SCE

Social
Communication
Ethics

volume 2 · issue 1 · 2026

Faculty of Communication Sciences
Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

SCE

Social Communication Ethics

Volume 2, Issue 1, 2026

Faculty of Communication Sciences

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION ETHICS
Journal of the Faculty of Communication Sciences
The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Sławomir Soczyński (The Pontificial University of John Paul II in Krakow)

DEPUTY EDITOR IN CHIEF
Katarzyna Drąg (The Pontificial University of John Paul II in Krakow)
Olga Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk (The Pontificial University of John Paul II in Krakow)

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Magdalena Jankosz (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow)

SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL
Monika Bartosiewicz (UiT The Arctic University of Norway), Eric Belekon (Miami Dade College, USA), Mara Gubaidullina-Al-Farabi (Kazakh National University Kazakhstan), Ivan Fomin (Charles University, Prague), Alan Fimister (Holy Apostoles College, USA), Iwona Hofman (Maria Curie-Sklodowska University, Lublin), Takanori Kawamata (Meisei University, Japan), Edward Kessler (Woolf Institute, Cambridge), Mariana Komarytsia (Research Institute for Press Studies, Ukraine), Tadeusz Kononiuk (University of Warsaw), Florin Nechita (Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania), Aleksander Onufrak (University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik, Slovakia), Bartalan Pusztai (University of Szeged, Hungary), Ron Rombs (Universty of Dallas, USA), Michael Roither (University of Applied Sciences Burgenland, Austria), Zhang Xiao Rui (Meisei University, Japan), Francesca Russo (Suor Orsola Benincasa University in Naples, Italy), Lidia Snicarczuk (Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine), Peter Zachar (Ludovica University of Public Service, Hungary)

DESIGN
Seweryn Puchała

TYPESETTING
Piotr Pielach

Copyright © 2026 by The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

ISSN 3071-9836 (online)

Publication financed by the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

Each submission is checked for originality with Crossref Similarity Check before review.

Editorial address: 31-004 Kraków, ul. Franciszkańska 1, e-mail: wnk@upjp2.edu.pl
Publisher: The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

Online: https://czasopisma.upjp2.edu.pl/sce

Contents

5 Sławomir Soczyński

Editorial

9 Małgorzata Laskowska

Teaching media ethics through civic education in Poland: Assumptions of the core curriculum

23 Tomáš Dvorský, Gabriel Eštok, Mária Denciová

The disinformation ecosystem and efforts at countering disinformation among Slovak youth

47 Maciej Nowakowski

Minority languages in social media: A comparative European study of digital vitality

71 Maciej Radej

The media in the face of truth: speaking, listening, and conversion

87 Monika Przybysz REVIEW

Crisis principles

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 5–8

Sławomir Soczyński

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2664-6833
slawomir.soczynski@upjp2.edu.pl

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow
https://ror.org/0583g9182

Editorial

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02100

ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Research clearly shows that in the era of digitalization, information overload, and the widespread presence of social media, the ability to critically analyze content, recognize disinformation, and use media in a conscious and responsible manner has become one of the key conditions for functioning in social and civic life. Media competences today go far beyond passive reception of information; they also include its interpretation, selection, creation, and ethical dissemination. This is particularly important in the context of the growing scale of fake news, information manipulation, and algorithmic mechanisms that shape how users perceive reality.

Contemporary studies emphasize that media education should be continuous and systemic—encompassing both children and youth as well as adults, who also operate in a rapidly changing communication environment. The dynamic development of technologies, platforms, and forms of communication means that these competences require continual updating. Their absence may lead not only to susceptibility to manipulation and disinformation, but also to digital exclusion, disorientation in the information space, and difficulties in making informed social and political decisions. For this reason, media education is increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of civic education and an essential element of preparation for life in the information society.

These issues are addressed extensively in the first article by Małgorzata Laskowska, *Teaching media ethics through civic education in Poland: Assumptions of the core curriculum*. The text demonstrates how the new subject "Civic Education" in Poland responds to the challenges of the contemporary world, in which young people function primarily within digital media environments. The author analyzes the extent to which the Polish core curriculum incorporates key issues such as disinformation, manipulation, responsibility for communication, and critical thinking. This is an engaging and timely article for anyone interested in understanding how the education system prepares students for conscious participation in democracy in the age of information. The article also highlights specific skills, such as source verification, message analysis, and the recognition of manipulation, that are now considered fundamental civic competences. In doing so, it shows how education can counteract social polarization and strengthen young people's resilience to disinformation.

The issue of media education, particularly its urgent necessity, is also indirectly addressed in the second article by Tomáš Dvorský, Gabriel Eštok and

Mária Denciová, *Disinformation ecosystem and its impact on Slovakia youth*. The authors analyze the growing phenomenon of disinformation in the Slovak online space and its impact on young people. They demonstrate how social media, algorithms, and so-called information bubbles shape the attitudes of youth, increasing their susceptibility to manipulation, radicalization, and polarization. This insightful study helps explain why young people often struggle to distinguish between true and false information and what consequences this has for democratic life and social stability. The authors also present empirical research findings, including differences related to gender and type of schooling, and propose practical solutions, from strengthening media education to using technological tools, that can help reduce the impact of disinformation and increase societal resilience.

A different yet equally important issue is explored in the third article by Maciej Nowakowski, *Social networks and minority language speakers: A pan-European comparison of development, initiatives and challenges*. The text focuses on the place of minority languages in the digital world, showing that their survival today depends not only on their presence in education or traditional media, but above all on their visibility in digital spaces, especially social media. The author compares four cases: Silesian, Provençal, Andalusian, and Scottish Gaelic, demonstrating how different models of institutional support and grassroots activity influence their prestige, usage, and attractiveness among younger users. The article makes clear that the absence of a language in digital spaces may lead to its gradual disappearance from the everyday communicative practices of future generations. At the same time, it suggests that combining grassroots creativity with well-designed language policies and institutional support can effectively strengthen linguistic diversity in Europe.

The final article in this issue addresses the fundamental problem of truth in the media. In *The media in the face of truth: Speaking, listening and conversion*, Maciej Radej offers a profound reflection on the place of truth in media communication, arguing that the contemporary crisis concerns not truth itself, but rather the human attitude toward it. The author explores the distinction between "true speech" and "spoken truth," emphasizing the importance of responsibility, attentive listening, and an inner openness to truth. This is a reflective and inspiring text for those who wish to better understand how media shape our thinking, choices, and social relationships. The article also highlights the dangers of fragmented communication, relativism, and

habituation to illusion, all of which weaken the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood. At the same time, it demonstrates that only a genuine turn toward truth, on the part of both media producers and audiences, can transform media into a space of authentic dialogue, freedom, and responsibility, and help rebuild trust in social communication.

Although the articles presented in this issue address diverse topics, they share a common concern: the quality of communication in a world dominated by digital media. Together, they show that the future of democratic societies depends not only on access to information, but above all on the ability to understand, evaluate, and use it responsibly.

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 9–22

Małgorzata Laskowska

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2192-9006
malgorzata.laskowska@uksw.edu.pl

Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University in Warsaw
https://ror.org/05sdyjv16

Teaching media ethics through civic education in Poland: Assumptions of the core curriculum

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02101

Article history • Received: 26 Jan 2026 • Accepted: 31 Mar 2026 • Published: 31 Mar 2026
ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Abstract

Teaching media ethics through civic education in Poland: Assumptions of the core curriculum

This article presents the results of an analysis of the scope and approach to media ethics issues in the core curriculum for Civic Education in upper-secondary schools, published by the Ministry of National Education (Poland) in March 2025. The study employed qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the complete curriculum text. The analysis demonstrated that media ethics content appears in ten points (12.2% of all entries). Four dominant ethical principles were identified in the document: accuracy and truthfulness of information, countering disinformation and manipulation, responsibility for messages and their social consequences, and critical evaluation of sources and credibility. The results indicate that media ethics content is distinctly practical, focusing on developing specific civic competencies.

Keywords: civic education, ethical competence, ethics teaching, media ethics, media literacy, MEN core curriculum 2025, Poland

From the 2025/2026 academic year, a new subject entitled "Civic Education" has been introduced in post-primary schools in Poland. Its fundamental aim is to develop civic competences among pupils, encourage them to engage in pro-social activities, and increase their interest in knowledge of the functioning of the state and society (MEN 2025a). The contemporary pupil for whom the "Civic Education" curriculum is designed, however, is a young citizen of a new generation, participating in social, political, and cultural life largely through digital media. With regard, therefore, to the contemporary understanding of citizenship, one may pose the question of whether the core curriculum for "Civic Education" has considered the media context, particularly the ethical aspects of media and communication.

Literature review

The aim of civic education is to prepare the individual for active participation in democratic society. This consists in shaping the individual by providing them with information and experiences towards engaged and conscious participation in public life. It is therefore concerned with equipping the pupil

with the appropriate knowledge and skills, as well as forming the attitudes necessary for engaging in democratic processes, and also with assisting in understanding rights and duties, in developing critical thinking, and in becoming active and conscious members of society (Alehegn, 2020; White et al., 2023, p. 249). For this reason, civic education is also termed citizenship education and democracy education (Rahayu et al., 2024, p. 190; De Los Reyes Villareal et al., 2023).

Contemporary civic education takes into account the media context of the world, because media constitute natural environments of life and learning for young people, as well as for acquiring and developing civic competences. Media—both traditional and digital—and now also artificial intelligence—are most frequently the first channels of social and political communication, and thereby a source of information that shapes civic knowledge, views, and attitudes (Marcyński, 2025, pp. 198–199; Leśniczak, 2024; Zhou et al., 2025). In the network, there is an increasing number of applications or content that have a significant role in young citizens undertaking civic decisions or actions. Some of these are more conducive, while others are less so, to the development of civic competences. Certain researchers, therefore, in examining the subject of contemporary citizenship, write explicitly of "digital citizenship," having in mind this natural participation of media in shaping civic competencies today (Sandi S & Vera, 2025, p. 57).

Another aspect, however, related to media in developing civic competencies is media and communication ethics, for instance in political, religious, or social contexts. The reliability of journalistic information, as well as political and administrative materials disseminated through the media, constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for informed civic decision-making and for the formation of individual opinions on matters of public, social, and cultural life. In this context, therefore, teaching media ethics (understanding how media and journalists ought to act in the public sphere from an ethical perspective) is increasingly treated as a core element of both media education and civic education (Laskowska, 2023; Laskowska, 2018; Karp, 2025, p. 636). The aim of formal education at various levels today is, after all, to prepare pupils for democracy in the post-truth era. For deepening civic competence, the teaching of such elements of media ethics as critical analysis of content, recognition of disinformation, manipulation, propaganda, fake news, and all other abuses of an ethical nature is particularly important (Zuhriyah, 2025, pp. 96–97; Santos Albardía et al., 2025, pp. 5–6, 8).

In the view of researchers, the combination of media education, particularly education in the sphere of media ethics, with civic values reduces susceptibility to polarisation and disinformation (Santos Albardía et al., 2025, p. 8). Curricula that combine the analysis of manipulation with public debate build critical awareness and the ability to argue in civic discourse (Nguyen, 2021, pp. 46).

Frequently cited didactic methods in the effective teaching of media ethics and media education in general regarding civic education are "analyse-create-share" and "create-reflect-act," by means of which pupils analyse messages, create their own content, and engage civically in concrete actions (Römer et al., 2023). These are therefore mainly practical activities: workshops and exercises incorporating elements of simulation projects.

Research aims and methodology

The aim of the research presented in the article is to determine the scope and the way issues are addressed related to media ethics in the core curriculum of the Ministry of National Education for the subject "Civic Education" in post-primary schools in Poland. The research questions are as follows: RQ1: Have issues related to media ethics been included in the 2025 core curriculum of the Polish Ministry of National Education for the subject "Civic Education"? If so, to what extent and in what manner? RQ2: Do the points in the civic education core curriculum concerning the teaching of media ethics have mandatory or optional status? Research hypotheses have also been formulated: H1: The 2025 MEN core curriculum for the subject "Civic Education" contains content related to media ethics. However, this content appears marginally, in limited quantity. H2: Content on media ethics appears in the "Civic Education" core curriculum, but solely as optional. This content is practical in nature, placing particular emphasis on developing the ethical competence of the young citizen.

The research was conducted between 2 and 9 November 2025. The analysis process proceeded in a systematic manner—each unit was evaluated in terms of the presence and character of references to selected ethical categories. The chosen research methods were qualitative and quantitative content analysis, whilst the research instrument consisted of an original categorisation key (see Table 1). The term "media ethics" (the principal analytical category) refers to a set of normative principles useful in evaluating the functioning of media,

encompassing ethical guidelines characteristic of the journalism profession and broadly understood broadcasters (Kononiuk, 2015, pp. 9–10).

Table 1. Categorisation key questionnaire

Category	Media ethics
Subcategories	— truth, reliability of information, separation of information from commentary — counteracting disinformation — responsibility for message content
Indicators	— references to facts and truth in communication guidelines — concerning the avoidance of manipulation — content on critical media use
Units of Analysis	Core curriculum points
Degree of Reference to Category	— direct — indirect

Source: own elaboration.

The research material consisted of the complete text of the "Civic Education" core curriculum (basic scope) published in March 2025 (Regulation of the Minister of Education, 2025). It encompasses the following thematic sections: (1) I and Society, (2) School as Community, (3) Local and Regional Community, (4) Democracy and Law, (5) Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere, (6) Poland in Europe, (7) The World of Global Dependencies. Each of these sections contains detailed requirements concerning knowledge and skills, as well as optional requirements, from amongst which the teacher implements at least one. There are 45 mandatory core curriculum points (M=45), whilst there are 37 optional points (O=37), thus 82 in total.

Results

Based on content analysis of the civic education core curriculum in general secondary schools, it has been demonstrated that issues related to media ethics have been included in ten points, which constitutes 12.2% of all

curriculum provisions. This should be assessed as a high degree of reference to this subject matter. Direct reference to media ethics was observed in six core curriculum points, of which two are mandatory (V M11[1], V M12) and four optional (V O1, V O5, VII O3, VII O6). Indirect reference to media ethics, meanwhile, appears in four points, and all of these are optional (I O4, IV O5, VII O1, VII O2).[1] This abbreviation should be read as follows: V M11 = fifth section in the core curriculum, 11th mandatory point. In the description of points, the section number is given first, then the status of the point (M—mandatory, O—optional), and finally the point number in the core curriculum.

