

The Readiness of Radio Journalism Ethical Self-Regulation in the European Union and Slovakia for the Online Media Era

La preparación de la autorregulación ética del periodismo radiofónico en la Unión Europea y Eslovaquia para la era de los medios digitales

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Abstract

The study examines whether and how current self-regulatory ethical codes governing radio and online audio production in the Slovak Republic and the European Union address key ethical issues in the digital information environment. These issues were identified through expert consensus in the Delphi study on information ethics conducted from 2021 to 2022 at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. The experts identified nine aspects across three areas of information ethics: primary ethical concerns (privacy and personal data, information technologies and artificial intelligence, disinformation), priority ethical dilemmas (human impact, transparency, human supervision, oversight), and core information values (usefulness, truthfulness, trustworthiness). These categories served as the basis for the content and comparative analyses in this study. The results show that the codes of ethics issued in Slovakia tend to be instrumental, normative, methodical, and reactive, while European codes are more philosophical, value-based, systemic, and proactive. The study contributes to the discussion on media and journalistic ethics in Slovakia, suggesting that although current regulations offer methodical guidance for ethical conduct in both traditional and digital media environments and align terminologically with the areas monitored and addressed by European codes of ethics, the Slovak code still largely reflects conceptual approaches rooted in 20th-century thinking compared to the broader, more visionary European codes.

Keywords: radio journalism, audio journalism, online media, ethical self-regulation, Slovakia

Resumen

El estudio examina si los códigos éticos autorregulatorios vigentes que rigen la radio y la producción de audio en línea en la República Eslovaca y en la Unión Europea abordan las cuestiones éticas clave en el entorno de la información digital y de qué manera lo hacen. Estas cuestiones se identificaron mediante el consenso de expertos en el estudio Delphi sobre ética de la información realizado entre 2021 y 2022 en la Universidad Comenius de Bratislava, Eslovaquia. Los expertos identificaron nueve aspectos en tres áreas de la ética de la información: preocupaciones éticas primarias (privacidad y datos personales, tecnologías de la información e inteligencia artificial, desinformación); dilemas éticos prioritarios (impacto humano, transparencia, supervisión humana, control); y valores fundamentales de la información (utilidad, veracidad, confiabilidad). Estas categorías sirvieron de base para el análisis de contenido y la comparación del estudio. Los resultados muestran que los códigos éticos emitidos en Eslovaquia tienden a ser instrumentales, normativos, metódicos y reactivos, mientras que los códigos europeos son más filosóficos, basados en valores, sistémicos y proactivos. El estudio contribuye al debate sobre la ética periodística y de los medios de comunicación en Eslovaquia, sugiriendo que, si bien las regulaciones actuales ofrecen una guía metódica para la conducta ética tanto en los medios tradicionales como en los digitales y se alinean terminológicamente con las áreas supervisadas y abordadas por los códigos éticos europeos, el código eslovaco todavía refleja en gran medida enfoques conceptuales arraigados en el pensamiento del siglo XX en comparación con los códigos europeos más amplios y visionarios.

Palabras clave: periodismo radiofónico, audioperiodismo, medios digitales, normativa ética, Eslovaquia

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1. Introduction and state of the art

Ethical regulation of radio broadcasting faces numerous challenges in the age of online media. Besides traditional concerns such as (1) truth versus misinformation, (2) impartiality versus partisanship, and (3) public service versus commercialism, new issues have emerged. These include the rapid spread of (often unverified or false) information, ongoing archive updates, moderation of online discussions, content personalization, transparency, and, more recently, the involvement of artificial intelligence (AI) in program creation. Radio broadcasting has transformed in the 21st century through online platforms into text, audio, and visual streaming of on-demand (video) audio content. A current trend in audio is “watching” podcasts instead of just “listening to” them, meaning audiences watch the dialogue or discussion in recordings, turning podcasting into video casting. In other words, radio broadcasting now involves multi-platform digital content delivery to a community audience. This also signifies a major shift in the ethical regulation of radio journalism. In the era of traditional offline media, the ethics of radio broadcasting were based on the good manners of mass society and the broad “universal” audience. However, the online era has introduced media content personalization through various on-demand providers, mainly targeting specific, “non-universal” audiences. For these audiences, many traditional aspects of ethical regulation—especially objectivity and impartiality—may no longer apply.

Nonetheless, the goal of ethical codes remains to guide media creators and the public, serving as instructions for proper conduct in daily routines and potentially challenging situations.

The main goal of this study is to assess whether current self-regulatory ethical codes governing radio and online audio production in the Slovak Republic and the European Union are capable of addressing existing challenges across nine aspects representing three areas of ethics in managing information in a digital world: (1) Main Ethical Issues: a) Privacy and personal data, b) Information Technologies and Artificial Intelligence, c) Disinformation; (2) Priority Ethical Dilemmas: a) Human Impact, b) Transparency, c) Supervision and Oversight by Humans; (3) Priority Information Values: a) Usefulness, b) Truthfulness, c) Trustworthiness. These categories of ethical challenges in modern society emerged from the Delphi study on information ethics (Steinerová, 2024) and formed the basis for this study, which uses content and comparative analyses as its research methods.

