

THE CODE OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

TR SR

TLAČOVO-DIGITÁLNA RADA
SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY

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PREAMBLE

Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as AONE)

- paying tribute to the creators of the first Code of Ethics from 1990, the Slovak Journalists Syndicate (hereinafter referred to as SSN) and the Association of Periodical Print Publishers (hereinafter referred to as AVT),
- building on the Journalist's Code of Ethics in force since 2011,
- respecting the changes in the media environment,
- perceiving the threat to the moral and value standards of journalistic work,
- respecting the importance of the existence of ethical rules for journalistic work and for the Slovak media environment,

adopts the Code of Journalistic Ethics (hereinafter referred to as the "Code of Ethics") on the basis of the agreement and consent of the Association of Print and Digital Media (successor of the AVT, hereinafter referred as ATDM), the SSN and the Interactive Advertising Bureau Slovakia (IAB Slovakia) (representative of the Internet media) as a statement of binding ethical standards for the work of journalists.

I. THE PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to:
 - (a) establish binding rules of conduct for natural persons and legal entities that publish periodical or non-periodical press in print or digital version intended for distribution in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "media"), editorial offices of periodical and non-periodical press in print or digital version intended for or distributed in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "editorial offices") and natural persons, who exercise the profession/activity of writing journalist in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as "journalist"), press agencies operating in the Slovak Republic, information service providers, internet portals, editorial offices, or individuals who decide to join,
 - (b) serve as a guide for natural and legal persons (such as editors, commentators, editors, cameramen, photographers, graphic designers, bloggers) who are involved in the creation of media content disseminated to the public, regardless of the technological platform used,
 - (c) ensure that all content published in print and on the Internet complies with the generally binding regulations of the Slovak Republic and with good morals.
 - (d) to inform the public about the ethical rules of journalistic work.
2. Adherence to the Code of Ethics does not prevent a media outlet or an editorial office from applying its own ethical rules in addition to the Code of Ethics, which do not contradict the Code of Ethics.

II. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISTIC WORK

1. The values of personal freedom, fairness and decency are paramount to the work of a journalist. In his/her work, he/she strives to promote these values in society.
2. The main principles that guide a journalist's work are impartiality, balance, objectivity, fairness, truthfulness, accountability and rigorous verification of facts.
3. A journalist shall ensure that all his public statements do not contradict the fundamental principles of journalism set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article.

4. A journalist publishing on the Internet is also bound by the IAB Slovakia Code of Internet Content Acceptance, which was approved by the General Assembly of the Internet Advertising Association IAB Slovakia on 21 January 2015.

III. THE JOURNALIST AND THE PUBLIC

1. The journalist is obliged to verify carefully any information he or she publishes. As a rule, he or she shall verify the information from at least two sources independent of each other.
2. A journalist shall always indicate the source of his or her information, unless the information is not generally known or is not considered to be generally known in the industry in which the journalist is covering. He/she shall not indicate the source in the case of the use of a classified or confidential source. He or she may use such a source in accordance with the provisions of this Code of Ethics on the use of extraordinary sources.
3. A journalist or media outlet shall not publish any information that it knows to be false. Truthful information shall be based on facts and their objective interpretation, taking into account the real context of the events described, without distorting the objective reality and concealing (omitting) part of the existing facts and context.
4. The truth and accuracy of textual, audio, audio-visual and visual agency information is the responsibility of the agencies and journalists have no obligation to verify it. If there is any doubt about the accuracy of the agency's information, the journalist is obliged to verify the information with another independent source.
5. A journalist shall never manipulate text, images, sound or audio recordings or photographs. Only those technical modifications which are intended to improve their quality or clarity are permissible. Collages, montages, reconstructions or illustrative visualisations must be clearly labelled.
6. The journalist and the media have the right and the obligation to refuse to publish false, distorted or incomplete information.
7. Headlines of articles or programmes must not be false in relation to the content of the text. The same applies to trailers and advertisements promoting articles and programmes.
8. Commentary and opinion must be clearly labelled and distinguished from news and facts. Opinions and value judgments expressed in commentary must be based on and logically follow from a sufficient factual basis.
9. Advertisements and paid announcements must be clearly identified. In the case of a commercial text, the article cannot give the impression that it is an independently authored work by a journalist. The journalist and the media have the right and the duty to refuse to publish disguised advertising.
10. A journalist may not pass off his or her older work as new work.
11. A journalist shall not, in the course of or in connection with the performance of his or her work, accept gifts or other benefits which might compromise his/her impartiality and objectivity or which might be construed as an attempt to influence his/her work. An exception to this rule is the customary provision of small promotional items and refreshments at press conferences and other events addressed to the public and members of the media.
12. If the cost of a journalist's travel or other benefits, or any part thereof, has been borne by someone other than the journalist or the media/editorial outlet, appropriate notice shall be given to the reader, listener or viewer.
13. The journalist has the right to personal integrity. If he/she finds himself/herself in a conflict of interest, in particular if he/she is working on a subject which concerns or may concern the journalist himself/herself, persons close to the journalist (Article 116 of the Civil Code) or the journalist's economic interests, he/she shall inform his/her editorial office of this fact. With the consent of the editorial board, the journalist may continue to work on the topic despite a possible conflict of interest, provided that the public is adequately informed of the possible conflict of interest.