Direct reference to media ethics

The first point classified as a direct reference to media ethics comes from the fifth section of the core curriculum (Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere) and reads as follows: [the pupil] "explains the influence of traditional and social media on the beliefs and attitudes of public opinion and on the functioning of society, the state, and democracy; explains threats associated with the dissemination of unverified information" (V M11). This content refers to key issues in media ethics, namely responsibility for reliability in the public sphere and the influence that media messages exert on social attitudes and the stability of democratic institutions. The second part of this point is particularly important, in which there is information about the consequences associated with the dissemination of unverified information. This is a general provision; however, this type of reference to disinformation threats necessitates in-depth reflection on, for instance, the ethical boundaries of freedom of speech, the obligations of both creators and recipients of content, as well as the consequences of unreliable messaging.

In the subsequent core curriculum point (V M12), the reference to media ethics concerns the competence of source verification and identification of disinformation. The pupil: "searches for credible and reliable sources of information on selected socio-political topics; identifies examples of manipulation and disinformation as well as false information and is able to verify them"

1 This abbreviation should be read as follows: V M11 = fifth section in the core curriculum, 11th mandatory point. In the description of points, the section number is given first, then the status of the point (M—mandatory, O—optional), and finally the point number in the core curriculum.

(V M12). This is a point from the section "Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere" and is entirely devoted to ethical issues. The development of these skills is fundamental to creating a conscious civil society capable of critical evaluation of media messages in an era of widespread information noise.

Similarly with the subsequent core curriculum point, this time optional, namely V O1 (section "Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere"). According to its content, the analysis of election campaigns and persuasive messages requires reflection on the boundary between honest persuasion and manipulation. The pupil: "analyses an election campaign, party programmes, and the manner of communication with citizens, and explains the influence of polls; critically evaluates persuasive messages—is able to distinguish facts from opinions and verify information" (V O1). The issues addressed here relate not only to media ethics but also to the ethics of political communication and the manner of reading and understanding media messages within its scope. This point concerns the responsibility of broadcasters for the social consequences of their persuasive actions.

Within the teaching of civic education, the competence of recognising the ideological profiles of media and evaluating their credibility is also deepened (V O5—section "Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere"). The pupil: "presents the media landscape in Poland, distinguishes the ideological profiles of editorial offices, evaluates the credibility of selected publications, and formulates opinions and discusses them with others" (V O5). This content once again directly refers to media ethics. Pupils learn the practical application of ethical criteria to the evaluation of media, which constitutes the essence of media competences in the axiological dimension.

Subsequently, within civic education, the competence of evaluating the impact of, amongst others, technology corporations is also acquired and deepened (VII O3—section "The World of Global Dependencies"). The pupil: "on selected examples evaluates the impact of international corporations, including technological ones, on social and economic life as well as the environment, and also formulates an opinion on this matter and engages in discussion." Although this point could be regarded as only an indirect reference to media ethics, it was decided to classify it as direct because nowadays—when speaking of the impact of large media and technology conglomerates—this is most frequently connected with the ethical dimension of this issue. This topic may be addressed in schools in such a manner as to refer to the dilemmas of digital

ethics: responsibility for algorithms shaping the public sphere, the balance between freedom and user protection, and the conflict between the logic of profit and the common good.

Finally, acquiring and verifying information about international events (VII O6—section "The World of Global Dependencies") requires the application of ethical principles of reliability. According to this core curriculum point, the pupil "analyses a selected current event in the international arena, acquires and verifies information about it, formulates an opinion on the matter, and presents it" (VII O6). This competence is particularly important in an era of information conflicts, where the ability to critically evaluate sources concerning international events acquires a dimension that is not only cognitive but above all ethical.

Indirect reference to media ethics

In the qualitative content analysis, indirect reference to media ethics was demonstrated in four points, and all of these are optional (I O4, IV O5, VII O1, VII O2). Point I O4, from the section "I and Society," concerns the transformations of Polish society after 1989, but with particular emphasis on technological development. The pupil:

> characterises selected transformations of Polish society after 1989 in the cultural, demographic, social, and political dimensions, and in the sphere of technological development; formulates an opinion and engages in discussion on possible social changes in the coming decades with particular emphasis on the development of digital technologies and changes in the natural environment (I O4).

The analysis of social and cultural transformations after 1989 is indirectly, sometimes directly, connected with the ethical consequences of the digital revolution. Media ethics thus becomes—although it need not, of course, depending on the manner of implementing this point—an important normative element in evaluating whether technology favours or threatens democratic and social values.

The subsequent core curriculum point in civic education (IV O5—section "Democracy and Law") concerns, it is true, law, as it refers to the issue of

personal data protection and violation of personal rights, particularly on the internet, but indirectly also to media ethics and digital ethics, including responsibility on the internet. According to its wording, the pupil: "indicates basic methods of protecting one's own personal data and explains forms of violating personal rights, particularly on the Internet; is able to report a violation of personal rights" (IV O5). In this provision one can discern such ethical principles as the need to respect privacy in media, avoiding unnecessary disclosure of information in order to prevent cyberbullying, responsibility for content transmitted, particularly concerning other persons, and strengthening the culture of reliability through reporting violations.

In point VII O1 from the section "The World of Global Dependencies," an indirect reference to media ethics is also discernible; it concerns the evaluation of arguments about the consequences of migratory movements and the verification of facts and analysis of opinions. The pupil: "evaluates arguments cited in public debate about the consequences of migratory movements in the world, and verifies facts and analyses opinions on this topic, and also formulates their position and engages in discussion" (VII O1). Public debate on migration is largely connected with media, and the evaluation of argumentation in the public sphere also possesses an ethical dimension (the extent to which content on this topic is credible). The verification of facts and analysis of opinions require, after all, the application of ethical standards of journalistic reliability.

The subsequent point (VII O2—section "The World of Global Dependencies") concerns the competence of searching for information about the activities of social organisations towards solving a global problem. According to its wording, the pupil: "searches for information about actions undertaken by social organisations and citizens towards solving a selected global problem, evaluates them, and as far as possible engages in selected ones" (VII O2). Once again, this point also contains an element of the skill of searching for information and subsequently evaluating it in terms of credibility. Today, the activities of social organisations are communicated and promoted primarily through media. The evaluation of these activities requires ethical reflection on the communication of organisations. The pupil must be able to evaluate whether the organisation's message is authentic, transparent, and consistent with ethical standards of communication, including being free from emotional manipulation.

Media ethical principles most frequently appearing in the core curriculum

On the basis of the analysis conducted, it is possible to distinguish the most frequently appearing guidelines of media ethics in the civic education core curriculum. The first of these is reliability of information. This is a principle included in all six points directly referring to media ethics (V M11, V M12, V O1, V O5, VII O3, VII O6) and in selected ones indirectly referring to the issue (VII O1, VII O2). The second ethical principle, similar to the first, is counteracting disinformation and manipulation in media messages. It is observable in points treating threats arising from unverified information (V M11), identification of disinformation (V M12), distinguishing facts from opinions, and verification of persuasive messages (V O1). In addition, it finds its reflection in the context of fact verification in public debate (VII O1). The third principle, meanwhile, connected with the previous ones, is the principle of critical evaluation of message credibility. It concerns the identification of reliable sources (V O12), the assessment of the credibility of publications, and the recognition of the ideological profiles of media outlets (V O5), as well as the verification of information related to international events (VII O6). The fourth principle is responsibility for communication and its social consequences. This principle is reflected in analyses of the media's influence on public opinion and democratic processes (V O11), in discussions concerning the boundary between persuasion and manipulation (V O1), and in evaluations of the impact exerted by technology corporations (VII O3).

Summary and concluding remarks

In the study, using the method of content analysis of the 2025 civic education core curriculum for post-primary schools, it has been demonstrated that issues related to media ethics are included therein; moreover, they are extensive and detailed, occupying as much as 12.2% of all core curriculum points. In connection with the above, the first hypothesis (H1)—according to which content in the sphere of media ethics was to be merely marginal in character—has not been confirmed. Regarding the second hypothesis (H2), content concerning media ethics was to be optional in character. The analysis conducted has partially confirmed these assumptions—this content appears

both in the form of mandatory points (two direct points) and optional points (eight points). This signifies that media ethics is not merely an optional addition but constitutes an integral and obligatory element of civic education in Polish schools.

In presenting the subsequent conclusions, it is worth referring to the manner of addressing issues related to media ethics in the civic education core curriculum. Firstly, these issues have not been presented in the form of a separate section but have been placed in various sections: I. "I and Society" (1 point), IV. "Democracy and Law" (1 point), V. "Poland—Government, the World of Politics, and the Public Sphere" (4 points), VII. "The World of Global Dependencies" (4 points). Sections V and VII draw particular attention in this context, in which there appear as many as 4 core curriculum points each on the topic of media ethics, on the basis of which it can be inferred that media ethical competence constitutes an important element of conscious participation in the political and public life of the country and the world (international politics). This approach to ethical issues is identical with the recommendations of researchers concerned with civic education, who emphasise that its important aim is to prepare the individual for active functioning in democratic society at the national and international levels (Alehegn, 2020; White et al., 2023).

The analysis has also demonstrated that the most frequent issues related to media ethics are: reliability of information, counteracting disinformation and manipulation, critical evaluation of sources and credibility, and responsibility for message content and its social consequences. The principle of reliability and truth of information is observable in all six points with direct reference to media ethics. According to the 2025 civic education curriculum, therefore, truth in public communication is the foundation of a well-functioning democratic system. This assumption—emphasising information reliability as an essential factor in undertaking appropriate civic decisions—corresponds with current content in the subject literature (Zuhriyah, 2025).

Bearing in mind the data obtained, it must be emphasised that it is gratifying that the teaching of media ethics is finding increasingly greater expression in formal school education. This knowledge, and above all the practical dimension of media ethical competence, is a necessity for every user of a smartphone or the internet today. This is important for many reasons, amongst others because, possessing such skills as verifying sources, credibility, manipulation, and disinformation—thus a highly developed media ethical

competence—it is possible to undertake sound decisions concerning every dimension of life, also in relation to civic matters. An uninformed citizen, after all, or one relying on false information and manipulations, is a citizen undertaking improper decisions towards themselves, loved ones, and their own country, which can lead to serious consequences. Today, media ethical competence is a set of many difficult skills, possible however to develop through the process of appropriately designed education.

References

Alehegn, D. (2020). *Civics and ethical education*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.

De los Reyes Villareal, E. R., Ramirez San Vicente, O., & Vargas Cruz, I. A. (2023). Civic education as a sustainable value in the formation of citizens. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, *11*(4), 399–410. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.114028

Karp, H. (2025). Edukacja medialna społeczeństwa. In H. Karp (Ed.), *Przyszłość systemu medialnego w Polsce: Etyka, pluralizm i wolność słowa w demokracji cyfrowej* (pp. 632–740). Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji.

Kononiuk, T. (2015). *Etyczne dziennikarstwo: Ewolucja deontyczna zawodu*. Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR.

Laskowska, M. (2018). *Kształcenie w zakresie etyki dziennikarskiej w kontekście mediów społecznościowych*. Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa.

Laskowska, M. (2023). Kompetencja etyczna: model nauczania według National Communication Association. *Społeczeństwo i Polityka*, 76, 61–80.

Leśniczak, R. (2024). Odpowiedzialność w komunikowaniu politycznym. In K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, K. Doktorowicz, P. Płaneta et al. (Eds.), *Leksykon terminów medialnych M–Z* (p. 143). Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

Marcyński, K. (2025). Consequences of AI-enhanced communicative competence: Between effectiveness, appropriateness, and aesthetics. In M. Szostak (Ed.), *Organizations, humanism and AI: An aesthetics approach* (pp. 198–218). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003662723

Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej. (2025). *Podstawy programowe do przedmiotów: edukacja obywatelska i edukacja zdrowotna podpisane przez Minister Edukacji*. https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/podstawy-programowe-do-przedmiotow-edukacja-obywatelska-i-edukacja-zdrowotna-podpisane-przez-minister-edukacji

Nguyen, V. T. (2021). Citizenship education: A media literacy course taught in Japanese university. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, *21*(1), 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/20471734211061487

Rahayu, K., Yunitasari, D., Utaminingsih, E., Purwaningsih, I., & Sari, F. I. (2024). Exploring the impact of civic education on civic participation among elementary school students. *Pedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan*, *13*(2), 189–195. https://doi.org/10.21070/pedagogia.v13i2.1658

Römer, L., Supa, M., & Hodboď, V. (2023). Media literacy education nurturing civic participation of disadvantaged youth, or not? *Learning, Media and Technology*, *48*(3), 372–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2022.2051046

Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji z dnia 6 marca 2025 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie podstawy programowej kształcenia ogólnego dla liceum ogólnokształcącego, technikum oraz branżowej szkoły II stopnia (Dz.U. 2025 poz. 382). https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20250000382/O/D20250382.pdf

Sandi, R., & Vera. (2025). Ethical Political Education in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities in Indonesia. *International Journal of Humanities, Law, and Politics*, *3*(2), 57–63. https://doi.org/10.46336/ijhlp.v3i2.220

Santos Albardía, M., Peña-Fernández, S., & Agirreazkuenaga, I. (2025). Technology, education and critical media literacy: Potential, challenges, and opportunities. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, *7*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2025.1608911

White, G., Dong, D., Campbell, D., & Lee, C. (2023). The future of civic education: Implications for research, policy, and practice. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *705*(1), 249–257. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162231193538

Zhou, M., Shen, J., & Zhang, H. (2025). Research on intelligent generation and adaptation system of civic education content based on machine learning. *Journal of Combinatorial Mathematics and Combinatorial Computing*, *127b*, 9097–9116. https://doi.org/10.61091/jcmcc127b-499

Zuhriyah, N. F. (2025). Digital ethics and media literacy: Assessing the role of education in preventing social polarization in the post-truth era. *INJURITY: Interdisciplinary Journal and Humanity*, *4*(2), 96–101. https://doi.org/10.58631/injurity.v4i2.1419

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 23–46

Tomáš Dvorský

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2084-537X
tomas.dvorsky@upjs.sk

Gabriel Eštok

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7269-1814
gabriel.estok@upjs.sk

Mária Denciová

https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6796-299X
maria.denciova@student.upjs.sk

Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Kosice
https://ror.org/039965637

The disinformation ecosystem and efforts at countering disinformation among Slovak youth

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02102

Article history • Received: 10 Oct 2025 • Accepted: 31 Mar 2026 • Published: 31 Mar 2026
ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Abstract

The disinformation ecosystem and efforts at countering disinformation among Slovak youth

This study addresses the research problem of the increasing exposure of Slovak youth to the disinformation ecosystem and its impact on their ability to critically evaluate information. The research aims to (1) assess the current impact of disinformation on young people in Slovakia and (2) identify effective interventions to mitigate its negative effects. The study applies a qualitative research design combining primary empirical research conducted among secondary school students with qualitative content analysis (n = 500, Košice and Prešov regions, 2023) and documentary analysis of secondary sources. Primary research findings reveal no evidence of extremist tendencies among respondents, yet notable subgroup differences were identified: secondary grammar school students and female respondents demonstrated greater critical awareness and openness to plurality of opinion. The study concludes that strengthening media literacy and critical thinking through education and civic engagement is essential for enhancing resilience to disinformation and supporting democratic stability.