The analysis revealed that the journalistic ethical codes adopted and maintained at the national level in the Slovak Republic are instrumental, normative, methodical, and reactive, while the European codes are philosophical, value-based, systemic, and proactive. This study aims to contribute to the development of media and journalistic ethics in Slovakia, which, as it appears, still largely reflects 20th-century thinking (for example, in understanding, truthfulness, objectivity, or privacy protection), even though it precisely regulates, from an instrumental and methodological perspective, the ethically sound conduct of journalistic creators in the digital environment of online media in the 21st century.

1.1. Radio as a phenomenon of media-driven communication – a literature review

Radio broadcasting in Slovakia will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in 2026, with only a little more history across Europe. Its widespread adoption in most European countries dates back to the early 1920s. Among the first were Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union in 1922. Czechoslovakia, which included Slovakia at the time, joined a few months later in 1923. In 1922, the United Kingdom established its first public radio station, the BBC, whose ideological and ethical foundation of market order, and particularly its role in preventing political and propagandistic misuse of technology by governments and politicians, served as an inspiration worldwide (Sámelová, 2019).

However, the golden age of radio broadcasting is generally considered to be the 1930s, when it established itself as a new branch of the creative industry. Since then, radio broadcasting has remained extremely popular, partly because of its wide variety of genres. Original music, news, and opinion shows expanded to include sports broadcasts, educational and outreach lectures, arts and comedy programs, and radio series for both children and adults. However, the rise of the radio creative industry is also closely linked to its commercialization (Rusnák, 2010). In just over a hundred years, radio has experienced several dramatic changes. Notably, its development in formatting once it secured its market position against television (Chignell, 2009), and later, through remediation and convergence as it adapted to the growth of the Internet and the digitalization of media communication (Jędrzejewski, 2015). This demonstrates that radio is a resilient medium capable of adapting to changing social and technological landscapes. Even in the digital media era, radio remains influential and, through podcasting, has evolved from linear broadcasting into the audio-centric medium of the digital age (Stržinec, 2025).

In media theory, three main concepts are used to analyze radio as a form of media-mediated communication. The oldest of these is represented by the theory of the “tetrad”—a four-law framework (Enhance, Obsolesce, Retrieve, Reverse) developed by Marshall and Eric McLuhan (1988). The theory

outlines a four-stage process in which a medium evolves into something new as it approaches the limits of its original form. Marshall McLuhan's student, Paul Levinson, later applied this theory to radio and showed that radio, as a purely auditory medium that replaced the press's original visual communication with auditory authenticity, evolved into television, which, with its technology, reintroduced the visual aspect of communication.

The second area of research in radio development is the theory of remediation by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000). Remediation explains how a new medium either fully absorbs or at least transforms the communication forms of its predecessors. Originally, new media imitate older ones to gain popularity and credibility with audiences, but over time, these transformed older communication forms become integrated into the new media (Bliss, 1991). The history of radio broadcasting aligns with this theory. As a new medium, radio adopted the communication styles of existing media — such as newspapers — which is why its programs were once called “magazines of the air” (Bliss, 1991). Broadcasting quickly gained widespread popularity and social influence by providing easy access to information, education, and entertainment, thereby partly replacing existing methods of dissemination (Sámelová, 2019). Radio has long borrowed communication formats from daily life—news, commentaries, literary stories, dramatizations, concerts, sports events, and more. Essentially, radio didn't introduce a new kind of content; it simply made existing content more accessible—bringing libraries, theater recordings, lecture halls, and sports venues to life in sound across various environments. It didn't generate new content but offered pluralistic access to existing content from a single device—a radio receiver and, later, a transistor (Sámelová, 2019). From this perspective, radio can rightly be seen as an analog, linear precursor to media convergence.

Media convergence describes the continuous flow of information across various media platforms, requiring cooperation among media industries in a landscape where an active audience can go anywhere to find what they want. This is how Henry Jenkins (2006), the founder of convergence theory, defined it. Jenkins sees convergence as a cultural shift rather than just a technological process that combines multiple media functions into a single device. According to Jenkins (2006, p. 14), convergence is an old concept that is gaining new importance.

Radio has historically demonstrated itself as a highly adaptable medium, capable of establishing its presence even in competition with audiovisual media, which appear more appealing to audiences because of their visual component. The digital era of radio does not seem to have caught it off guard. On the contrary, it has capitalized on its limitations with analog linear broadcasting and swiftly added new features, starting with access to audio archives of its programs. From there, transitioning to podcasting, streaming, and paid on-demand audio services was a small step (Hancock & McMurtry, 2018). According to an analysis by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU, 2024) on long-term trends in radio listening in Europe, linear radio broadcasting is currently undergoing gradual shifts in listener behavior. And although it still reaches large audiences, streaming and on-demand services are becoming increasingly influential in the digital audio landscape.

However, technological advances in the digital age have also prompted changes in how journalistic content is created (Višňovský, J., Radošinská, J. & Predmerská, 2015). The need for de-skilling and re-skilling (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008), which involves moving away from traditional analog practices and adopting new digital methods, quickly increased the demand for journalistic versatility represented by craft multi-skilling (García Avilés et al., 2004). This skill entails the ability to work across text, audio, and visual media. All of this takes place during an era of fake news and widespread public access to online publishing. Therefore, there are valid reasons to adjust journalistic ethics to reflect the new reality

of radio broadcasting within the digital information society. The requirements for ethical reflection in managing information in the digitized media landscape were examined through a Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024), whose findings serve as the framework for this research on codes of ethics in media and journalism in Slovakia and the European Union.

