". The connection with areas such as "work" and "energy" points to fundamental changes in the economy and the labour market. In this case, ESG factors highlight the importance of transparent governance, inclusiveness and ethics in the implementation of new technologies.

The network of global trends also includes topics such as terrorism, international relations and social responsibility, which show that security, stability and trust are basic prerequisites for sustainable business and social development. At the same time, the connections between "economy" and "sustainability" emphasize that economic growth must be in line with environmental and social goals. The importance of ESG therefore lies in its ability to offer a holistic framework that reflects the multidisciplinary nature of global trends – from geopolitical and economic to technological and environmental. Applying ESG principles allows companies not only to reduce risks, but also to find new opportunities in an interconnected world.

In conclusion, ESG in the context of global trends is more than just a management tool – it is a strategy for building resilience, trust and long-term value for companies and society. Its integration into political, economic and corporate decisions is key to sustainable development and effective management of current and future challenges.

4.2 Transformational acceleration

The second category includes terms that express the tendency of global trends to cause change and influence individuals, society or the economic environment. This group includes words such as: "innovation", "trends", "collaboration", "competitiveness", "growth", "convergence", "development", "influence", "power" and "transformation". These terms characterize the essence of the causes and consequences that global trends bring and point to the driving mechanisms of change manifested at the global, macroeconomic and sectoral levels.

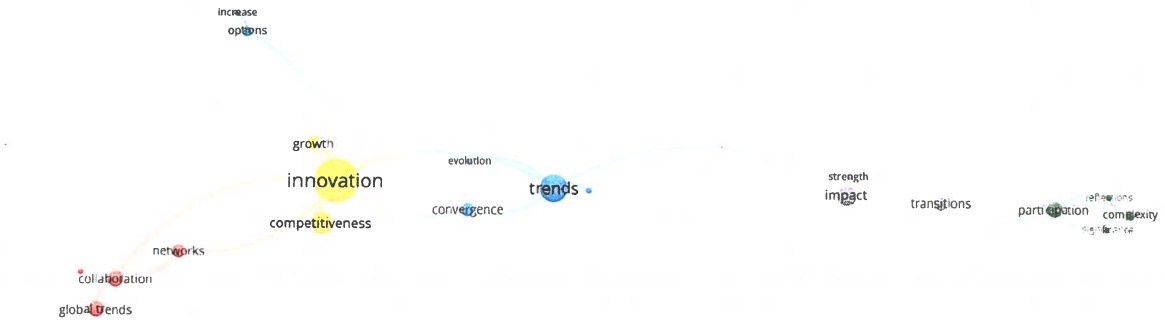


Figure 2. Acceleration characteristics
Source: Author's own processing based on Web of Science data (2025).

In general, the closer two key concepts are to each other, the stronger their mutual connection. Overlapping concepts such as trends, innovation and growth, which appear most frequently in the scientific literature, indicate a competitive environment in which it is necessary to monitor adaptation to changing global conditions. The convergence of different economic areas opens up space for the emergence of new opportunities and the transformation of traditional models. The power of global trends lies in their complexity and fundamental importance, which is crucial in assessing their impacts on society and the market environment.

This dimension is also highlighted by Sultan et al. (2008), who point out that a global trend represents a significant movement, tendency or force that arises or operates in one or more parts of the world. Definitions of global trends often focus on the scope of changes they bring, describing them as driving mechanisms of transformation – dynamic, intense, long-term and with a significant impact on a global or multidisciplinary scale. Ismail et al. (2021)

characterized them as "robust transformative forces with far-reaching effects on individuals, society, culture, business, and economies". Furthermore, Oberholster and Adendorff (2018) defined global trends through three dimensions – impact, reach, and time, which corresponding to the level of change, the scope of influence, and the time horizon.

4.3 Intensity of impact

The bibliographical analysis in Figure 3 offers a visual insight into the scope of influence and dynamics of global trends that transcend both geographical and societal boundaries.

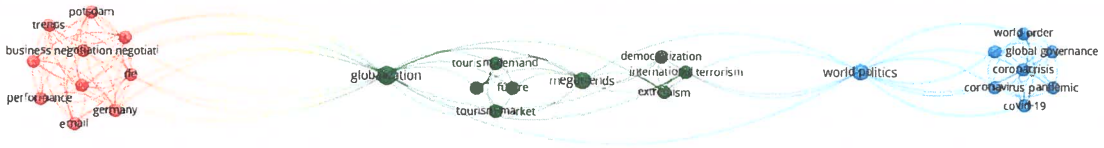


Figure 3. Scope of effect
Source: Author's own processing based on Web of Science data (2025).