Keywords: disinformation, disinformation ecosystem, youth, media literacy, Slovakia

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the spread of disinformation in the Slovak online space, which poses a challenge for society and especially for the younger generation. This trend is related to the increasing availability of digital technologies, the growth of social networks and changes in the way young people receive and process information. Young people are among the most active users of media and social platforms and are therefore often exposed to a large amount of false or manipulative information that can influence their perception of reality, their trust in democratic institutions and their overall attitudes towards social issues. The long-term impact of distorted information can have a negative effect on their value system, civic attitudes and ability to navigate democratic discourse. The disinformation ecosystem, which includes several different actors operating on social networks using algorithms and information bubbles, helps to reinforce polarisation and susceptibility to extremism. This phenomenon requires a comprehensive approach that, in addition to better regulation of the online space, also includes media education aimed at developing critical thinking among young people so that they can be effectively protected from the negative

consequences of the wave of disinformation. This article therefore analyses the disinformation ecosystem in Slovakia and its impact on young people, as well as possible solutions in this area. Although the issue of the impact of disinformation on young people is the subject of growing interest among experts, it remains a relatively unexplored area in the Slovak context. The lack of empirical data on how young people respond to disinformation content and what factors increase their vulnerability poses a challenge for both research and the development of preventive strategies.

This study employs several key concepts, the definition of which is essential for a precise understanding of the research problem. The following definitions also reflect the prevailing understanding in current international research. Disinformation is information that is false and intentionally created with the aim of harming a person, social group, organization, or state (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Wardle and Derakhshan subsequently distinguish between misinformation (false content without intentional manipulation), disinformation (intentional falsehood), and malinformation (true content used with the intent to harm). For the purposes of this study, the central concept is disinformation in its intentional dimension, since the analyzed phenomena—coordinated campaigns, algorithmic narrative amplification, and the use of the information environment for political manipulation—presuppose intentionality on the part of the actors.

The disinformation ecosystem represents a more comprehensive analytical framework that goes beyond individual pieces of disinformation. We understand it to be a complex system of actors, processes, and tools that work in a coordinated manner to spread false or misleading information with the aim of influencing public opinion. The ecosystem encompasses various platforms, social media algorithms, media outlets, and actors—both state and non-state—that create and amplify disinformation content. The concept of an ecosystem emphasizes the systemic and adaptive nature of the phenomenon: disinformation does not operate in isolation but is part of interconnected networks in which it is amplified and reproduced (Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018). It seems likely that it is precisely this systemic nature of the disinformation environment that explains why isolated interventions—such as one-off fact-checking campaigns—have limited long-term effects.

For the purposes of this study, youth is defined as the age group from 16 to 20 years old, assessed not only by age but also by social and educational status. The relevance of this age definition lies in the fact that this is a group

growing up in an environment where digital media and social networks serve as primary information channels, which distinguishes them from older generations in how they process and evaluate information.

In this study, media literacy is understood as a set of skills and abilities necessary for the critical understanding, evaluation, and creation of media messages and content. It includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and creatively use media, as well as a critical attitude toward media information that enables responsible media use and increases resilience to disinformation (Schwendowius & Terstegen, citing Baacke, 2021). Baacke's (1997) classic taxonomy distinguishes four basic areas: media literacy (Medienkunde), media criticism (Medienkritik), media design (Mediengestaltung), and media use (Mediennutzung). This four-dimensional structure remains the reference framework in European research, although newer approaches expand it to include digital and data literacy (Ferrari, 2013; Hobbs, 2017). Media literacy is not merely an individual competence but also a social practice. Its development depends on institutional conditions, particularly on its systemic integration into the formal education curriculum.

The aim of this study is to characterise the impact of young people's exposure to the disinformation ecosystem in Slovakia and to identify available preventive measures and strategies aimed at protecting and educating this age group. The study addresses two research questions:

RQ1. What is the state of the disinformation ecosystem's impact on young people in the Slovak Republic?

RQ2. What interventions or strategies can be effective in reducing the negative impact of exposure to disinformation on young people in Slovakia?

Literature review

In recent years, experts from the Slovak Information Service and the Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, as well as several institutions such as the Slovak Centre for Scientific and Technical Information (CVTI SR), IUVENTA—Slovak Youth Institute, the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) and other think tanks and academic institutions operating in Slovakia. Current research emphasises that the issue of

disinformation and its impact on young people represents a key social and educational challenge, as low levels of media literacy often lead to young people being unable to distinguish between true and false information. This increases their vulnerability to manipulation, which negatively affects their critical thinking, trust in democratic institutions and overall social stability. Disinformation, defined as intentionally false or misleading information disseminated to deceive, and its broader category of "information disorder" (including misinformation and malinformation) have emerged as critical challenges in the digital age, particularly for adolescents navigating social media platforms reshaped by algorithms and viral content (Brion-Méndez et al., 2025; Pereira et al., 2025). Youth represent a vulnerable demographic due to ongoing cognitive development, heightened social conformity, and frequent exposure to online misinformation, which can amplify confusion, anxiety, and polarization (Brion-Méndez et al., 2025; Pereira et al., 2025; Van der Linden & Roozenbeek, 2024). In Slovakia, recent studies highlight that disinformation and fake news are increasingly embedded in the everyday media environment of children and adolescents, yet their critical-thinking and media-literacy skills remain uneven (CEE-DEM, 2024; Zuborová, 2019). The CEE-DEM report shows that many Slovak youths encounter manipulated content online, while Zuborová finds that young people aged 18–24 are frequent consumers of disinformation on social media but rarely report or question it, pointing to a gap between information openness and discernment. At the policy level, media literacy and safe use of new media are formally recognized, but implementation in schools is fragmented and teacher training is limited (Youth Wiki, 2025). Most efforts consist of ad-hoc awareness campaigns rather than a coherent national strategy, which weakens institutional responses and leaves Slovak youth more vulnerable to misleading narratives in both domestic and transnational disinformation campaigns (Youth Wiki, 2025; EU DisinfoLab, 2020s).

Slovakia is not an isolated case. Several countries in Central and Eastern Europe face comparable challenges regarding disinformation, and research into its impact on young people and the effectiveness of countermeasures is leading to growing interest in these issues.

Poland is a case where systemic weaknesses in media literacy education have become the subject of academic research. Waszak et al. (2025), in an extensive study on strategies for teaching disinformation awareness in the Polish education system, found that although the national curriculum has included topics on disinformation and fake news in subjects for both primary and secondary

schools since 2017, the implementation of this requirement depends on the individual approach of the educator, and most teachers have not been specifically trained in media education. This fragmentation of the curricular approach is consistent with the findings of a comparative study of fact-checking initiatives as promoters of media literacy in Poland (Kuś & Barczyszyn-Madziarz, 2020), which identifies non-governmental organizations and academic institutions as key actors in a space that the state has failed to adequately fill. The Czech Republic faces a similar structural situation. Jedinák and Borská (2023), in a study conducted on a sample of university students in 2022, found that while young people perceive disinformation as a problem, their ability to actively verify information before sharing it remains low. This gap between perceived importance and actual competencies is also characteristic of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. When examining this research, it is necessary to consider the limitations of this type of study. For example, Waszak et al. (2025) work primarily with curriculum documents and teachers' statements. Since they do not work with measurable outcomes obtained from students, their conclusions may reflect implementation barriers rather than actual changes in competencies. The study by Jedinák and Borská (2023) is limited to a sample of university students from a single institution, which narrows its validity. The extent to which these conclusions can be generalized to high school students, the focus of our study, may be questionable.

At the transnational level, the CEDMO (Central European Digital Media Observatory) project, which coordinates researchers from Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, mapped the structure and semantics of disinformation narratives. An analysis of a sample of 1,523 fake news stories in Polish, Czech, and Slovak from January 2023 to November 2024 revealed significant overlaps in the thematic patterns of disinformation across these countries, suggesting a shared information ecosystem with similar vulnerabilities. On the other hand, Radi, Tomšič, and Bădescu (eds., 2024) analyze strategies for combating disinformation in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Slovenia, and other countries with post-communist experience in their collective monograph *Media Literacy, Media Education and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. A common denominator among the identified countries is the low consolidation of democratic institutions and the persistent influence of foreign propaganda. It is precisely this that increases the overall vulnerability of these societies to disinformation. Based on comparative data from this research, it can be concluded that Slovakia shares three key deficits

with most of the analyzed countries: the absence of systematic education in media literacy, dependence on sector-isolated initiatives, and a low level of coordination between the state, the academic community, and civil society. Despite the analytical value of these findings, their limitations must be noted. The CEDMO analysis works with a closed sample of verified false reports. This means that it works exclusively with content that has been fact-checked. Such a selection cannot account for reports that may have been omitted from the research due to ambiguities in their statements and were not labeled as false. This may lead to an underestimation of the actual scope of the disinformation ecosystem. The collective monograph by Radi, Tomšič, and Bădescu (2024), on the other hand, employs a predominantly descriptive and comparative approach without a unified methodology across the countries studied. This, to some extent, complicates direct comparisons and the derivation of relationships between individual variables and resilience to disinformation. A broader regional picture is provided by the Disinformation Resilience Index for Central and Eastern Europe (DRI, 2024), which measures resilience to disinformation in ten countries in the region based on an expert survey, assessing the social, legal-institutional, and media-digital components of resilience. The survey results confirm that the Visegrad Group countries, including Slovakia, made only marginal progress in strengthening resilience to disinformation between 2021 and 2024. The global research consortium GLOBSEC (2023), in a survey conducted in eight Central and Eastern European countries (including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia), documented that the degree of susceptibility to believing pro-Kremlin narratives varies significantly across individual countries. The tendency to succumb to pro-Russian propaganda depends on a combination of historical context, political culture, and the state of the media environment. Slovakia ranked among the countries with below-average resilience, alongside Bulgaria and Hungary.

In terms of methods for combating disinformation, current research focuses on two complementary strategies: debunking and prebunking. In this context, Bruns et al. (2024) confirmed in an online experiment (5,228 respondents from Germany, Greece, Ireland, and Poland) that both approaches statistically significantly reduce the level of agreement with disinformation claims about climate change and vaccines, with debunking showing slightly higher effectiveness. Traberg, Roozenbeek, and van der Linden (2022) further specify that prebunking is particularly effective when it targets constructive manipulation techniques (emotional appeal, false dichotomies, logical fallacies) rather than

specific disinformation claims, which increases its generalizability to various types of disinformation content. Van der Linden (2023) in his monograph: *Foolproof: Why Misinformation Infects Our Minds and How to Build Immunity*, summarizes the available evidence and notes that prebunking interventions tested through playable media (e.g., the game Bad News) demonstrably increase players' ability to identify manipulative techniques even outside the gaming environment. However, research on the effectiveness of prebunking and debunking exhibits several methodological limitations. The experiment by Bruns et al. (2024) was conducted online and utilized specifically and artificially created disinformation claims in a controlled environment. Therefore, their transferability to a natural media environment may be limited. Van der Linden (2023) himself acknowledges that the long-term effect of prebunking interventions has not been sufficiently explored, and most studies measure the effect immediately after the intervention, not several months later.

In their study, Drushlyak et al. (2025) analyze the effectiveness of various types of educational interventions aimed at developing information and media literacy among youth. Their research showed that different types of educational interventions develop distinct components of media literacy—information literacy, digital safety, and media literacy. This suggests that an effective intervention model for the Slovak context should combine multiple didactic approaches, depending on the target competency.

Methodology

The primary research is based on data and findings obtained through qualitative research tracking the correlations between deformations of political awareness and the increase of political extremism among secondary school students in the the Košice and Prešov regions.[1] Research focused on the uni-

1 The research (VEGA No. 1/0321/21) focused on examining the correlations between distortions in political awareness and the rise of political extremism among young people in the Košice and Prešov regions. Methodologically, it builds on previous research by Marcela Gbúrová, who has already addressed the issue of political awareness in several publications and scientific projects. The project followed on from research into secondary illiteracy in the Slovak Republic (VEGA No. 1/0658/16), which also presented the concept of different levels of political awareness in more detail. The questionnaire used in the research consisted of two tests, labelled Test A and Test B. Test A contained five sets of questions aimed at finding the level of political awareness in areas such as human rights, democracy, nativism,

variate analysis of variance as well as on the correlation analysis of the items of political awareness and political extremism—detecting the differences between the measured values of political awareness as the actual predisposition of the respondents and the values of potential tendencies to political extremism. Data collection was administered in September 2023 by physical collection in selected secondary grammar schools in the municipalities of Košice and Prešov (random selection). The final sample, after elimination of incorrectly completed questionnaires, consists of 500 respondents, based on the maintained proportional key: 125 respondents for each type of school (a total of 250 respondents for both types of secondary schools) and in the region in question. The respondents were students aged 16 to 20 in the third and fourth grades of secondary school. The data obtained were processed using reliability tests (Cronbach's alpha), one-way analysis of variance (Oneway ANOVA), and linear correlation analysis (Ruman, 2023).