1.2. The Delphi study on information ethics

The terms “Delphi method,” “Delphi technique,” or “Delphi study” describe a qualitative forecasting approach where a group of experts works to find solutions to complex problems through several rounds of anonymous evaluation. The aim is to arrive at answers or develop innovative solutions based on expert consensus in the relevant field (e.g., Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Chuenjitwongsa, 2017; Sablatzky, 2022).

The Delphi study, whose results we use in this research, focused on information ethics research conducted in 2021–2022 at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. This Delphi study on information ethics (Steinerová, 2024) was part of a larger project addressing the ethical challenges of the digital information revolution. In the pilot survey and two rounds, experts from various academic disciplines and professional fields—including information science, media, marketing communication, social informatics, philosophy, psychology, political science, and management from Slovakia and the Czech Republic—participated (4 experts in the pilot survey, 19 in the first round, and 6 in the second).

The results showed that experts in the discussed social disciplines agree on three main issues facing society today, three priority dilemmas, and three key values of information (Steinerová, 2024, pp. 169-177). Regarding these areas, the discussion identified three sets of reasons why experts consider these phenomena problematic.

- (1) Experts agreed that the *three main issues* in the development of information ethics are Privacy and personal data, Information Technologies and Artificial Intelligence, and Disinformation (Steinerová, 2024, pp. 174-175).
- (2) The *three main ethical dilemmas* in managing information are currently considered to be Human Impact, Transparency, and Supervision and Oversight by Humans (ibidem, pp. 175-176);
- (3) Experts consider Usefulness, Truthfulness, and Trustworthiness the *three most important values of information* in developing information ethics (ibidem, pp. 176-177).

Since modern radio journalism and its institutional realities have shifted from the analog era of linear broadcasting to the digital era of online streaming and on-demand programming, it is clear that radio content production no longer focuses solely on what is transmitted to the listener in a one-way audio format. Online production is more complex, involving not only professional broadcasters and their audiences but also technologies that serve as tools for distributing radio programs and as independent creators of media content similar to journalistic work. Therefore, journalistic and media ethics should naturally adapt to the trends identified by experts in the Delphi Study as currently dominant phenomena in developing appropriate ethical regulation. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the readiness of the ethical codes governing radio journalism and online audio production in the Slovak Republic and in the European Union. The theoretical foundation of the concept of readiness in this case is based on the findings of this Delphi Study, whose results serve as analytical categories in this research.

2. Methodology

Methodologically, this study is a qualitative comparative analysis. In the first step, it employs content analysis to provide a documentary description of the examined codes of ethics as self-regulatory documents across three thematic clusters: (1) Main Ethical Issues; (2) Priority Ethical Dilemmas; (3) Priority Information Values. The specific analytical criteria for each cluster were derived from the results of the Delphi study on information ethics (Steinerová, 2024) and served as a reference framework for evaluating the readiness of the analyzed codes of ethics for the online era (see Conding Table, Appendix 1). In the second step, the study conducts a comparative analysis of the individual codes of ethics alongside the findings of the Delphi study. In the third step, it concludes with an assessment of the current state of ethical self-regulation in journalism in Slovakia and Europe, specifically regarding the ethical challenges faced by radio broadcasting and online audio production.

2.1. Data collection – the method for selecting codes of ethics

The selection of codes of ethics included in this study is based on three criteria: (1) current validity in 2026; (2) self-regulatory impact on traditional media radio broadcasting and/or online audio production; (3) representation of professional and institutional authority in the field of ethical self-regulation of professional journalism. The chosen ethical codes are therefore current voluntary regulations that significantly impact both radio and online audio production and are widely adopted at national and international levels.

At the national level, we reviewed the “*Code of Journalistic Ethics*” (2017), the “*Optional Protocol to the Code of Journalistic Ethics on the Protection of Human Dignity, Humanity, and Minors*” (2024), and the “*Second Optional Protocol to the Code of Journalistic Ethics on Public Access to Information, the Comprehensiveness of Information, Opinion Plurality, Objectivity, and Impartiality*” (2025). All three documents establish a shared ethical self-regulatory framework and were issued by Slovakia’s main self-regulatory body for media ethics — the Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics (AONE). Its members include all major media organizations — both public service and privately owned, nationwide and regional or local — representing traditional print, radio, and television outlets, along with online media providers in Slovakia: the Slovak Syndicate of Journalists, the Association of Printed and Digital Media (ATDM), the Association of Television Broadcasters of Slovakia, and the Association of Radios of Slovakia. AONE is a full member of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils of Europe (AIPCE). The country’s largest radio broadcaster, public-service Slovak Television and Radio, follows AONE’s ethical guidelines; however, it manages journalistic ethics across its four TV and ten radio services, plus its online platforms, based on its own codes of ethics — the “*Statute of Program Staff and Associates of Radio and Television of Slovakia*” (2011) and the “*Code of Ethics for Internet Communication*” (2018). Consequently, we also analyzed these two documents at the national level.

At the international level, we examined the media ethics self-regulatory frameworks of the European Union (EU) and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). The EU’s framework is based on two documents: “*Resolution 1003 (1993) on the Ethics of Journalism*,” which serves as a core guide for many national codes, and the widely used “*Ethical Guidelines for Online Journalism (General Principles)*” (Pavli & Sala, 2018). The EBU ethics framework is important for this research because the EBU is the world’s largest and most influential professional organization, bringing together public-service radio and television broadcasters not only from all EU member countries but also from other continents. The EBU codes of ethics we reviewed include “*The Values Translated: Editorial Guidelines*” (2013) and “*EBU Blueprint: Harnessing AI for Public Service Media. Principles, Goals and Calls to Action*” (2025).