14. If the editorial board finds itself in a conflict of interest, in particular if it reports on the activities of a media outlet or a person directly or indirectly controlling a media outlet, it shall inform the public in an appropriate manner. A journalist may not use to his or her advantage information obtained in the course of his or her work unless it has been made public.
15. A journalist shall not use the privileges of his profession for his/her private benefit, nor shall he/she show his/her press card or indicate his/her affiliation to a media outlet in situations unrelated to the direct exercise of his profession.
16. A journalist shall not engage in political activities where his or her political activities could give rise to a conflict of interest and call into question his or her impartiality or objectivity.
17. If a journalist discovers that he or she has published incorrect information, he or she shall make every effort to correct it without delay, even without being invited by any of the parties concerned or by the editorial staff.

IV. THE JOURNALIST AND THE OBJECT OF THEIR INTEREST

1. Except where a matter of public interest is involved, a journalist may not, without the consent of the natural person concerned, publish information relating exclusively to the privacy of that natural person, nor publish records of a personal nature of that natural person. Except where the natural person concerned is himself or herself suspected of acting unlawfully or of causing offence, the journalist may not, even when publishing information and records relating to matters of public interest pursuant to the preceding sentence, lower the good name, honour and dignity of the natural person concerned.
2. The journalist shall respect the presumption of innocence, including in relation to persons suspected of, accused of or charged with a criminal offence. He/she shall only publish the full names of people suspected of criminal activity if the publication of their names constitutes an important public interest.
3. The journalist shall not incite, directly or indirectly, any hatred, intolerance or discrimination based in particular on race, worldview, religion, ethnic origin, age, social status, gender or sexual orientation. It only reports on people's membership of a minority group if this information is relevant in the context of the post.
4. The journalist shall respect the basic principles of a democratic and legal state, the constitutional order of the Slovak Republic as well as the applicable law and general moral principles.
5. The journalist respects other states, nations, their traditions, culture religion or other beliefs.
6. The journalist does not directly or indirectly support human rights violations, violence or environmental damage.
7. The journalist shall always use appropriate means of expression.

V. THE JOURNALIST AND THEIR SOURCE(S)

1. A journalist shall obtain textual, audio, audio-visual and visual records and materials for articles and other works in such a way that it is obvious that he or she is a journalist and does not conceal his or her full name and affiliation to a particular medium. He/she shall give advance notice of the recording of a telephone interview unless it is a situation as described in Article V.9.
2. The journalist shall abide by promises to protect the identity of the source until relieved of this obligation by the person who is the source of the information.
3. At public appearances and meetings, the journalist shall be entitled to make textual, audio, audio-visual and visual recordings without the express consent of the persons appearing, provided that there is no infringement of copyright or rights related to copyright. A journalist may do the same when making recordings and collecting information in public places.

4. The journalist shall treat with increased sensitivity and responsibility persons who are inexperienced in communicating with journalists, are unaware of the consequences of their actions, or are in a particularly difficult life situation, in particular victims or witnesses of crimes, accidents or other events that may cause the individual significant emotional stress.
5. Children and adolescents shall be used by the journalist as a source of information only in exceptional cases, with particular regard to their moral and emotional development.
6. Unless precluded with regard to the communication of matters of public interest, the journalist shall have a duty to protect the privacy and legitimate interests of the persons referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 and not to abuse their confidence.
7. A journalist shall not be obliged to accede to a request for additional correction, non-disclosure or non-broadcasting of information obtained in accordance with this Code of Ethics by a respondent who has previously consented to disclosure. In justified cases, he or she may accept an agreement for subsequent authorization before the interview begins. If the interviewee requests authorization, the journalist must inform the interviewee that the authorization may only include clarification of direct quotations from the interviewee, not alteration of the meaning of answers or deletion of answers that were given in the original interview. Authorisation of the recording or text will be limited solely to statements made by the interviewee. The journalist will not agree to an arrangement that would allow the interviewee to agree to the use of his or her statement only in the context of the entire program or article.
8. In the circumstances set out below, a journalist may use extraordinary means in his or her work. These include:
 - (a) the use of covert methods of gathering information, including the use of a hidden camera or microphone,
 - (b) the use of classified and confidential sources,
 - (c) disclosure of unverified information,
 - (d) disclosure of information from the private lives of persons who are not in public office and whose privacy is otherwise protected.
9. Extraordinary means of journalistic work may be used only if their use is directed towards the fulfilment of an important public interest and that this public interest could not be achieved in any other way.
10. The use of extraordinary means of journalistic work must be approved at the highest editorial level.
11. The use of extraordinary means must be adequately explained to the recipients of the information at the time of publication of the text or broadcast of the programme in the preparation of which it was used.
12. An important public interest is defined as an interest which significantly benefits a substantial part of society, contributes to the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms or to the protection of the principles of democracy and the rule of law.
13. In particular, an important public interest is:
 - (a) the prevention of abuse of public authority,
 - (b) the proper functioning of the political system and public institutions,
 - (c) the protection of the life, health, safety and property of citizens,
 - (d) the protection of morals and fundamental social values,
 - (e) the protection of the environment, cultural monuments or cultural heritage.