The research is in its secondary research also based on an analysis of existing data and expert studies on the spread of disinformation among young people and their behaviour on social networks. Secondary sources are used for this purpose, including scientific articles, research reports, methodological manuals and analytical documents (e.g. Hodek, SFPA, Security Academy of the Police Force, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University). The analysis of these sources used a qualitative content analysis method with elements of documentary analysis, which allows for the systematic identification and categorisation of factors influencing the vulnerability of young people to disinformation.

The qualitative content analysis focused on the systematic identification of research findings related to disinformation and its impact on young people.

the media and European integration. Test B focused on measuring the inclination towards political extremism. The questionnaire also included demographic questions about the gender, type of school, region and age of the respondents, as well as their nationality. The research sample consisted of 500 secondary school students from the Košice and Prešov regions. The questionnaires were collected in September 2023 in physical form at selected secondary schools in the Košice and Prešov regions (random selection). Detailed research results are published in the publication Gbúrová, Daniela, Daniel Dobiaš, Jana Šutajová, Gabriel Eštok, Ján Ruman, and Tomáš Dvorský. 2023. Research Into Correlations Between Deformations of Political Awareness and the Increase of Political Extremism Among Secondary School Students in the Košice Self-governing Region and the Prešov Self-governing Region. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, ŠafárikPress Publishing House. https://doi.org/10.33542/RCB-0277-0 (The Impact of Political Awareness on Political Extremism Among Secondary School Students in the Košice and Prešov Regions). The publication is available online at https://unibook.upjs.sk/sk/filozoficka-fakulta/1134-research-into-correlations-between-deformations-of-political-awareness.html.

Based on recurring patterns, we summarised the findings. The main areas of analysis focused on several interrelated dimensions. The attention was devoted to examining how Slovak youth distinguish between true and false information. This was closely linked to an exploration of the relationship between media literacy and young people's vulnerability to harmful or misleading content. Furthermore, the research investigated the tendencies observed among young people in relation to their perception of the limits of freedom of speech, as well as their awareness of their own susceptibility to manipulation. In addition, these findings were contextualised within the broader framework of public trust in mainstream media in Slovakia. Finally, the analysis also addressed the visible strategies for countering disinformation, including media education initiatives, fact-checking practices, and the use of technological tools.

The documentary analysis focused on a contextual understanding of the phenomena under investigation. We analysed documents (e.g. research reports, strategies, methodological guides) to find out how different institutions and organisations define and address the issue of disinformation. The findings were then used to interpret the results of the content analysis and to identify gaps in existing knowledge.

The research combines critical literary and content analysis of secondary sources with a synthesis of empirical data obtained from existing surveys and analytical studies in order to achieve a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the issue under investigation. The following procedure was followed in synthesising the data:

- relevant research and studies dealing with the issue of disinformation and young people in Slovakia were identified;
- key findings and data were extracted regarding the objective, research questions and defined categories;
- this data and these findings were systematised with the results of content analysis, focusing on key issues related to the impact of disinformation on young people in Slovakia;
- The synthesised data were interpreted in the context of theoretical knowledge about disinformation and its impact on society.

This approach provided a comprehensive view of the issue under investigation.

The limitation of this research is that it is based on a limited number of available studies and a relatively underdeveloped discussion on the spread

and impact of disinformation among young people in Slovakia. The use of secondary data may imply limitations in controlling the quality and methodology of the original research. Despite these limitations, we believe that our research provides valuable insights into the disinformation ecosystem and its impact on young people in Slovakia.

Results on the disinformation ecosystem and its impact on Slovak youth

Correlations between deformations of political awareness and the increase of political extremism among secondary school students in the the Košice and Prešov regions

During primary research into the correlations between distortions in political awareness and the rise of political extremism among secondary school students in the Košice and Prešov regions, conducted by Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, we focused on various aspects related to information acquisition, susceptibility to manipulation, preference for simple solutions to complex problems, and inclination towards myth-making or taboo forms of behaviour. As part of the research, students were asked questions about their level of trust in the media, their tendency to be susceptible to conspiracy thinking and perception, and their overestimation of their own judgement in identifying manipulation. Through these questions, we also analysed students' attitudes towards truth, which can provide insight into their approach to plurality of opinion and social polarisation. In addition, we focused on attitudes towards freedom of speech and awareness of its limits as a regulator of the democratic functioning of society. In this context, respondents were asked to answer four key questions:

- "Freedom of speech must be unlimited (I can write whatever I want on social media)."
- "There is only one truth, and that is the one that I recognise as truth."
- "All media serve to manipulate the masses by the elites."
- "I can always tell the difference between truth and manipulation."

One of the results of this research is the identification of correlations between political awareness and political extremism regarding the media. In questions related to freedom of speech, plurality of opinion, critical evaluation

of one's own judgement, or susceptibility to conspiracy thinking, no findings were made that would indicate tendencies towards extremist attitudes among students. On the issue of freedom of speech, a finding was made that grammar school students are more aware of the limits of freedom of speech than vocational school students. The research pointed to the fact that the tendency towards polarisation of opinion is not high and that students are aware of the importance of plurality of opinion in society, or that their own beliefs may also be wrong. Women showed a higher level of awareness on this issue than men. The research results suggest that students are aware of their own limitations and are cautious about detecting manipulation, which may indicate their awareness of the risks and pitfalls of today's complex information environment. The results indicated a higher level of distrust of the media and greater vulnerability to conspiracy thinking among males than females. This suggests a higher level of awareness of the limits of freedom of speech among women and a greater inclination among the male population towards more radical attitudes on the issue of freedom of speech. Furthermore, grammar school students view their beliefs more sceptically and are more open to other opinions. This may indicate the positive results of humanities and social sciences education at grammar school level, which leads students to evaluate their own beliefs more critically. The research identified a correlation confirming the relationship between the level of political awareness and openness to discuss and transform one's views. From this, it can be concluded that although a growing level of political awareness influences the increase in acceptance and recognition of other views and openness to discussion, it does so only to a small extent. It also indicates the ability of students to critically re-evaluate their own beliefs, thereby reducing the risk of their social and political polarisation or radicalisation leading to extremist tendencies (Ruman, 2023). The complete methodology, statistical data, and results are available in the publication: *Research Into Correlations Between Deformations of Political Awareness and the Increase of Political Extremism Among Secondary School Students in the Košice Self-governing Region and the Prešov Self-governing Region* (Gbúrová et al., 2023).

Systematic identification and categorisation of factors influencing the vulnerability of young people to disinformation

In term of secondary research results, according to a survey by psychologists at Comenius University in Bratislava and the Slovak Academy of Sciences,

published in the scientific journal Frontiers of Psychology, up to 41% of respondents are unable to distinguish true information from false information, and only 48% of young people believed real news more than misleading news (Greškovičová et al., 2022). In the current environment of information overload and complex social phenomena, people often resort to simple or conspiratorial explanations that offer them a comprehensible framework. An important role is also played by the tendency towards so-called confirmation bias, i.e. the tendency to seek out opinions and information that confirm one's own beliefs, which in turn contributes to the creation of so-called opinion bubbles in society (Pariser, 2011). The results of the OECD report on institutional trust show that up to 26% of Slovak respondents cite friends and acquaintances as their key source of information and trust them more than any state institution (Globsec, 2025). Such an isolated virtual space is created mainly by social media algorithms and is reinforced by the confirmation of existing opinions, which leads to individuals closing themselves off in homogeneous groups without contact with different opinions. The result is a distorted perception of reality and the polarisation of society, which negatively affects its cohesion and discourse. This phenomenon is often associated with the echo chamber effect, where the same or similar opinions are repeated, which can contribute to the radicalisation of the attitudes of their members (Pariser, 2011). However, the origins of this phenomenon date back to the 1960s, when a tendency was demonstrated for people to expose themselves to news that was in line with their opinions or interests and, conversely, to avoid non-conformist material (Klapper, 1960).

In the overall assessment, according to the *Globsec* agency, Slovakia ranked among the countries most prone to believing in conspiracy theories. The results of the survey also show that respondents identified television, social networks and friends as their primary sources of information (Globsec, 2025). Navigating such an information environment is more challenging with the increasing dynamics of information transfer and the growing number of information platforms. According to the Digital News Report by Oxford University and the Reuters Institute, trust in traditional media is declining, and Slovakia has the third lowest level of trust among the European countries surveyed (Reuters, 2023). The general trend we have observed of declining trust in so-called traditional media is an indicator that in recent years people have been turning more to other sources of information, which include the so-called disinformation ecosystem. This is an ideal channel for

disseminating content that is problematic in terms of objectivity, criticality and legitimacy. Social networks currently play the role of an alternative channel for disseminating information. They provide an environment where content spreads quickly and without significant regulation and have become the main source of information for a large part of society. Their importance also lies in their ability to influence public opinion, as they use algorithms to offer users personalised content tailored to their preferences. However, this mechanism causes the information received to be selective, giving individuals only a narrow and often distorted picture of social reality (Dvorský, 2023).

This mechanism has a particularly significant impact on young people, who are among the most active users of social networks in Slovakia (Go4insight, 2024). Unlike the era dominated by print, television, and radio, today's communication has clearly shifted toward digital platforms and social media. These online spaces offer dynamic and constantly evolving opportunities, especially when it comes to shaping the attitudes of different voter groups (Šárovec, 2024). For young people, these platforms have become not only a major source of information, but also a space for social interaction and identity formation. However, algorithmic content filtering leads to young people being more frequently exposed to information bubbles dominated by one-sided or distorted interpretations of reality. This increases their vulnerability to disinformation and conspiracy narratives, which provide them with simple and attractive explanations of complex phenomena. The potential negative impact of social networks on society was also acknowledged by Facebook's Product Manager for Civic Engagement S. Chakrabarti, who pointed out in 2018 that social media essentially amplifies human intentions—both positive and negative. In his words, at best, they can promote civic engagement and freedom of expression, but at worst, they contribute to the spread of misinformation and the weakening of democratic processes (META, 2018). In Slovakia, even young people's communication on social networks focuses more on confrontational narratives than in the European context, as shown by an analysis of the political communication of youth organizations by Mihálik, Garaj, and Bardovič (Mihálik et al., 2022). In the Slovak context, the problem of vulnerability to disinformation is even more pronounced, as the discussion on media literacy is relatively new and systematic critical thinking programmes are only gradually being introduced into the school environment (SFPA, 2022). An example is the methodological handbook of the State Pedagogical Institute of the Slovak Republic, which defines 10 media literacy

competencies (Bizíková et al.). This weak preparedness of society is linked to several factors that have shaped the unfavourable situation in recent years: Slovakia has long been exposed to hybrid warfare and foreign propaganda, populism and aggressive, often manipulative communication have spread in politics, with some political leaders and well-known figures with great influence themselves becoming disseminators or creators of disinformation. Combined with the chaotic functioning of the state during the pandemic, this has led to an increase in distrust of public institutions and authorities. Weak media education is therefore unable to sufficiently compensate for these negative factors, which increases the overall vulnerability of young people and society to disinformation content (SFPA, 2023).

According to experts, the poor level of critical thinking among Slovak students is alarming because of its negative impact on civic awareness and the mood in society. As mentioned in the post above, we observe a low ability among young people to evaluate information and distinguish between true and false news. According to research by UK and SAV, students placed almost no emphasis on manipulative techniques in texts, such as bold font, grammatical errors or superlatives (Greškovičová et al., 2022). Slovak pupils also achieve poorer results in reading literacy, with the PISA 2022 test confirming that their level remains below the OECD average (Greškovičová et al., 2022). Reading literacy is key to effectively evaluating and processing the information that young people encounter. It is a set of skills that includes understanding a text, critically evaluating its content and context, assessing its relevance, and identifying inaccurate, misleading, or deceptive information (MK SR, 2011). A lack of these skills significantly increases young people's vulnerability to disinformation and conspiracy narratives.

Discussion

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of international research on the vulnerability of young people to disinformation, with the Slovak case exhibiting several structural characteristics shared with other Central and Eastern European countries. The absence of empirically verifiable extremist tendencies among respondents suggests that exposure to the disinformation ecosystem does not automatically lead to political radicalization. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Radi, Tomšič, and

Bădescu (2024), according to whom the correlation between disinformation exposure and extremism is mediated primarily by the institutional context and the level of formal education.

The identified differences between various types of secondary schools in selected regions of Slovakia are analytically significant. Students at grammar schools demonstrate a higher degree of critical reflection on their own beliefs and are open to a greater plurality of opinions. This is a phenomenon observed by Waszak et al. (2025) in the Polish context. We agree with the assessment that the integration of humanities and social science subjects correlates with a greater ability to identify attempts at manipulation. It can therefore be concluded that the type of educational environment or institution acts as a variable between exposure to disinformation and cognitive resilience. This has direct implications for the structure and content of preventive interventions.

Gender differences in susceptibility to conspiracy thinking and trust in the media are consistent with the findings of the study by Belovičová et al. (2024) conducted on a Slovak sample, as well as with comparative data from GLOBSEC (2023), according to which men in Central and Eastern European countries exhibit a statistically higher susceptibility to pro-Kremlin narratives than women. These findings may suggest that a gender-sensitive approach to media education is not only desirable but methodologically necessary.

The positive correlation between the level of political awareness and the willingness to revise one's own views supports van der Linden's (2023) theoretical framework, according to which cognitive resilience to disinformation is not a static trait but a developable competence. On the other hand, the degree of correlation suggests that political awareness alone, without targeted education in media literacy, is insufficient to build effective resilience. This finding is consistent with the findings of Vrag and Tully (2021), who identified motivational and institutional dimensions as necessary conditions for the effectiveness of media literacy interventions.