The red group on the left includes concepts related to business and commerce, such as performance, negotiation, entrepreneurship, and management. Their interconnections indicate that they often appear together in the literature focused on business processes, governance, and performance evaluation. The impact of these concepts is significant, as economic and business practices shape global trends that affect business across the world, regardless of borders.

The green group in the central part is related to the relationship between globalization and tourism. It includes topics reflecting demand and market dynamics in the tourism industry. Globalization and migration of people show how tourism adapts to global changes while connecting different cultures and nations, thereby contributing to more intense intercultural interaction.

The blue group on the right focuses on world politics and global governance, with an emphasis on events with a global impact, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These topics are inherently linked to processes that transcend national borders and require coordinated international cooperation.

According to Ismail et al. (2021), global trends represent significant transformative forces with long-term effects on individuals, society, culture, business and economies. This view is also supported by Jeflea et al. (2022), who argue that global trends are not only large forces operating in selected geographical regions but have the potential to influence the development of human civilization as a whole. Moreover, various authors (Farahani et al., 2019; Vena et al., 2020) emphasize that these attributes point to the ability of global trends to radically reshape social structures and mechanisms of functioning, thereby contributing to the emergence of a new world order.

4.4 Time dimension

Figure 4 shows a network analysis of concepts related to global trends, focusing on their temporal dimension. Megatrends differ from regular trends or smaller phenomena in that they develop over longer periods of time and are characterized by a lasting impact (Linthorst

& de Waal, 2020; Störmer et al., 2020). Their effects often span years or decades, and in many cases even span multiple generations.

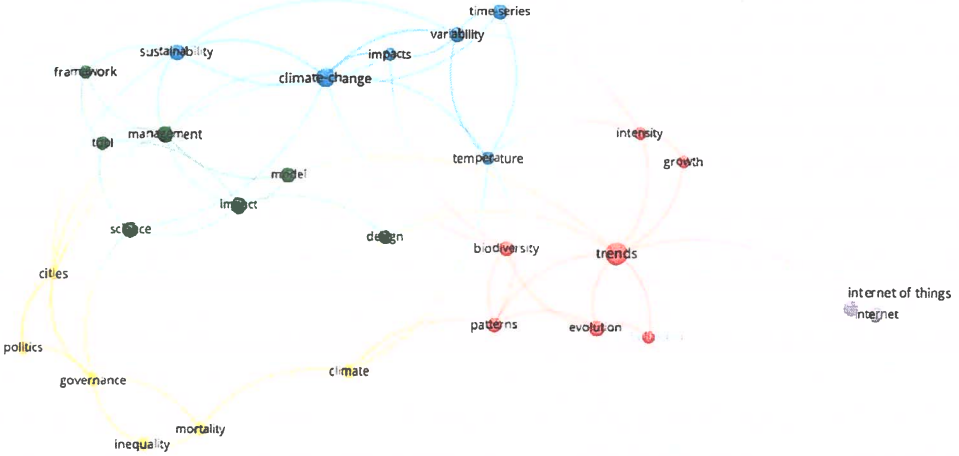


Figure 4. Time perspective
Source: Author's own processing based on Web of Science data (2025).

The red cluster links concepts such as trends, intensity, diversity, evolution and globalization, thus pointing out the dynamic nature of trends and their diverse impact on global development. The blue cluster focuses on climate change, variability and temperature, emphasizing long-term environmental transformations and their impacts. The green cluster links concepts such as sustainability, frameworks and models, signalling the importance of strategic planning and management in the context of sustainable development. The yellow cluster, containing the concepts of politics, governance, inequality and cities, reveals the interconnectedness of social and political factors with global trends. The separate purple cluster, represented by the term internet, indicates its key, but largely autonomous role within global dynamics.

These clusters show that global trends are closely interconnected and influence each other, while the time dimension emphasizes the continuous process of evolution and adaptation of society, technology and the environment. While some authors have quantified the duration of megatrends at seven to ten years, most leave it as an open-ended time frame – for example, van Dorsser & Taneja (2020) state that megatrends can be tracked over decades. Other approaches emphasize the temporal dynamics of megatrends, which often form slowly and gradually gain momentum, but once they occur, they have long-term and far-reaching consequences (Berlinger et al., 2021; Magyar et al., 2021).

4.5 Predictive properties

The final category focuses on technological innovations and predictive models, which are key tools in managing and adapting to global trends. Figure 5 shows a comprehensive network analysis that visualizes the interconnected set of topics necessary for predictive understanding and anticipation of the evolution of these trends.