We have not examined legal norms or codes at the national or international level that impose mandatory obligations because these are legally binding acts or directives of the media system rather than voluntary ethical self-regulation. In Slovakia, these mainly include the “*Media Services Act*” (2022) and the “*Act on Slovak Television and Radio*” (2024). At the EU level, they primarily consist of well-known laws and directives such as the “*European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)*” (EU, 2024b), the “*Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMDS)*” (EU, 2018), the “*Protection Against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)*” (EU, 2024a), and the “*Digital Services Act (DSA)*” (EU, 2025). These are not voluntary codes of ethics, so they are excluded from our analysis. Within the EU’s framework for ethical regulation, there is a special category for initially voluntary self-regulatory codes like the “*Code of Practice on Disinformation*” (EC, 2018) and the “*Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online*” (2016). However, in 2025, the EU integrated these into the legally binding DSA standards, effectively creating a form of “soft law.” Conversely, the “*Resolution 2066 (2015) on Media responsibility and ethics in a changing media environment*” (2015) is only a set of recommendations, not a code of ethics. As a result, these three documents were also excluded from this study.

2.2. Data analysis method

Data analysis was conducted in two phases. The first involved a documentary-descriptive content analysis, and the second was a comparative analysis.

In the first phase—content analysis—the individual provisions of the examined codes of ethics were evaluated using a coding table (Appendix 1), whose criteria were based on the Delphi study on information ethics (Steinerová, 2024). We used a standardized coding table for qualitative analysis because the selected codes of ethics not only differ in focus—whether broad or specific—but also vary in scope, level of detail, repetition, and language. The provisions in the codes of ethics were gradually organized into three thematic clusters, each consisting of three categories.

2) *Three Main Ethical Issues:*

- (1) Privacy and personal data (ensuring the protection of privacy and personal information data);
- (2) Information Technologies and Artificial Intelligence (ensuring transparency, human oversight of data quality, and human benefits);
- (3) Disinformation (ensuring information accuracy, verifying facts, promoting information literacy, and fighting fake news);

3) *Three Priority Ethical Dilemmas:*

- (1) Human Impact (solution elements related to monitoring and protecting personal data, human control and decision-making, as well as commercialization);
- (2) Transparency (elements of solutions in the areas of potential threat of content distortion by algorithms, interpretability, explainability, and decision-making);
- (3) Supervision and Oversight by Humans (elements of solutions in the area of preventing restrictions on freedom and democracy);

4) *Three Priority Information Values:*

- (1) Usefulness (from the perspectives of cognitive development and responsibility);
- (2) Truthfulness (from the perspectives of verification and critique thinking);
- (3) Trustworthiness (from the perspectives of objectivity and timeliness).

In the second phase—comparative analysis—we examined the thematic overlaps between the analyzed ethical codes and the phenomena identified in the Delphi study results (Steinerová, 2024), specifically the three main ethical problems, three priority ethical dilemmas, and three priority information values. This was done to evaluate whether and how the ethical codes address these three key challenges in journalistic ethics. In other words, it assesses how prepared they are to face today's challenges.

This research was qualitative, focusing on identifying patterns rather than quantifying data from the coding table. It also provides insights into how current ethical challenges are addressed within existing self-regulatory codes in the European Union and in Slovakia, a member state.

2.3. Research ethics

Although this study is based on desk research and involves no human participants, the author still followed academic ethical principles. All third-party ideas are either cited or properly paraphrased and referenced according to established citation rules. A research assistant from Google, NotebookLM, was used to organize and analyze thematic clusters. The author processed the coding table independently, without using NotebookLM. The research assistant was used only in the comparative part of the study. Specifically, there were two types of prompts: “*compare each other...* (according to the clusters of the coding table and particular documents included in the specific comparison)” and “*show individually where in the document there is a mention of...* (the assistant's specific statement).” The author personally checked all NotebookLM statements against the relevant self-regulatory standards and compared them with the coding table. None of the AI research assistant's statements showed AI distortion or AI hallucination. However, a general conclusion about the limitations of NotebookLM cannot be drawn from this experience, because it was a simple use of this analytical tool under continuous human supervision, operating exclusively within the given nine documents, and, moreover, with a straightforward means of verifying its findings.

When comparing and interpreting the data, the author avoided personal bias and aimed for a responsible, impartial, and fair assessment. Importantly, the author did not intend to harm any institutions whose ethical codes were examined in this research. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the readiness for ethical self-regulation in radio broadcasting and in online audio programs produced by professional journalists to address challenges associated with digitally mediated media communication. We hope that this analysis will contribute to both academic and practical progress in media ethics in the online era.

3. Analysis and results

Since this qualitative research involved two phases—first, a content analysis of the examined codes of ethics at both the national level of the Slovak Republic and the international level of the European Union, and second, a subsequent comparative analysis of these codes—we will present the findings in two steps. In subsections 3.1 and 3.2, we will briefly introduce the frameworks of ethical self-regulation

for journalism and media in Slovakia and the European Union, respectively, as established by the examined codes of ethics. Because all the examined codes are quite extensive, we will not include detailed overviews of the specific rules underlying each code's findings in the content analysis results due to space constraints. Instead, we will focus on the main ideological and content messages of these codes. Finally, subsection 3.3 will present a comparative analysis based on the results of the Delphi study on information ethics (Steinerová, 2024). The Delphi study serves as the reference framework for this research, evaluating the readiness of the currently valid ethical codes in Slovakia and the European Union to address the challenges of the 21st-century online era.