Implications and recommendations

The HoDeKoProM research emphasises that young people perceive improvements in education and the development of personal responsibility as the most appropriate solution to combating disinformation, while clearly

rejecting an approach based on censorship (Belovičová et al., 2024). According to the respondents in this research, effective media literacy programmes can be integrated directly into school education as systematic course modules that teach students to distinguish between true and misleading information, verify sources and reflect on forms of manipulation. However, in addition to education in schools, it is also necessary to develop informal educational interventions, such as workshops, creative media, and interactive projects that engage young people directly and practically (Belovičová et al., 2024). According to the results of the "Together for Healthy Media" research conducted by the Slovak Youth Council, it is necessary to emphasise strengthening the capacities of youth leaders, lecturers and educators. They should be equipped with tools and knowledge that will enable them to guide young people towards a responsible and critical approach to the media and content on the internet (Slovak Youth Council, 2025). The project also aims to create partnerships between youth organisations, schools and public institutions to strengthen the system supporting resilience to disinformation as part of civic engagement (Slovak Youth Council, 2025). Career coaching can also play an important role in this area, as it has proven to be an effective tool for developing civic and societal skills (Tokolyova, 2025).

Technological interventions are also an important part of the fight against disinformation in Slovakia. Examples that are already actively working in practice include Checkbot (Dlhopolec, 2019), which functions as an interactive chatbot on Facebook Messenger that educates users by helping them analyse claims and verify facts without directly telling them what is true and what is a hoax. The HOPE (Hall of Positive Engagement) project, initiated by Tomáš Kriššák, uses gamification as a way to engage young people—students learn to recognise hateful or manipulative behaviour, trolls or conflict situations in the online environment through an interactive game. The project also includes digital materials such as comics and an online library, which are freely available and can be used in schools or extracurricular activities. These initiatives suggest that a combination of technological tools (chatbots, AI, visual formats, games), education and practical interaction can be effective elements of a prevention strategy. At the same time, they show that young people's participation, experiences and reflection in interactive formats have the potential to strengthen their media resilience to disinformation.

In Slovakia, active civil society plays an important role, with several initiatives aimed at identifying and monitoring problematic content in the online

space. Among the most significant projects is the fact-checking platform Demagog.sk, which verifies the factuality of public statements made by politicians and social authorities. Another example is Blbec.online, a system that collects and analyses data on extremist and manipulative profiles on social networks, thereby contributing to the detection of disinformation networks and trends in online communication. The Adapt Institute, which specialises in monitoring the information space and detecting false or potentially harmful content, also plays an important role. It is complemented by the Konspiratori.sk project, which offers a publicly accessible database of websites with dubious, manipulative or conspiratorial content. This project uses a clearly defined evaluation methodology that includes criteria such as adherence to the principles of journalistic ethics, transparency of media ownership, separation of news from commentary, and assessment of the scientific and factual accuracy of published content. It also considers whether the website spreads hate speech, alarmist news or propaganda narratives (Dvorský, 2023).

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to characterise the impact of young people's exposure to the disinformation ecosystem in Slovakia and to identify available preventive measures and strategies aimed at protecting and educating this age group. In line with this aim, the study addressed two research questions focused on (RQ1) the current impact of the disinformation ecosystem on young people in the Slovak Republic and (RQ2) interventions that can effectively reduce the negative consequences of this exposure.

Research conducted in the Slovak Republic points to several findings regarding the relationship between youth exposure to the disinformation ecosystem. The research suggests that young people in Slovakia have difficulty assessing the relevance of news and identifying unreliable content. The shortcomings in recognising manipulative techniques in media and social network content fit into the broader context of long-term measurements that have found low levels of reading literacy among Slovak youth, which has long been below the OECD average. This vulnerability is reinforced by the fact that young people are among the primary users of social media and thus obtain information from a regulated environment that is a significant platform for the disinformation ecosystem. Spatially limited research in the

region of eastern Slovakia has highlighted several findings on the relationship between political awareness and tendencies towards extremism among young people in matters relating to the media. On the issue of freedom of speech, a finding was made that grammar school students are more aware of the limits of freedom of speech than vocational school students. Also, grammar school students are more sceptical about their beliefs and more open to other opinions. In terms of gender differentiation, a higher degree of caution in evaluating information was found among females, while males showed a higher inclination towards radicalisation. Taken together, these results provide an answer to RQ1: the impact of the disinformation ecosystem on Slovak youth is manifested not in straightforward extremist attitudes, but in differentiated patterns of vulnerability shaped by school type, gender and overall levels of literacy and political awareness.

Regarding RQ2, the analysis shows that effective responses to disinformation require a comprehensive and long-term approach that combines education, technological innovation and active civic engagement. The development of media and digital literacy, especially among young people, through formal and informal education plays a key role. By coordinating these approaches, it is possible to gradually increase society's resilience to disinformation and strengthen trust in democratic institutions and the media. Education focused on media literacy, identifying disinformation, hybrid threats and protecting the cognitive environment is a legitimate means of strengthening political awareness. By developing these skills, students become more resistant to manipulation, learn to think independently and critically, and gain a better understanding of the fundamental principles of freedom of expression and diversity of opinion, which are key to the functioning of a democratic system and the rule of law. Such education can also contribute to reducing the risk of the spread of political radicalism and extremism.

At the same time, this study has several limitations. The primary research was geographically confined to secondary school students in the Košice and Prešov regions and captured only one age cohort, which limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader youth population in Slovakia. The analysis of secondary data relies on existing studies of varying methodological quality, which constrains the precision with which causal relationships between disinformation exposure, trust and democratic attitudes can be assessed. Future research should therefore expand the empirical basis by including other regions, age groups and longitudinal designs that would allow

for the observation of changes in vulnerability over time. It would also be useful to experimentally test specific educational and prebunking interventions in school settings to evaluate their concrete impact on media literacy and resilience to disinformation.

Projects affiliation

VEGA č. 1/0645/25: Instrumentalisation of Historical Events as a Subject of Recodification Schemes in Political and Propaganda Practice in Slovakia after 1989 (Selected Aspects of Ethnic Relations).

Authors' contributions

Tomáš Dvorský 20% (first authorship) • Gabriel Eštok 40% • Mária Denciová 40%

References

Adapt Institute. (n.d.). *Analýzy a výskumy o informačnom priestore a dezinformáciách*. https://www.adaptinstitute.org/research-and-analysis/

Baacke, D. (1997). *Medienpädagogik*. Niemeyer.

Belovičová, M., Šramová, B., & Kusá, D. (2024). *Hodnoty, dezinformácie, konšpirácie, propaganda a mediálna gramotnosť mládeže: Správa z výskumu HoDeKoProM*. Výskumný ústav detskej psychológie a patopsychológie. https://vudpap.sk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Sprava-HoDeKoProM-SK-verzia.pdf

Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics* (pp. 3–27). Oxford University Press.

Bizíková, L., et al. (n.d.). *10 kompetencií mediálnej gramotnosti*. https://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/ucebnice-metodiky-publikacie/10-kompetencii-medialnej-gramotnosti.pdf

Brečko, B. N., & Punie, Y. (Eds.). (2013). *DIGCOMP: A framework for developing and understanding digital competence in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://doi.org/10.2788/52966

Brion-Méndez, M., et al. (2025). *Understanding the impact of misinformation on adolescents*.

CEE-DEM. (2024). *Perception of disinformation and fake news in the environment of children and adolescents in Slovakia*.

Center for East European Studies. (2024). *Disinformation resilience index 2024*. https://east-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/DRI_2024_edition.pdf

Demagog.sk. (n.d.). *Overovanie faktov v politickej komunikácii*. https://demagog.sk

Dlhopolec, P. (2019). *Checkbot educates and warns. It never tells the truth*. https://spectator.sme.sk/politics-and-society/c/checkbot-educates-and-warns-it-never-tells-the-truth-bringing-world-to-the-classroom

Dvorský, T. (2023). Vnímanie fenoménu médií u študentov stredných škôl Košického a Prešovského samosprávneho kraja. In *Výskum korelácií medzi deformáciami politického vedomia a nárastom politického extrémizmu u študentov stredných škôl*. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice.

EU DisinfoLab. (n.d.). *The disinformation landscape in Slovakia*.

European Commission. (2018). *Strategická komunikácia a boj proti zahraničnej manipulácii s informáciami a zahraničnému zasahovaniu*. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/countering-information-manipulation_sk

Gbúrová, M., Dobiaš, D., Šutajová, J., Eštok, G., Ruman, J., & Dvorský, T. (2023). *Research into correlations between deformations of political awareness and the increase of political extremism among secondary school students in the Košice self-governing region and the Prešov self-governing region*. ŠafárikPress. https://doi.org/10.33542/RCB-0277-0

GLOBSEC. (2023). *GLOBSEC trends 2023*. https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/GLOBSEC%20Trends%202023.pdf

GLOBSEC. (2025). *Voices of Central and Eastern Europe: Perceptions of democracy & disinformation*. https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/GLOBSEC%20Trends%202025_1.pdf

Go4Insight. (2023). *Správa o mediálnych návykoch mládeže na Slovensku 2023*. https://www.go4insight.com/post/ko%C4%BEko-slov%C3%A1kov-je-na-soci%C3%A1lnych-sie%C5%A5ach

Greškovičová, K., Masaryk, R., Synak, N., & Kurincová Čavojová, V. (2022). Superlatives, clickbaits, appeals to authority, poor grammar, or boldface: Is editorial style related to the credibility of online health messages? *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, Article 940903. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.940903

Hobbs, R. (2017). *Create to learn: Introduction to digital literacy*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communication* (pp. 19–20). The Free Press.

Konšpirátori.sk. (n.d.). *Zoznam problematických webových stránok*. https://www.konspiratori.sk/kriteria

META. (2018). *Hard questions: What effect does social media have on democracy?* https://about.fb.com/news/2018/01/effect-social-media-democracy/

Mihálik, J., Garaj, M., & Bardovič, J. (2022). *Social media and political communication of youth political organisations*. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11020069

Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. (2025). *Koncepcia mediálnej výchovy v Slovenskej republike*. https://www.culture.gov.sk/uncat/koncepcia-medialnej-vychovy-v-sr/

Nature Publishing Group. (2024). *Scientific article on misinformation*. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-71599-6

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Press.

Pereira, R. T., et al. (2025). *Information disorder's impact on adolescents*.

Pisklová, M. (2021). *Metodika vzdelávania slovenskej mládeže*. SFPA. https://www.sfpa.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/metodika_vzdelavania_web_2s-2.pdf

Radi, B. M., Tomšič, M., & Bădescu, G. (Eds.). (2024). *Media literacy, media education and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Peter Lang.

Reuters Institute. (2023). *Digital news report 2023*. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf

Ruman, J. (2023). Methodology of research. In *Research into correlations between deformations of political awareness and the increase of political extremism*. ŠafárikPress UPJŠ.

SAGE Journals. (2022). *Article on misinformation*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221087936

SFPA—Slovak Foreign Policy Association. (2022). *Dezinformácie a ich vplyv na slovenskú spoločnosť*. https://www.sfpa.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Dezinformacie-a-ich-vplyv-na-slovensku-spolocnost-final-7.pdf

SIS. (2020). *Správa o činnosti SIS za rok 2020*. https://sis.gov.sk/pre-vas/sprava-o-cinnosti-2020.html

Slovak Youth Council. (2025). *Mládež a informácie: Kritické myslenie a mediálna gramotnosť na Slovensku*.

Šárovec, D. (2024). TikTok as a security threat? A challenge for political actors in the Czech Republic. In E. Kancik-Kołtun (Ed.), *Contemporary security problems of Poland and the Czech Republic* (pp. 112–123). Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press.

Tokolyova, T., & Klepáčová, H. (2025). *Career coaching as a catalyst for youth development*. https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/369215

Van der Linden, S. (2023). *Foolproof: Why misinformation infects our minds and how to build immunity*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Van der Linden, S., Roozenbeek, J., et al. (n.d.). *Strategies to combat misinformation*.

Waszak, P. M., Pierucka, M., Dydjow-Bendek, D., Czernych, R., Trzeciak-Bilska, K., Rój, A., & Zagożdżon, P. (2025). Strategies for teaching disinformation awareness in the Polish educational system. *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio N: Educatio Nova*, *10*, 407–427. https://doi.org/10.17951/en.2025.10.407-427

Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*. Council of Europe.

Youth Wiki. (2025). *Media literacy and safe use of new media (Slovakia)*.

Zuborová, V. (2019). *Disinformation and the youth: The case of Slovakia*.

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 47–70

Maciej Nowakowski

https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6841-5922
maciejknowakowski@gmail.com

Jagiellonian University
https://ror.org/03bqmcz70

Minority languages in social media: A comparative European study of digital vitality

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02103

Article history • Received: 31 Aug 2025 • Accepted: 20 Mar 2026 • Published: 31 Mar 2026
ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Abstract

Minority languages in social media: A comparative European study of digital vitality

This article explores how the role of media in supporting minority languages is evolving in response to the expanding digital media landscape in the EU. It examines how the use of minority languages in media is influenced by their status within the growing digital market. As digital media become more dominant in everyday life, minority languages are susceptible to negative shifts, particularly with the rise of internet-based platforms. Through the analysis of four minority language secessionist movements (Scottish Gaelic, Provençal, Andalusian, and Silesian), the article examines whether each context can still support minority languages institutionally in their respective media landscape, and what conditions are necessary for that support. It also questions how EU policies aimed at protecting and promoting these languages can remain effective if they aren't adapted to fit the new digital realities. The significance of the study thus stems from its direct comparative approach and its comprehensive update of existing academic literature, assessing the changes that took place across the four media systems. The results showed an asymmetrical growth of traditional outlets as opposed to digital ones among all communities, owing largely to a lack of public policy initiatives within the free-market digital space and subsequent algorithmic prioritisation of majority languages. The article thus calls for a synthesis of top-down policy initiatives with bottom-up grassroots movements to enhance and develop new media services in minority languages.

Keywords: minority languages, social media, digital prestige planning, algorithmic bias, language policy, linguistic vitality

In an era of platform-dominated communication, social media have become central to how language is used, valued, and reproduced in everyday life. Across Europe, younger generations increasingly conduct their social, cultural, and even political interactions through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X. This shift has profound implications for minority languages. If a language is absent from these spaces, it risks exclusion not only from daily communication, but also from the symbolic domains in which linguistic legitimacy and cultural relevance are negotiated.

Recent data on media consumption across Europe confirm the scale of this transformation. Digital platforms now dominate news access and interpersonal communication, particularly among younger users, for whom social

media constitute a primary environment of interaction rather than a supplementary one. In this context, linguistic presence online is no longer optional: it is a key indicator of vitality. As Kornai (2013) argues, only a small fraction of the world's languages are likely to achieve "digital survival," raising urgent questions about the future of linguistic diversity in increasingly algorithm-driven communication environments.