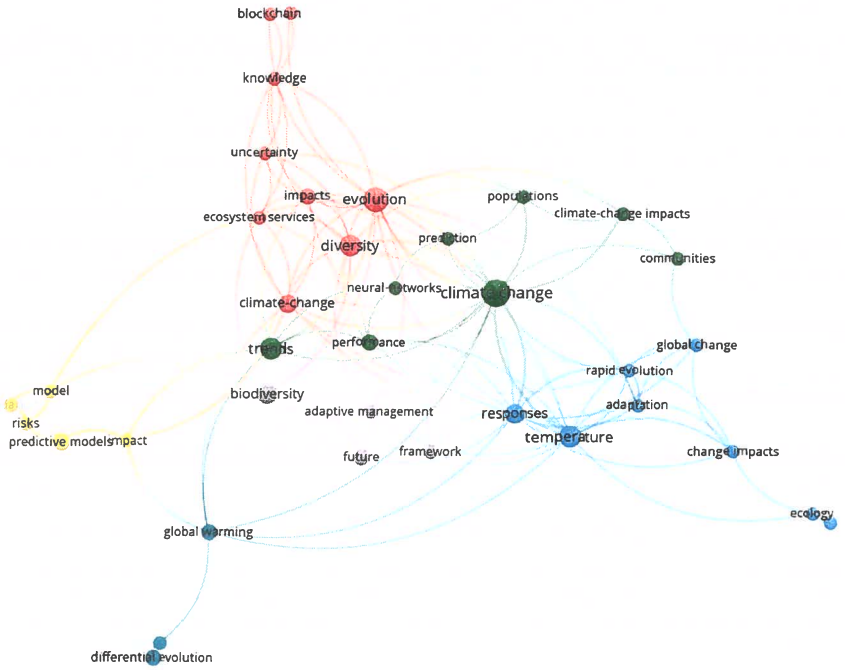


Figure 5. Predictive characteristics
Source: Author's own processing based on Web of Science data (2025).

The red cluster emphasizes the importance of technological innovation and knowledge as drivers of evolutionary change in various industries. Terms such as blockchain and ecosystem services suggest that technologies will play a key role in future transformations in the areas of trade, services and sustainability (Jankowiak, 2021). The presence of the terms diversity and evolution indicates that the ability to adapt and diversify is essential for success in a changing turbulent environment.

The green cluster emphasizes the importance of prediction and the use of advanced technologies such as neural networks to identify and anticipate trends. This allows for more effective strategic planning and preparedness for future challenges and opportunities. The blue cluster focuses on adaptation and response to changing conditions, which is essential for organizations and companies to remain competitive and survive in a dynamic environment. The yellow cluster emphasizes the importance of predictive models and risk management. The creation and validation of models that can predict future trends are crucial for strategic decision-making and risk minimization through data-driven analysis. The turquoise cluster highlights global environmental changes and their societal impacts. Topics such as ecology and adaptation to global change are essential for sustainable development and the protection of natural resources.

These characteristics are reflected in various definitions of global trends in the literature. Batt (2018) refers to them as a construct that "shapes our future world", similar to Maggio et al. (2019). Reimers-Hild (2018) points out that global trends also serve as tools for strategic foresight that support future planning. Doppler & Steffen (2020) describe them as "constants of development in global society", while Ahlqvist (2022) understands them as long-term development trajectories with an expected continuation in the future. Singh (2021) defines global trends as "global, sustainable and macroeconomic forces of development" that fundamentally affect business, economy, culture, society and individual lives and determine the pace of change.

Although Naffa & Fain (2020) have used the concept of global trends to analyse retrospective processes, the prevailing consensus is that they are primarily future-oriented phenomena. For example, Artuso & Guijt (2020) emphasize that global trends "originate from the past, take shape in the present and transform the future".

The bibliographic analysis confirmed that scientific research and definitions of global trends agree on their key importance in understanding the future development of society, economy and other areas such as technology, health, innovation, education, environment, politics and culture.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The growing interconnections between people, economies and cultures remain one of the main drivers of globalization, which is now manifested mainly through the transfer of digital services, information and knowledge. Although the pace of traditional globalization has slowed down and new dimensions with uncertain consequences have emerged, the future of this process remains open and full of challenges. In this context, ESG principles are gaining importance, allowing businesses and societies to cope with risks and seek a balance between economic efficiency, national security and the resilience of economies.

While past phases of globalization were driven mainly by the pursuit of efficiency and market expansion, the present brings the need to also consider factors such as inequality, environmental risks and responsible management of supply chains. The ESG framework acts here as a strategic tool that helps integrate economic, social and environmental considerations into decision-making. In this way, businesses not only increase their resilience to the uncertainties of globalization, but also contribute to the long-term sustainable development of society.

Future developments may lead to slower globalization, partial deglobalization, or new forms of connectivity, but regardless of the trajectory, it remains crucial to examine how global trends translate into business practice. Further research should therefore combine economic, technological, social, and environmental factors to provide a comprehensive picture of how ESG approaches help businesses and societies manage the uncertainties of a globalized world and find sustainable paths into the future.

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