3.1. Journalistic ethical self-regulation at the national level of the Slovak Republic

The five analyzed codes of ethical self-regulation for the media in Slovakia show a comprehensive approach by both self-regulatory groups (media association – AONE, public-service broadcaster – STVR) in managing ethical standards in journalism and media nationwide. All these codes combine broad principles and professional standards with daily practice guidelines. As a result, they offer the Slovak journalistic community highly detailed methodological guidance. The rules apply to all types of media—traditional and online, print, audio, and audiovisual.

They regard personal freedom, justice, and decency as the core values that shape these codes. Therefore, they focus on protecting human dignity, the rights of minors, and those of other vulnerable groups. They view human dignity as the highest and unquestionable standard, including respect for all forms of life and a prohibition on discrimination. Protecting human personality takes precedence over technological progress. They believe that pluralism of opinion and objectivity are essential to journalism, along with editorial independence. In this context, they also define the boundaries between editing, writing, and censorship. Freedom in journalism also depends on respecting journalists' consciences and allowing them to refuse to participate in actions that conflict with their moral beliefs.

All five codes of ethics issued and valid in Slovakia emphasize procedural accuracy in daily work. They do not focus on strategic visions and ideals; instead, they specify how employees should behave in specific regulated areas and situations. In journalism, it is crucial to verify information with at least two independent sources, separate facts from opinions, and distinguish reports from comments and evaluative judgments. Incorrect information must be corrected immediately upon discovery, even without waiting for a prompt. According to these standards, the objectivity of media content depends on this requirement. For the same reason, radio listeners and TV viewers should be informed in advance about the genre of the program they are about to listen to or watch—whether it is news, documentary, journalistic, discussion, art, or others.

Slovak codes also address challenges related to information technology and operating on online media platforms, while maintaining the hierarchy of values established for traditional media. This includes a strong emphasis on protecting individuals, ensuring truthfulness, and preserving credibility. Information from social networks is considered public expression but requires a special method to verify the author's identity. Media organizations are required to safeguard the technical integrity of data and metadata that are protected as journalistic sources.

Ethical self-regulation of journalism and media in Slovakia is voluntary, but for all entities that have signed up, it becomes binding not only at the declarative level but also in practice. The analyzed codes of ethics, therefore, include sanction provisions. In the case of codes issued by the professional organization AONE, these sanctions include measures such as publishing a decision on ethics

violations, ordering the withdrawal of content, or requiring content to be edited. Ethical standards violations in a public-service STVR constitute a violation of work discipline or contractual terms.

3.2. Journalistic ethical self-regulation at the international level

The four codes of ethics studied—two issued by EU organizations and two by the European Broadcasting Union—represent current self-regulatory frameworks for journalistic and media ethics in the European Union. They are viewed as sets of values, principles, and goals designed to uphold democratic principles in the digital age. They can be described as philosophical, systemic, and proactive, and are also highly adaptable to the challenges presented by new technologies.

They see information as a pillar of democracy and a fundamental human right, not as a commodity (a major shift from how information was understood before the Internet). Because of this, they oppose the commercialization of information, criticize the use of news to boost viewership and ad revenue, and recommend this approach as essential for newsrooms. They base editorial responsibility solely on the independent judgment of professionals, free from political or commercial pressure. Checking and double-checking are viewed not just as tools to prevent mistakes but as crucial acts for building and maintaining integrity. Likewise, they see human oversight of content not just as a way to prevent publishing errors but mainly as a necessary step to stop technologies and AI from gaining autonomous control over information. Human supervision and oversight remain irreplaceable in this context.

Transparency involves explaining to the audience not only when and how media use AI, but also how it impacts content. In the fight against disinformation, professional media, particularly public media, must serve as a critical counterbalance to false news spread intentionally or unintentionally by both the general public and AI-generated content. European codes of ethics also address interactivity in detail. They assign responsibility for third-party content to the media, whose editors are obligated to monitor websites and social networks associated with their outlets to prevent the spread of hate speech or illegal content, including the prompt removal of sexual content and intimate images published without consent.

The European Codes of Ethics approach to the use of online platforms by professional media to “demystify journalism” is also innovative. Its goal is to make journalistic practices transparent to the general public by explaining how and why specific editorial decisions are made.

The examined codes of ethics of the European Union and the EBU do not include direct sanctions but rely on the assumption that individual countries have their own self-regulatory organizations and tools for developing and promoting journalistic and media ethics. They suggest establishing bodies made up of publishers, journalists, user associations, experts, and judges. These bodies, as well as universities, could, on a regular basis (the proposal is annually), compare media coverage with actual facts, thereby serving the public as a measure (barometer of credibility) of journalistic professionals' ethical standards.

3.3. Intersections between findings and the Delphi study

The consensus among experts participating in the Delphi Study on Information Ethics (Steinerová 2024) centered on three main ethical issues today, three priority ethical dilemmas, and three key values in information handling. This served as the analytical tool for this research on codes of ethics to evaluate the readiness of codes issued and valid in Slovakia and the European Union. We believe that the self-regulatory ethics of journalism and media organizations, as leaders of socially responsible media-driven communication, should reflect current trends. In this subsection, we summarize the findings from the

comparative part of our analysis, where we examined the thematic overlaps between the results of the Delphi Study and the scope and wording of the analyzed codes of ethics at both the national and international levels, and ultimately compared them.