Within the European Union, this challenge is compounded by a structural lag between policy frameworks and media realities. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML, 1992) established important protections for minority languages in traditional domains such as education, broadcasting, and public administration. However, it was designed in a pre-digital era and does not adequately address the dynamics of platform economies, algorithmic visibility, or user-generated content. While many minority languages have achieved a degree of institutional presence in radio, television, or regional press, their visibility in digital environments remains uneven and often marginal.

At the same time, social media offer new opportunities for minority language revitalisation. Digital platforms can create additional domains of written use, connect geographically dispersed speakers, and enhance prestige by associating minority languages with contemporary cultural practices. Yet these opportunities are unevenly distributed. Structural barriers—including algorithmic bias toward majority languages, limited technical resources, and insufficient content diversity—continue to constrain minority language use online. As a result, a growing tension emerges between institutional support and everyday practice: languages may be formally recognised and taught, yet remain marginal in the communicative spaces that shape daily interaction.

This article addresses this tension through a comparative analysis of four minority language contexts linked to regionalist or secessionist movements: Silesian in Poland, Provençal in France, Andalusian in Spain, and Scottish Gaelic in the United Kingdom. These cases were selected because they represent distinct configurations of institutional recognition, educational integration, and grassroots activism. Together, they provide a framework for examining how different combinations of top-down and bottom-up initiatives shape minority language presence in digital media.

While previous research has explored minority language use in both traditional and digital media, relatively few studies have systematically compared how institutional support and grassroots digital practices interact

across multiple European contexts. This study seeks to address that gap by integrating sociolinguistic and media-oriented perspectives within a comparative framework. In doing so, it moves beyond descriptive accounts of digital language use to examine the structural conditions that enable or constrain minority language vitality online.

The analysis is guided by established models of language vitality and planning, including the COD model of competence, opportunity, and desire (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2003), and Hinton's (2002) PIE cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. These frameworks are particularly relevant in digital environments, where linguistic success depends not only on institutional support, but also on user engagement, technological accessibility, and perceived prestige. Building on these perspectives, the article asks: under what conditions can European minority languages sustain meaningful presence in digital communication environments, and what policy interventions are necessary to ensure that social media function as a resource rather than a barrier to linguistic diversity?

By addressing these questions, the article contributes to interdisciplinary debates in media studies, sociolinguistics, and language policy. It argues that minority languages in Europe are at a critical juncture: without stronger integration into digital environments, institutional protections risk becoming symbolic rather than functional. However, where coordinated strategies align policy support with grassroots digital innovation, minority languages may not only survive but also gain renewed visibility and relevance in contemporary communicative life

Literature review

From traditional to digital media: Shifting domains of minority language use

Research on minority languages in Europe has consistently emphasised the central role of media in shaping linguistic vitality. Early scholarship focused primarily on traditional media—radio, press, and television—as key domains through which minority languages could gain visibility, legitimacy, and symbolic recognition (Cormack, 1998; Hogan-Brun & Wolff, 2003). Within this framework, policy instruments such as the European Charter for Regional

or Minority Languages (ECRML, 1992) encouraged states to institutionalise minority language presence through regional broadcasting and public service media (Guyot, 2007).

However, subsequent research has highlighted the structural limitations of this model. Traditional media tend to operate within institutional and cultural domains that are increasingly disconnected from the everyday communicative practices of younger generations (Moring, 2007). As McQuail (2000) observed, media institutions often reproduce dominant language hierarchies, meaning that formal visibility does not necessarily translate into active use. This disconnect is particularly evident in contexts where minority languages are well represented in broadcasting but remain marginal in informal, peer-to-peer communication.

The transition to digital media has fundamentally reshaped these dynamics. Contemporary media environments are characterised by participatory, user-generated content and platform-based communication, where linguistic practices are shaped not only by institutions but also by users themselves. As Gnach, Engebretsen, and Weber (2022) argue, digital communication blurs the boundaries between producers and audiences, creating new forms of linguistic participation that differ significantly from traditional media models. This shift requires a reconceptualisation of minority language media from institutional provision to everyday digital practice.

Social media, digital linguistics, and new forms of language use

The rise of social media has generated growing interest in how digital environments reshape language use, identity, and communication. Studies in media linguistics emphasise that online communication is characterised by hybridity, multimodality, and fluid language practices that often transcend standardised forms (Calude, 2023; Dovchin, 2020). In these contexts, minority languages may function not only as tools of communication but also as markers of identity, authenticity, and resistance within digital cultures.

From this perspective, social media create new domains of linguistic vitality. UNESCO (2003) identified three key potentials: expanding written use, connecting dispersed communities, and enhancing prestige by linking minority languages with contemporary cultural forms. Empirical studies have confirmed these dynamics in cases such as Welsh, Basque, and Catalan, where

social media enable both linguistic innovation and identity performance (Jones, Cunliffe, & Honeycutt, 2013; Nguyen, Trieschnigg, & Cornips, 2015).

At the same time, digital communication introduces new challenges. The informal and often non-standard nature of online language use can complicate efforts at standardisation, particularly for languages with contested orthographies. Research on internet language practices highlights how variability and experimentation—while potentially empowering—can also limit wider accessibility and institutional uptake (Urzędowska, 2021). Similarly, Skowronek (2021) notes that contemporary media linguistics must grapple with the tension between linguistic creativity and communicative clarity in digital environments.

For minority languages, these dynamics create both opportunities and constraints. On the one hand, digital platforms lower barriers to entry, enabling grassroots communities to produce and disseminate content independently of institutional support. On the other hand, the lack of standardisation, resources, and technical infrastructure can restrict the scalability and sustainability of such initiatives.

Structural barriers in digital environments

Despite the potential of social media, structural barriers continue to limit minority language presence online. One of the most significant challenges is algorithmic bias. Digital platforms prioritise content based on engagement metrics and scale, which systematically advantages majority languages with larger user bases (Ferré-Pavia et al., 2018). As a result, minority language content often remains less visible, regardless of its cultural relevance or quality.

In addition, technical and linguistic constraints play a crucial role. Limited availability of standardised orthographies, spell-checking tools, and language-specific interfaces can hinder participation in digital communication. This is particularly evident in contexts where linguistic norms are still evolving or contested, as in the case of Silesian and Andalusian. Without accessible writing systems and technological support, users may default to majority languages in online interaction.

Another key factor is content diversity. As Gibson (2015) argues, digital vitality depends not only on the presence of a language online but also on the range and appeal of available content. Minority languages that lack representation in entertainment, humour, and youth-oriented media may

struggle to attract younger users, even when institutional support is present. This creates a paradox in which languages may be formally recognised yet remain socially marginal in everyday communication.

These barriers have broader sociolinguistic consequences. The absence of minority languages from digital spaces can weaken their perceived relevance, contributing to a shift toward majority language use in informal domains. Over time, this may lead to what has been described as "domain contraction," where minority languages become confined to formal or symbolic contexts rather than functioning as living means of communication.

Institutional and grassroots approaches to digital vitality

The literature highlights an ongoing tension between institutional and grassroots approaches to minority language promotion. Institutional frameworks, such as education systems and public media, are effective in supporting language competence and standardisation (Fishman, 1991). However, they often struggle to adapt to rapidly changing digital environments and to engage younger audiences.

In contrast, grassroots digital initiatives—such as social media communities, blogs, and user-generated content—can foster creativity, engagement, and cultural relevance. These bottom-up practices are particularly visible in contexts where institutional support is limited, demonstrating the capacity of communities to sustain linguistic activity independently (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2021).

Yet both approaches have limitations when operating in isolation. Institutional strategies without digital adaptation risk producing "passive competence" without active use, while grassroots initiatives without structural support may remain fragmented and unsustainable. Recent studies suggest that successful cases of minority language revitalisation increasingly involve hybrid models that combine policy support with community-driven digital innovation.

Theoretical Frameworks for Analysing Digital Language Vitality

Several theoretical models provide useful tools for analysing minority language dynamics in digital contexts. Grin, Sfreddo, and Vaillancourt's (2003) COD model—competence, opportunity, and desire—offers a multidimensional

framework for understanding language use. In digital environments, competence relates to literacy and technical resources, opportunity to platform accessibility, and desire to social prestige and peer networks.

Hinton's (2002) PIE model—planning, implementation, and evaluation—emphasises the importance of cyclical and adaptive language policy. Digital contexts highlight the risks of incomplete policy cycles, where planning and implementation are not matched by effective evaluation of changing communication practices.

Ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Ehala, 2015) further underscores the symbolic dimension of language use. Visibility in public and digital spaces contributes to perceptions of legitimacy and group identity, while absence may signal decline or irrelevance. In contemporary media environments, social media presence functions as a key indicator of this symbolic vitality.

Research gap and contribution of the study

While existing research has explored minority language use in both traditional and digital media, there remains a lack of comparative studies that systematically examine how institutional frameworks and grassroots digital practices interact across different European contexts. Much of the literature focuses on single-language case studies, limiting the ability to identify broader patterns and structural conditions.

This study addresses that gap by adopting a cross-national comparative approach, analysing four minority language contexts with differing levels of institutional recognition and digital engagement. By integrating insights from sociolinguistics, media studies, and language policy, it seeks to move beyond descriptive accounts of digital language use and to identify the key factors that enable or constrain minority language vitality in platform-based communication environments.

Methodology

Case selection

This study employs a comparative case-study design, examining four minority language contexts with active regionalist or secessionist movements:

Silesian (Poland), Provençal (France), Andalusian (Spain), and Scottish Gaelic (United Kingdom). These cases were selected for three principal reasons.

First, they represent different levels of institutional recognition. Gaelic has long enjoyed legal recognition and educational integration, while Provençal has partial support in schools but limited visibility elsewhere. By contrast, Silesian and Andalusian remain largely unrecognised at the state level, though both have been the focus of grassroots campaigns for recognition.

Second, the four cases illustrate contrasting balances between acquisition planning and prestige planning (Fishman, 1991). Gaelic and Provençal are taught in schools, which fosters competence but has not translated into strong digital prestige. Silesian and Andalusian, on the other hand, are energised by bottom-up digital activism, but lack systematic support for educational transmission.

Third, these languages are embedded in politically charged identity movements, where language is not only a communicative medium but also a symbol of cultural distinctiveness and, in some contexts, political autonomy. This makes them particularly useful for analysing how minority languages negotiate visibility in the digital sphere, where symbolic presence is tied directly to prestige and legitimacy.

Research design and data collection

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data with comparative analysis. The survey instrument was adapted from a model developed by Mentrau Iaith Cymru (Welsh Language Initiative, 2015), designed to measure minority language use in digital environments.

Fieldwork was conducted in 2024 across four regions: Scotland (Gaelic), Andalusia, Provence, and Silesia, with a total of 322 respondents (72 in Scotland, 88 in Andalusia, 59 in Provence, and 103 in Silesia). Respondents were stratified by age group (<18, 18–39, and 39+), enabling a generational comparison of social media use and attitudes towards digital resources.

The survey focused on three dimensions derived from Gibson's (2015) framework of enabling conditions for digital ascent (with participants self-evaluating the social media experience in their respective ML on a 5-point Likert scale):

— Use—the proportion of respondents reporting social media use in the minority language (ML) compared to the dominant language (DL).

- Resources—satisfaction with available orthographies, writing models, and technical support (such as keyboards or spell-checkers).
- Content—satisfaction with the diversity, appeal, and cultural relevance of available digital content in the minority language.

Responses were analysed through a Bayesian posterior probability model to estimate the likelihood of social media use across age groups. The resulting distributions, presented in the Results section, offer insights into generational differences in use, resource satisfaction, and content evaluation.

Analytical framework

The analysis is guided by three complementary theoretical frameworks:

- COD Model (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2003): used to interpret how competence, opportunity, and desire interact in digital contexts. For instance, competence is tied to orthographic accessibility, opportunity to digital platform availability, and desire to prestige and peer influence.
- PIE Model (Hinton, 2002): applied to evaluate the alignment of planning, implementation, and evaluation across cases. This is particularly relevant for comparing institutional approaches (Gaelic, Provençal) with community-driven ones (Silesian, Andalusian).
- Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Ehala, 2015; Landry & Bourhis, 1997): used to frame the symbolic impact of digital presence. Online use functions both as a measure and a driver of perceived vitality.

By combining these frameworks, the study integrates sociolinguistic, policy, and media perspectives to interpret how minority languages navigate the challenges of digitalisation.

Limitations

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively small sample sizes for each case restrict the statistical generalisability of the findings. The survey design captures self-reported use and satisfaction but cannot fully account for the complexity of digital behaviour in practice. Moreover, while the analysis centres on social media, other domains—such as family transmission or cultural production—also shape linguistic vitality but fall outside the scope of this study.

Despite these limitations, the study offers an empirically grounded and theoretically informed account of how minority languages engage with digital media. By adopting a comparative lens across four distinct contexts, it provides insight into the interplay of institutional recognition, grassroots innovation, and generational dynamics in shaping the digital futures of minority languages.

Results and analysis

Overview of findings

The survey data reveals a clear asymmetry between generational engagement and structural support for minority language (ML) use in digital media. While younger respondents (<18 and 18–39) demonstrate relatively higher levels of engagement, this is not consistently supported by the availability of adequate resources or content. Conversely, older respondents (39+) report low levels of both use and satisfaction, indicating that digital engagement remains limited across all groups.