VI. THE JOURNALIST AND THE EDITORIAL BOARD

1. A journalist in a management position shall actively promote compliance with this Code of Ethics.

2. Editorial boards and journalists in management positions shall protect the journalist's freedom of expression and, where necessary, provide appropriate legal protection to the extent possible.
3. A journalist shall not be compelled to take actions or engage in opinions that are fundamentally contrary to his or her conscience; the exercise of this right shall not cause the journalist to suffer prejudice to other rights.
4. An article intended for publication, the content of which has been editorially altered in such a way as to change its original meaning, may be published only with the consent of the author.
5. Such consent shall also be required if the contribution is to be published under a brand name, pseudonym or anonymously.
6. The journalist shall be obliged to cooperate in legal proceedings and administrative proceedings brought against his colleagues or the media, if such proceedings are related to the journalist's activities.
7. Editorial boards and journalists in management positions shall respect diversity of opinion and equal opportunities regardless of the gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, social status, sexual orientation, religion, political, social and cultural affiliation of journalists.

VII. THE JOURNALIST AND HIS OR HER COLLEAGUES

1. A journalist may not pass off another's text, or part of a text, photograph or other work or record as his or her own.
2. If a journalist wishes to publish the same or a similar piece in more than one media outlet, he or she must notify the media outlets. This also applies if two journalists from two media outlets publish an interview with the same person that was jointly produced, but they only identify the journalist by his or her first name for their own media outlet.
3. A journalist has a duty to expose and publish the unethical and illegal actions of his colleagues.

VIII. CENSORSHIP

1. Censorship means the restriction, deliberate distortion or non-disclosure of information, audio, visual or audio-visual recording when it is for political, economic or personal reasons.
2. Censorship is incompatible with the ethical rules of journalistic work and is prohibited.
3. The management of each editorial office has the right to decide on the topics to be covered by journalists and other contributors to the editorial office, to determine the manner in which they are handled and to decide not to publish the work. The editing and redaction of texts, audio, visual or audio-visual recordings shall not be considered as censorship.
4. Editing means the modification of a text, sound, visual or audio-visual recording in terms of its meaning structure, dramaturgical construction, factual and factual accuracy, grammatical correctness and clarity.
5. Editing means managing the whole process of acquiring and processing information for publication or broadcast, deciding on its publication or inclusion in a broadcast, its length, genre, the order in which it is published or broadcast and the context in which it is published.

IX. ACCESSION TO THE CODE

1. Any professional organisation, media, news agency, information service provider, website, editorial office or individual may accede to this Code of Ethics by sending a notice of adherence to AONE. In the same way, such person may withdraw his or her adherence to the Code of Ethics.
2. AONE publishes a list of organisations and persons who have adhered to the Code of Ethics on its website, where the current version of the Code of Ethics is also published.

X. TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

1. The Representative Body of the Association for the Protection of Journalistic Ethics (ZZ AONE),

whose members are representatives of SSN, ATDM and IAB Slovakia, at its meeting on 17 June 2017, and shall enter into force on the day following its approval.

2. The decision of the SSN Board of Directors to approve the amendment to the Journalist's Code of Ethics dated 8 June 2017 shall be deemed to be accession to this Code of Ethics.
3. With this version of the Code of Ethics, the previously valid text approved by the 9th SSN Congress on 5 November 2010, which was effective as of 1 January 2011, ceases to be valid after SSN's consent.
4. Organisations and persons who have subscribed to the current text of the Code in recent years remain subscribers to the current Code of Ethics for Journalists.

AONE

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