Figure 1 illustrates the key areas and main ideas that codes of ethics address concerning three major ethical issues today: privacy and personal data, information technologies, and artificial intelligence.

Figure 1. Comparison based on the Delphi study's three main ethical issues.

Ethical issue	Slovakia	European Union
Privacy and personal data	Focusing on what a journalist should avoid revealing and how to protect individuals' identities.	Focusing on privacy as a human right and the need for system security (AI).
	Focused on preventing the release of personal identifiers in news.	Focused on transparency in data collection and cybersecurity.
	When managing social networks, they warn against sharing internal information and colleagues' privacy.	In managing social media, they warn about non-consensual content and the effects of algorithms on privacy.
Information Technologies and Artificial Intelligence	The concept of AI is mentioned only indirectly through visualizations and digital platforms.	AI is viewed as a transformative force that requires oversight.
	Human oversight is regarded as the editor's responsibility for the final content.	Human oversight is seen as a strategic way to control technology and data quality.
	The benefits of IT and AI to people are understood as supporting the development of a knowledge society and culture.	The benefits of IT and AI for people are acknowledged to empower users and shield them from algorithmic distortion.
Disinformation	Fake news and disinformation are considered professional misconduct (and can even be a criminal offense).	Fake news and disinformation are seen as a threat to democracy and the integrity of decision-making processes.
	The method for combating disinformation involves a procedural approach: the two-source rule and editorial responsibility.	The method of combating disinformation is strategic: building verification systems and technical solutions (e.g., C2PA).
	Information literacy is implicitly included in the codes through the development of a knowledge society and informed opinions.	Information literacy is explicit—a requirement to teach audiences how to use information responsibly.

Source: own elaboration (data: NotebookLM).

The table shows that both Slovak and international codes address all three issues identified by the Delphi study experts. However, the different approaches of Slovak and international ethical self-regulation in understanding these issues also become apparent. Slovak codes adopt a more protective stance toward individuals and their dignity, offer principles for ethical human conduct online, and provide journalists with a detailed manual for action across all three areas of ethical concern to prevent unethical behavior. European codes, on the other hand, also focus on the ethics of technologies themselves to ensure the preservation of truth amid the era of fake news. Nevertheless, Slovak and international codes agree that privacy protection should also be considered in light of the public

interest, that artificial intelligence should be monitored and supervised by humans, and that technologies should not be used to manipulate information.

Figure 2 illustrates the key areas and main ideas that codes of ethics address in relation to three priority ethical dilemmas today: human impact, transparency, and human supervision and oversight.

Figure 2. Comparison based on the Delphi study's three priority ethical dilemmas.

Dilemma	Slovakia	European Union
Human Impact	Focus on protection of personal privacy, human dignity, and journalistic sources.	Focus on cybersecurity and transparency in data processing systems.
	Human control as the freedom of conscience and the editor's right to make the final decision.	Human control as a strategic imperative and counterbalance to automated systems (AI).
	Commercialization is addressed through labeling in advertising and by addressing individual conflicts of interest.	Commercialization is addressed through the nature of information (not a commodity), and copyright when training AI.
Transparency	The threat of content distortion is addressed by banning image and sound manipulation and labeling visualizations.	The threat of content distortion is addressed by revealing AI use and fighting algorithmic bias.
	Focusing on interpretability and explainability by ensuring clear language, grammatical accuracy, and using effective methods.	Emphasizing interpretability and explainability by understanding how information is generated and prioritized.
	Human decision-making, based on editorial hierarchy within the scope of editorial responsibility.	Decision-making must stay under human oversight, even when automated systems are employed.
Supervision and Oversight by Humans	Nature of supervision and oversight: managerial and procedural, with a focus on the editor's work and editorial line.	Nature of supervision and oversight: systemic and democratic, emphasizing supervisory boards and public accountability
	Protection of freedom: Secured by editorial independence and the journalist's right to conscientious objection.	Protection of freedom: Ensured through transparency of ownership and combating automated distortion.
	Supervision aims to prevent censorship by politicians and advertisers.	Supervision aims to prevent "mediocracy" so that the media does not become an unrepresentative source of authority.

Source: own elaboration (data: NotebookLM).

The table again shows that all three dilemmas today are also reflected in the ethical codes of Slovakia and the European Union, but with different approaches to their understanding and, consequently, their addressing. Slovak codes emphasize the procedural aspect, offering journalists guidance on handling information or commerce. European codes focus on establishing core principles to sustain human journalism in the age of artificial intelligence. Nonetheless, both groups agree on the importance of human dignity and the media's editorial responsibility, which must remain paramount over technological and commercial interests.

Figure 3 illustrates the key areas and main ideas that codes of ethics address regarding three priority information values: usefulness, truthfulness, and trustworthiness.

Figure 3. Comparison based on the Delphi study's three priority information values.