Table 1. Posterior probabilities of social media use, resource satisfaction, and content satisfaction by age group

ML Group	Use (<18)	Use (18–39)	Use (>39)	Resources (<18)	Resources (18–39)	Resources (>39)	Content (<18)	Content (18–39)	Content (>39)
Scottish Gaelic	0.22	0.18	0.08	0.65	0.62	0.55	0.4	0.35	0.25
Provençal	0.2	0.12	0.05	0.7	0.68	0.6	0.3	0.28	0.18
Andalusian	0.42	0.35	0.12	0.38	0.35	0.2	0.55	0.5	0.25
Silesian	0.48	0.4	0.15	0.45	0.42	0.28	0.6	0.55	0.3

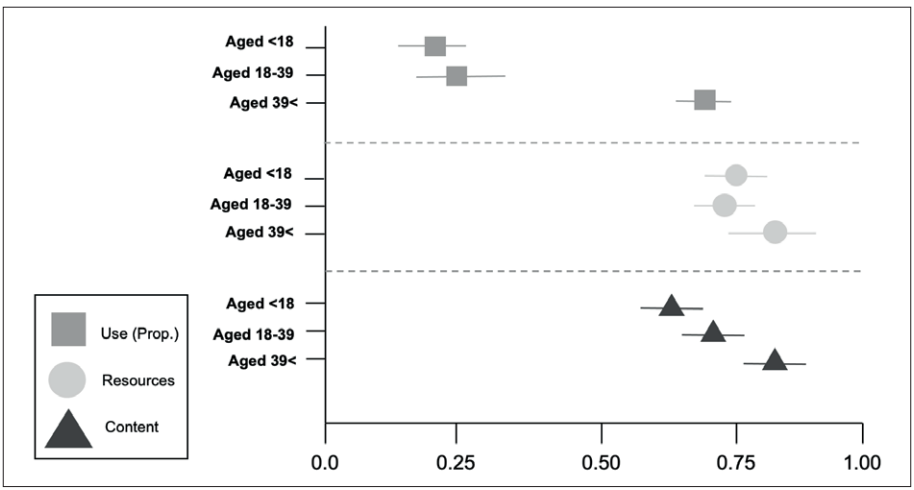
Source: Author's own survey data (2024). Note: Values represent posterior probabilities derived from Bayesian estimation based on survey responses (N = 322).

Three key patterns emerge. First, overall use of minority languages on social media remains low across all cases, rarely exceeding a probability of 0.50 even among younger cohorts. This suggests that digital environments, while offering opportunities, do not automatically translate into widespread linguistic adoption. Second, there is a divergence between institutional support and actual use: languages with strong educational and policy backing (Gaelic, Provençal) show higher satisfaction with resources but lower levels of digital engagement. Third, grassroots-driven contexts (Silesian, Andalusian) exhibit higher levels of use and content satisfaction despite weaker institutional support, indicating that cultural relevance may outweigh formal standardisation in digital settings.

Taken together, these findings suggest that minority language vitality in digital environments is shaped less by institutional provision alone and more by the interaction between resources, content, and user motivation.

Scottish Gaelic

Figure 1. Posterior probability that Scottish respondents use social media in the ML



Source: Author's own survey data (2024).

The Gaelic case illustrates a mismatch between institutional competence and digital engagement. While younger respondents report relatively high satisfaction with orthographic and technical resources (0.65 among

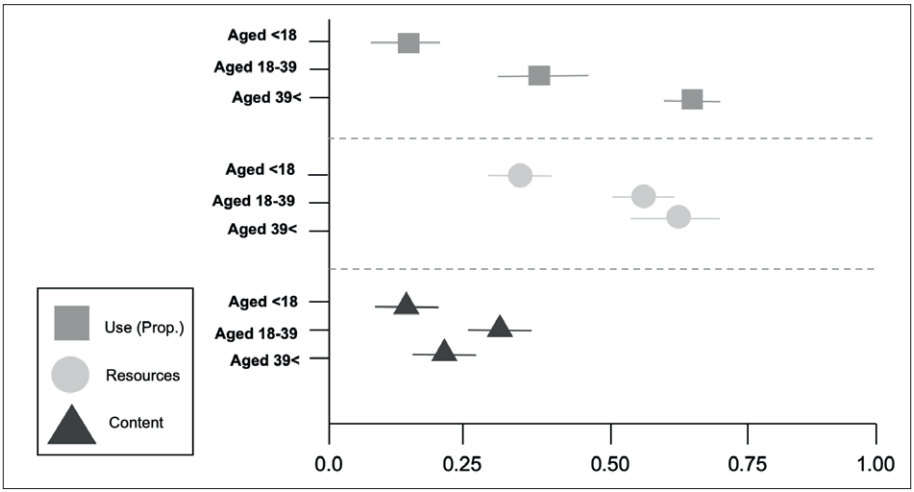
under-18s), actual use of Gaelic on social media remains limited (0.22 for under-18s, declining further among older cohorts).

This discrepancy suggests that competence alone is insufficient to sustain digital use. Despite strong support in education and traditional media, Gaelic lacks a robust presence in the types of content that dominate contemporary digital platforms, such as short-form video, influencer-driven content, and interactive formats. The relatively low levels of content satisfaction (0.40 among under-18s) indicate that users do not perceive Gaelic as a viable medium for everyday digital interaction.

From a broader perspective, this pattern reflects a competence–prestige gap: users possess the skills to use the language but lack sufficient social and cultural incentives to do so in digital environments. As a result, Gaelic remains institutionally strong but digitally marginal.

Provençal

Figure 2. Posterior probability that Provençal respondents use social media in the ML



Source: Author's own survey data (2024).

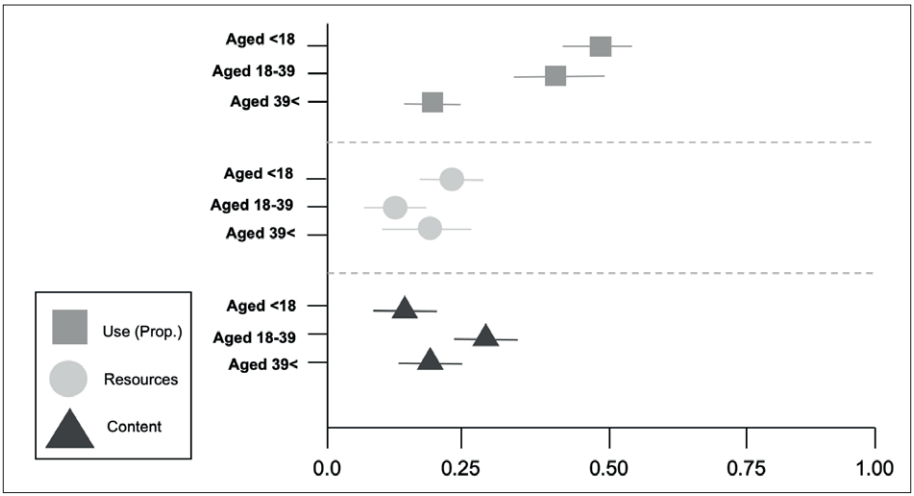
The Provençal case reinforces this pattern but with even lower levels of digital engagement. Although respondents report the highest satisfaction with resources across all cases (0.70 among under-18s), social media use remains minimal (0.20 for under-18s, 0.12 for 18–39).

This suggests that standardisation and educational support, while necessary, do not automatically generate active use. Provençal appears to function primarily as a symbolic or heritage language, associated with cultural preservation rather than everyday communication. The low levels of content satisfaction further indicate that available media do not align with contemporary digital practices, particularly those of younger users.

In contrast to Gaelic, where institutional structures are relatively dynamic, Provençal demonstrates a more static model of language maintenance. The result is a form of "passive competence," where speakers may understand or value the language but do not actively use it in digital interaction.

Andalusian

Figure 3. Posterior probability that Andalusian respondents use social media in the ML



Source: Author's own survey data (2024).

The Andalusian case presents a contrasting dynamic. Despite low satisfaction with orthographic resources (0.38 among under-18s), respondents report relatively high levels of social media use (0.42 for under-18s) and strong content satisfaction (0.55).

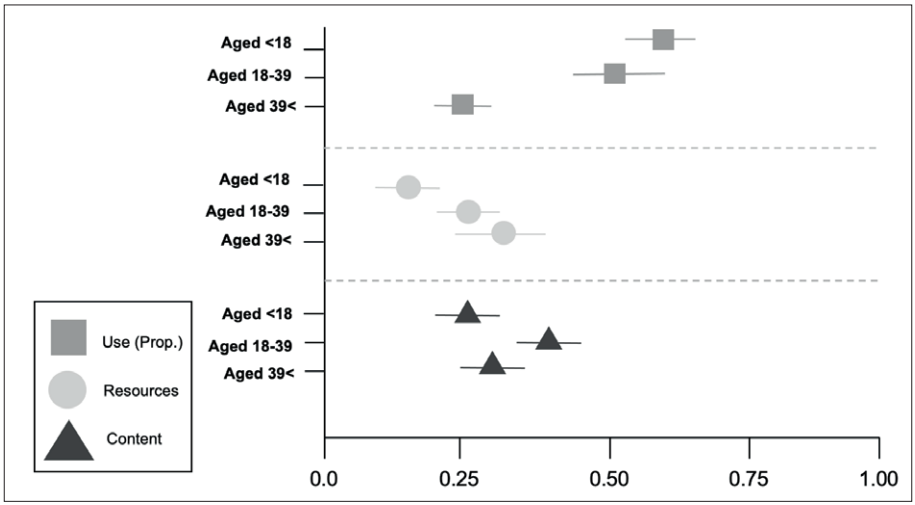
This indicates that grassroots digital practices can compensate for the absence of institutional support, at least in the short term. The popularity of memes, blogs, and culturally resonant content suggests that linguistic vitality

in digital environments is closely tied to identity expression and cultural relevance. In this context, non-standardised forms do not necessarily hinder participation; instead, they may facilitate creative and flexible language use.

However, this model raises questions about sustainability. Without consistent orthographies or institutional integration, Andalusian risks remaining confined to informal or niche domains. While digital visibility is high, its long-term impact on linguistic stability and broader recognition remains uncertain.

Silesian

Figure 4. Posterior probability that Silesian respondents use social media in the ML



Source: Author's own survey data (2024).

Silesian represents the most balanced case, combining relatively high levels of digital use (0.48 for under-18s) with moderate satisfaction in both resources and content. This suggests a more integrated model of minority language vitality, where grassroots digital activity is beginning to align with emerging institutional support.

The high levels of content satisfaction (0.60 among under-18s) indicate a strong presence of culturally relevant digital material, while ongoing developments in language recognition and education point toward increasing

formal support. This convergence creates the potential for a reinforcing cycle in which competence, opportunity, and desire mutually strengthen one another.

Silesian thus illustrates a transitional stage in minority language development, where digital vitality may serve as a foundation for broader institutional recognition and long-term sustainability.

Cross-case synthesis

A comparative analysis of the four cases highlights three overarching dynamics.

- Generational divides: Younger respondents consistently report higher engagement with minority languages online, but even among them, use remains below half. This highlights both the potential of digital platforms to foster vitality and the fragility of these gains.
- Institutional versus grassroots asymmetry: Institutional support (Gaelic, Provençal) secures competence through education but fails to generate digital prestige, while grassroots activism (Silesian, Andalusian) creates engaging content but struggles with sustainability. Neither approach alone appears sufficient.
- Resource–content mismatch: Languages with strong orthographic resources often lack diverse content (Gaelic, Provençal), while those with weaker resources compensate through creative digital cultures (Silesian, Andalusian). This mismatch underscores the need for policy frameworks that simultaneously address competence and prestige.

Together, these findings demonstrate that social media functions as both a mirror and a driver of minority language vitality. It mirrors broader structural imbalances between institutional and grassroots initiatives, while also driving new patterns of prestige and identity. The challenge, therefore, lies in harnessing digital platforms to align competence, opportunity, and desire in ways that sustain minority language use across generations.

Discussion

Interpreting the findings through COD, PIE, and vitality models

The findings demonstrate that social media are not merely an additional domain of language use but a central arena in which linguistic vitality is negotiated. This aligns with recent work in media linguistics, which emphasises that digital communication environments reshape not only how language is used but also how it is valued and legitimised (Calude, 2023; Gnach, Engebretsen, & Weber, 2022). Across all four cases, institutional recognition alone does not ensure active use in digital environments. Instead, vitality depends on the interaction between competence, opportunity, and desire, as conceptualised in the COD model (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2003).

In institutional contexts such as Gaelic and Provençal, competence is relatively well developed through education and standardisation. However, limited opportunities for meaningful digital engagement and low levels of user-driven content reduce the incentive to use the language in everyday communication. This finding supports earlier observations that formal visibility does not necessarily translate into functional use (McQuail, 2000; Moring, 2007). Conversely, in Andalusian and Silesian, grassroots digital practices generate strong opportunities and desire, but competence remains uneven due to limited standardisation and institutional support. Similar patterns have been observed in other minority language contexts, where user-generated content plays a crucial role in sustaining engagement (Jones, Cunliffe, & Honeycutt, 2013).

Generational gaps and the risk of split maintenance

A key finding of this study is the emergence of a generational divide in minority language use. Younger speakers are more likely to engage with minority languages in digital contexts, yet their overall use remains limited. This reflects broader trends identified in studies of digital communication, where younger users shape linguistic practices through platform-based interaction (Dovchin, 2020).

In institutional contexts, this dynamic leads to what may be described as functional displacement: minority languages are maintained in formal domains such as education but are replaced by majority languages in informal,

everyday communication. This phenomenon is consistent with Fishman's (1991) theory of domain-specific language shift, where languages may survive in institutional settings while declining in everyday use. In grassroots contexts, the opposite pattern emerges, with active digital use but limited integration into formal structures. However, without institutional reinforcement, such practices may remain unstable and fragmented (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2021).

Institutional versus grassroots approaches

The contrast between institutional and grassroots approaches highlights the need for hybrid models of language support. Institutional frameworks provide stability, legitimacy, and resources, particularly through education and standardisation (Fishman, 1991). However, they often struggle to adapt to rapidly evolving digital environments and to engage younger audiences.

Grassroots initiatives, by contrast, are characterised by flexibility and cultural relevance. Digital communities, memes, and user-generated content can foster engagement and identity expression, particularly among younger users (Nguyen, Trieschnigg, & Cornips, 2015). Yet these initiatives may lack long-term sustainability without structural support.

Recent research suggests that successful minority language revitalisation increasingly depends on combining these approaches. For example, studies of Basque and Welsh digital media show that institutional support for online content creation can significantly enhance both visibility and engagement (Zabaleta et al., 2013). The Silesian case reflects a similar trajectory, where emerging institutional recognition may reinforce existing grassroots vitality.