Information value	Slovakia	European Union
Usefulness	Focus on building society: Emphasizing the cognitive development of the "knowledge society."	Focus on Individual Empowerment: Highlighting "empowerment" and a citizen's capacity to be an "active member" of society.
	Cognitive development is promoted through traditional educational programs and encouragement of artistic creation.	Cognitive development addressed through new literacies (media, technological, AI) and the ability to interpret a complex world.
	Responsibility is seen as ensuring editorial quality and safeguarding "good morals" within a national context.	Responsibility involves safeguarding democracy and universal human rights from technological dangers.
Truthfulness	Truthfulness is maintained as factual accuracy concerning reality (rule 2 of independent sources).	Truthfulness is a vital element in upholding the media's systemic credibility (the "check and double-check" rule).
	Critical thinking is seen as a journalist's integrity and refusal of manipulation.	Critical thinking as audience media literacy and protection against algorithmic distortion.
	Promptly correcting an error without being prompted is considered a duty to truthfulness.	Correcting an error promptly without being prompted is seen as a way to build transparency and trustworthiness.
Trustworthiness	Trustworthiness is defined as objectivity in distinguishing fact from opinion and report from comment.	Trustworthiness is viewed as a value: fairness, integrity, and resistance to commercial pressures.
	Trustworthiness is achieved through strict methodological procedures and the journalist's personal integrity.	Trustworthiness is built on systemic integrity. Objectivity is seen through "plurality of voices" and "fairness".
	The criterion of objectivity is about balance. A numerical imbalance doesn't always mean there's a lack of objectivity.	Impartiality is achieved over a longer period, not in a single report.

Source: own elaboration (data: NotebookLM).

Thirdly, the table confirms that both Slovak and international ethical codes address all three key values, which, according to experts in a Delphi study, currently shape professional ethics in information management. However, the interpretation of these issues, and therefore the wording of individual provisions, differ significantly between the Slovak and international codes. Slovak codes focus on solving practical problems journalists face daily, particularly those related to usefulness, truthfulness, and trustworthiness. European codes, on the other hand, emphasize the future of the public, who must learn to navigate an information-rich and ever-changing world. Professional media should support them in this effort. As a result, European codes call for critical thinking not only from journalists but also from

media audiences. European codes do not provide journalists with specific methodological guidelines; instead, they aim to establish a value system that addresses the challenges posed by online technologies.

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this qualitative study, we examined the current codes of ethics that form the framework for ethical self-regulation of radio broadcasting and online audio programs in the Slovak Republic and in Europe. These codes address both the content produced by professionals at traditional radio stations and the audio content they distribute online. In Slovakia, at the national level, three mutually complementary codes issued by the country's most significant media professional organization, AONE, were analyzed, along with two codes applicable to the public-service broadcaster STVR, which operates four television stations and ten radio stations and manages several online platforms. Internationally, we analyzed two self-regulatory codes of ethics from the European Union and two from the world's largest and most influential public broadcasters' union, EBU. For each issuing entity—AONE, STVR, EU, and EBU—one code focused on general principles and regulations for traditional media (even though all of them already include online content), and one specialized in the ethical self-regulation of online content. The exception was the AONE code, which governs online content with two specialized complementary documents. Overall, nine documents were analyzed.

The content analysis of the codes showed that both the Slovak and European codes of ethics reflect the findings of the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) across all examined areas: (1) main ethical issues, (2) key ethical dilemmas, and shared understanding of the (3) value of information. They clearly agree not only on the need for human control over technology but also on the need for humans to have the final decision-making authority. AI tools should serve as assistants in media creation, not as alternatives or replacements for human creativity. All the codes highlight the importance of media outlets' editorial independence over the advantages of technological capabilities and potential profits from commercializing media content.

The content analysis showed strong agreement on key terms between national and international ethics codes (e.g., transparency, human control, usefulness), despite their different narrative styles. Slovak codes are quite pragmatic, offering detailed instructions for safe use that encourage desirable individual behavior within ethical standards. In contrast, European codes focus on ethical strategies to prevent the misuse of people, content, or institutions. Therefore, regulating individual behavior primarily provides a framework grounded in the core values of broadcasting or publishing. In other words, Slovak codes aim to protect individuals—such as journalists, editors, or institutions—from accusations of ethical violations. European codes, on the other hand, aim to protect the integrity of free media organizations that act responsibly to serve the public in a free society. These freedoms should be upheld and promoted by media professionals through codes of ethics. This fundamental difference became clear when comparing individual codes with the results of the Delphi study, not during the content analysis itself, but in the subsequent comparative analysis.

The comparative analysis of the examined codes revealed a distinct paradigmatic difference between the Slovak self-regulatory codes of ethics and those of Europe. While Slovak codes are normative, reactive, and prescriptive, they are built from the bottom up with detailed, specific procedural guidelines aimed mainly at protecting the media organization and its employees from various external negative influences and undue pressures. European codes, in contrast, are value-based and proactive, philosophical and systemic, designed from the top down as overarching value frameworks that focus on defending the public interest against technological and commercial pressures. Slovak codes also address core values

such as “public service” and “public interest,” but mostly at a declarative level, emphasizing the personal responsibility of media creators. They primarily focus on procedural ethics, especially on how journalists should manage data from sources and third parties. Conversely, international documents adopt a different approach. They regulate human responsibility within a framework of principles, stressing that human-created media content should be produced responsibly, even as technology and AI are integrated into the media space. Technology should not replace human creativity. In summary, international documents establish guiding principles rather than detailed procedures.

A similar difference in approach is seen in how solutions to the transparency dilemma are handled. Slovak methods focus on procedural and personnel transparency, emphasising the responsibility of the editor, dramaturg, and journalist to ensure the audience knows who created the content, whether it is authentic, and, if not, who changed it, what, and how. In short, human intent must be clearly understandable to the audience. However, European codes (especially those issued by the EBU for public broadcasters and content providers) rely on automated mechanisms to ensure transparency, with human oversight. In their view, transparency means explaining to the audience the technological process that causes distortions in the content.

When addressing the dilemma of human supervision and oversight, the difference between national and international self-regulation paradigms becomes even more apparent. For Slovak codes, the foundation of human supervision is again based on editorial responsibility and hierarchy. They serve as a kind of safety net that can (and should) protect against negative influences from both the outside and the inside—for example, privacy violations, technological distortions, or censorship driven by political or commercial pressures. European codes, however, approach the need for human final authority in decision-making quite differently. Their regulatory provisions clearly reflect an understanding of this need as an institutional hope that technologies will not erode democratic values from within, undermine liberal democracy and its social order, or allow the media themselves to become an unrepresentative power.

Even in understanding the value of information, the Slovak ethical codes are normative and focus on media institutions. They recognize the usefulness of information for societal development and human cognition through building a knowledge society via educational programs that the media are expected to provide. In contrast, European codes describe the usefulness of information in terms of active citizenship among media audiences, aiming to empower information users. As a result, they emphasize tools to promote public empowerment. The media provide the public with tools to live safely online. Slovak codes treat values such as truthfulness or the credibility of information as technical categories, regulating them in a notably prescriptive way. For example, they define truthfulness as an objectively verified, factually accurate conformity and establish precise procedures for verifying information and assessing objectivity. Objectivity is even defined as a requirement rather than an ideal, achieved through strict methodological adherence. European codes do not include such technical details. They understand truthfulness broadly, linking it with trustworthiness. In their regulatory frameworks, informational truthfulness forms the foundation of public trust in professional media, emphasizing the importance of verification and media literacy to empower citizens and strengthen their role in society. Objectivity then becomes a strategic safeguard for the media against the loss of public trust. Despite these formal and narrative differences, the Slovak and European codes of ethics share common themes and principled values in ethical self-regulation.

The practical benefit of this study's findings is that the analysis will serve as a starting point for drafting amendments to Slovakia's ethical self-regulatory standards. For this purpose, a group of scholars, led by the author of this study, received a research grant, as acknowledged.

The limitations of this study lie in its thematic scope. The research demonstrated that the goal was too broad. The study aimed to explore the intersections of ethical self-regulation relevant to radio creators and online audio professionals, aligning with the findings of the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) across three areas: (1) ethical problems, (2) ethical dilemmas, and (3) understanding the value of information. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial to examine each of these areas in greater detail, especially since the comparative analysis revealed notable differences in how Slovakia and the European Union approach ethical self-regulation. Slovak codes tend to be more normative and reactive, developed from the bottom up with detailed procedural requirements, while European codes tend to address media ethics philosophically and proactively, created from the top down through a shared system of values.

The future lines of research might include, for example, longitudinal monitoring of revisions to the Slovak self-regulatory codes following the implementation of the European AI Act (EP & CEU, 2024); empirical validation of how radio journalists perceive ethical differences between specific domestic and international codes; or a comparison with V4 countries, which are historically and culturally close to Slovakia.

The limits of this study include, in part, the theoretical basis itself – the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024), whose results determined the code clusters used in our analyses and, de facto, their overall thematic direction. We are aware that we might have reached (slightly) different conclusions if we had based the code clusters on the value principles of other documents, e.g. on The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) “*Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists*” (2019), known as the “*Bordeaux Declaration*,” which completes the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists from 1954, or on the “*Handbook for Journalists*” (2005) adopted by UNESCO and Reporters Without Borders (RSF). However, the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) represents a suitable theoretical framework for our analyses for several reasons: (1) *interdisciplinarity* – unlike institutions with a thematic or professional mandate, such as the IFJ, UNESCO or RSF, the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) reflects the consensus of scholars and practitioners from information science, media, marketing communication, social informatics, philosophy, psychology, political science, and management on priorities in the field of information ethics; (2) *cultural proximity* – international documents on ethics reflect the intercultural intersections of the international community, but professional ethics mainly depends on specific needs at the national or local levels, which is why we consider it significant that we have established code clusters based on the latest knowledge related to Slovak realities; (3) *focus* – unlike international documents that offer a wide range of recommendations in the field of ethics, the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) brought a list of nine specific value-oriented terms that should be reflected as priorities in the current ethics of working with information; (4) *topicality* – the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) is the latest document of its kind known to us; (5) *dissemination of knowledge from the home university* – the Delphi study (Steinerová, 2024) was created at Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, to which the author of this study is also affiliated, although she herself did not participate in the implementation of this Delphi study.

Overall, it can be concluded that the current level of ethical self-regulation for radio broadcasters and online audio providers is strong in both Slovakia and the European Union. Along with legal regulations, these establish a solid foundation for optimism about the future of the journalistic radio and audio industries—a future that is not only based on coexistence but also on ethically grounded cooperation

between humans and technology, including artificial intelligence, in the online era. However, it is important to recognize that current media and journalistic ethics in Slovakia still mainly reflect 20th-century ideas, such as perspectives on understanding, truthfulness, objectivity, and privacy. From the perspective of future coexistence between human society and AI, Slovak codes should consider expanding their scope to better align with philosophical and visionary approaches, similar to the current self-regulatory ethical standards issued by European Union organizations.

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