The politics of algorithmic visibility

The role of algorithmic systems emerges as a critical factor shaping minority language use. Digital platforms prioritise content based on scale, engagement, and commercial value, systematically favouring majority languages with larger user bases (Ferré-Pavia et al., 2018). As a result, minority language content is less likely to be recommended, shared, or encountered by users, regardless of its quality.

This dynamic reflects what Kelly-Holmes (2019) describes as "digital language policy," where platform design and algorithmic processes implicitly regulate language visibility. The consequences are twofold. First, reduced

visibility undermines prestige, as users may perceive minority languages as less relevant or modern. Second, it limits opportunities for interaction, reinforcing patterns of language shift toward dominant languages.

These findings suggest that digital inequality is not only a matter of user behaviour but also of structural constraints embedded within platform architectures.

Policy implications

The findings point to several key directions for language policy in the digital age. First, existing frameworks such as the ECRML (1992) must be updated to reflect the centrality of digital platforms in contemporary communication. As Hogan-Brun and Wolff (2003) note, policy frameworks designed for traditional media cannot fully address the dynamics of digital environments.

Second, policy should extend beyond acquisition planning to include active prestige planning. Supporting digital content creation, particularly in youth-oriented formats, is essential for maintaining relevance in platform-based communication (Gibson, 2015). Third, grassroots initiatives should be integrated into broader policy frameworks, ensuring both flexibility and sustainability. Finally, policymakers must engage with technology companies to address algorithmic bias and improve digital infrastructure for minority languages (Kelly-Holmes, 2019).

Minority languages at a crossroads

Taken together, the findings indicate that minority languages in Europe are at a critical juncture. Institutionalised languages risk stagnation without digital adaptation, while grassroots-driven languages risk fragmentation without structural support. This dual challenge has been noted in broader research on linguistic vitality, which emphasises the importance of aligning policy, practice, and social context (Ehala, 2015; Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Social media thus represent both a risk and an opportunity. If minority languages fail to establish a meaningful presence in digital environments, their long-term vitality will be undermined. However, where institutional support and grassroots innovation are effectively combined, digital platforms may provide new pathways for revitalisation, enabling minority languages to remain visible, relevant, and actively used across generations.

Conclusions

This article has examined how minority languages navigate digital communication environments across four European contexts: Silesian, Provençal, Andalusian, and Scottish Gaelic. The findings reveal a consistent structural asymmetry. Institutional support plays a crucial role in developing linguistic competence through education and standardisation, yet it does not automatically translate into active use in digital spaces. Conversely, grassroots digital practices generate visibility, engagement, and cultural relevance, but often lack the structural support necessary for long-term sustainability.

By applying the COD model (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2003), the PIE framework (Hinton, 2002), and ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Ehala, 2015; Landry & Bourhis, 1997), this study has demonstrated that minority language vitality in the digital age depends on the alignment of competence, opportunity, and desire within platform-based communication environments. Social media emerge not simply as an additional domain of use, but as an arena in which linguistic relevance, prestige, and intergenerational transmission are negotiated.

The comparative analysis highlights that neither institutional nor grassroots approaches are sufficient in isolation. Institutional models risk producing passive competence without everyday use, while grassroots initiatives may remain fragmented without policy support. The most promising pathway lies in hybrid strategies that integrate top-down frameworks with bottom-up digital innovation, ensuring both stability and adaptability in rapidly evolving media environments.

The implications for policy are clear. Existing frameworks, such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, must be updated to reflect the realities of algorithm-driven communication systems. Acquisition planning should be complemented by active prestige planning, particularly through investment in digital content creation and support for minority language presence on major platforms. At the same time, policymakers must engage with technology companies to address structural inequalities in algorithmic visibility and digital infrastructure.

At a broader level, the study suggests that minority languages in Europe are at a critical crossroads. Without meaningful integration into digital communication practices, institutional protections risk becoming increasingly symbolic. However, where policy support and community-driven innovation

are effectively aligned, digital environments may offer new opportunities for revitalisation, enabling minority languages to remain visible, relevant, and actively used in contemporary society.

Finally, this study also points to important directions for future research. In particular, the conclusions would benefit from comparative analysis involving majority languages, allowing for a more precise assessment of whether the observed patterns are specific to minority language contexts or reflect broader dynamics of digital communication. Further research could also explore platform-specific practices (e.g., TikTok, YouTube) and longitudinal changes in language use, providing deeper insight into how digital environments shape linguistic vitality over time.

In this sense, the future of linguistic diversity in Europe will depend not only on preservation, but on adaptation. The challenge is no longer simply to maintain minority languages, but to ensure that they function as living, dynamic means of communication within the digital spaces that increasingly define everyday life.

References

Calude, A. S. (2023). *The linguistics of social media: An introduction*. Routledge.

Cormack, M. (1998). Minority language media in Western Europe: Preliminary considerations. *European Journal of Communication*, *13*(1), 33–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323198013001002

Costa-Carreras, J. (2021). Catalan in the digital world: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *42*(4), 315–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1715991

Cunliffe, D. (2020). Minority languages, social media and the digital divide: A Welsh case study. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *263*(1), 111–130. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-2096

Dołowy-Rybińska, N. (2021). *Cultural and linguistic minorities in the digital age: The case of Breton*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Dołowy-Rybińska, N., & Hornsby, M. (2021). Digital practices and minority language ideologies: Young speakers of Breton, Kashubian and Welsh. *Language Policy*, *20*(1), 25–47. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-020-09585-1

Dovchin, S. (2020). *Language, social media and ideologies: Translingual Englishes, Facebook and authenticities*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55759-5

Ehala, M. (2015). *Ethnolinguistic vitality and intergroup processes*. Multilingual Matters.

Engesser, S., & Franzetti, A. (2011). Media systems and minority languages: The digital challenge. *Communications*, *36*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2011.003

Ferré-Pavia, C., Zabaleta, I., Gutiérrez, M., Fernández-Astobiza, I., & Xamardo, N. (2018). Minority language media and social media: Usage and challenges. *International Journal of Communication*, *12*, 1185–1204.

Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.

Gibson, M. (2015). Minority languages online: A sociolinguistic perspective. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *36*(3), 235–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.936874

Gnach, A., Engebretsen, M., & Weber, W. (2022). *Digital communication and media linguistics: With case studies in journalism, PR, and community communication*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108907255

Grin, F., Sfreddo, C., & Vaillancourt, F. (2003). *The economics of the multilingual workplace*. Routledge.

Guyot, J. (2007). Regional television and minority language identity in France. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *15*(1), 69–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782800701273317

Hinton, L. (2002). How to teach when the teacher isn't fluent. In L. Hinton & K. Hale (Eds.), *The green book of language revitalization in practice* (pp. 217–230). Academic Press.

Hogan-Brun, G., & Wolff, S. (2003). *Minority languages in Europe: Frameworks, status, prospects*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Jones, E. H. G., Cunliffe, D., & Honeycutt, Z. (2013). Social media and minority languages: A Welsh case study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *34*(7), 671–689. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.807273

Kelly-Holmes, H. (2019). Digital language policy: Minority languages in the algorithmic age. *Language Policy*, *18*(4), 473–490. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-019-09532-4

Kornai, A. (2013). Digital language death. *PLOS ONE*, *8*(10), e77056. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0077056

Landry, R., & Bourhis, R. Y. (1997). Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *16*(1), 23–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002

McQuail, D. (2000). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Moring, T. (2007). Functional completeness in minority language media. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *28*(3), 197–211. https://doi.org/10.2167/jmmd495.0

Nguyen, D., Trieschnigg, R., & Cornips, L. (2015). Audience and the use of minority languages on social media. *Social Media + Society*, *1*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115609709

Ó Murchadha, N. (2020). New speakers and digital media in Irish: Language, identity and innovation. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *33*(3), 264–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2019.1676761

Skóra, A. (2021). Grassroots digital activism and Silesian language promotion. *Slavia Meridionalis*, *21*(1), 155–178. https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.2321

Skowronek, B. (2021). Knotty problems of media linguistics (from today's perspective). *Tekst i Dyskurs*, *15*, 157–170. https://doi.org/10.7311/tid.15.2021.06

Stern, A. (2024). Andalusian identity and the politics of recognition. *Nations and Nationalism*, *30*(1), 122–140. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12900

Tilles, D. (2024, January 15). Poland recognises Silesian as a regional language. *Notes from Poland*. https://notesfrompoland.com

UNESCO. (2003). *Language vitality and endangerment*. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages.

Urzędowska, A. (2021). Polish internet language—selected forms. *Social Communication*, *7*(1), 58–66. https://doi.org/10.2478/sc-2021-0005

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 71–86

Maciej Radej

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0127-7875
maciej.radej@upjp2.edu.pl

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow
https://ror.org/0583g9182

The media in the face of truth: speaking, listening, and conversion

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02104

Article history • Received: 25 Feb 2026 • Accepted: 10 Mar 2026 • Published: 31 Mar 2026
ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Abstract

The media in the face of truth: speaking, listening, and conversion

The article reflects on truth as a fundamental criterion for the functioning of the mass media. In the face of contemporary fascination with pluralism and fragmentariness, the oneness of truth is recalled, which has the power to integrate dispersed collectivities. The text distinguishes between "true speech" (language that does not falsify reality) and "spoken truth" (disclosure of truth in the communication space). It also points out the necessity of active and wise listening to truth, engaging the whole person and protecting against manipulation and illusions. The ultimate goal of the recipient's interaction with the media should be conversion (metanoia) to truth, consisting of abandoning untruths and building the ability to distinguish between good and evil. A complete turn towards truth constitutes a media conversion, protecting human dignity and guaranteeing true freedom.

Keywords: truth in the media, oneness of truth, true speech, listening to truth, media conversion, social communication

Invariably, truth remains the most vital criterion in cognition, judgement, interpersonal relations, and choice-making. It is also the sense and fulcrum for the functioning of the mass media. Reflection on truth inevitably leads to the perception of the imperative of truth which is directed towards people, calls up to them, and turns to them as well as examines, evaluates, interrupts, and interferes with human activity. Indeed, it is incorrect to discuss the contemporary crisis of truth: what should be discussed is rather the crisis in man's attitude towards truth. Truth, regardless of the criterion of the conditions in which an individual lives, can fulfil a unifying and integrative function. Truth eliminates suspicion and thus may facilitate the consolidation of loose collectivities of people who are distrustful towards each other and separate in the media space. Projecting truth onto a large screen has a strong impact on the projection of the expanded network of human interrelations and exchange of information based on the ultimate value, namely truth. Given the risk of truth being ideologised, contemporary media users need to be constantly reminded of the crucial issues related to the criterion of cognising reality. In the milieu of fragmented information, they deserve answers to the following questions: Does any person have their own truth?

And if so, are there many truths or only one? What is the difference between true speech and spoken truth? What does it mean to heed truth and to be captivated by truth? What would it mean for the media to convert to truth? These important matters shall be discussed in this article.

One truth or a plurality of truths?

Nowadays, people are fascinated with optionality, plurality, fragmentariness, and dispersion, which stand in contrast to the singularity and unity of knowing the truth. Today's digital media are a window through which the users can look into the pieces of content they seek. We must realise that plurality is not a source of unity; on the contrary, it is unity that is the source of plurality. To a speculative mind, the singularity of truth is perfection. The adjective "singular" describing truth denies the possibility that many truths may co-exist; the number "one" is used for quantitative organisation and for describing the relations towards the existent order. The starting point is the recognition of the oneness of truth, which stands behind the order of things and allows us to determine relations between them (Heschel, 1951, pp. 111–112).

Anything in plurality is related to singularity. It can be shown mathematically (e.g. as 🧍 + 🧍 = 🧍 🧍 or 🧍 + 🧍 + 🧍 = 🧍 🧍 🧍 etc.). Any variant of a formula, even when it includes multiplicities, has a starting point in the number "one" (🧍). The left side of the equation has to correspond to the value of its right side. When different people meet and each of them expresses the truth, they relate to its oneness. The solutions and the results of the search are just what they are, they can neither be supplemented by anything, nor detracted from. A human person, although real, is not truth. Truth exists regardless of individuals. Man is a witness to truth, which he draws from an independent source. Therefore, the need for independent media results from truth. Whatever is true is correspondent. In my mathematical example both sides of the equation are correspondent, that is their value is exactly the same, neither higher nor lower. It is what it is. We should oppose views that negate and reject the oneness of truth. When the number "one" is reduced to 0.99 or even 0, this reduction means rejecting truth, making up fiction, and dismissing the laws of logic.

The multiplication of the number of truths can be best explained on the example of ice calving. When blocks of ice break away from a glacier, each

of them becomes a separate unit, has its own autonomy and structure, and begins to function in a new way: it no longer belongs to a solid mass, instead, it starts to drift. The separated iceberg "forgets" its source and the origin of its existence. It lives independently, just as the other disconnected chunks. However, the parts do not form a whole any more, neither are they larger than the whole. One piece of a jigsaw puzzle is just a tiny element in a bigger picture. It is only the whole, the unity of all the elements of the picture, that makes it possible for us to see the actual state of affairs. Thus the number "one" stands for the privileged position of truth and shows its uniqueness. The essence of truth is more than an individual is able to learn or express. That's why the task of the media is to make effort to reach the source of truth, namely to present such content that provokes the ultimate, primary questions. Irrelevant or secondary content cannot be misrepresented as that of primary importance. Regrettably, many broadcasters offer trivial and immaterial information as deserving of close attention of the general public. Consequently, both the media and their users are threatened by a loss of their own identity as well as a loss of identification with what is really important in favour of banal and commonplace topics. The users face the risk of petrifaction, due to which inflexible and rigid forms become permanent (Dictionary Cambridge).[1]

When individualism is upheld and when blocks of information that got detached from truth are considered truthful, it becomes difficult to understand the whole; indeed, one is inclined to believe ever more strongly that there does not exist one truth. Everybody has their own truth so ideally they should stick to their own judgement and opinion. A drifting ice floe moves randomly and does not plan its course; similarly, media users get disorientated and do not know which direction to take, and so they may find themselves on a collision course and bump into another drifting object. Also, they may collide with the wholeness and unity of truth, which can never be appropriated. So when we ask how many truths there are or even when we experience a plurality of truths, a fragmentation of truth, we are still aware that the fragments belong to one whole. Truth is one. It has the power to unite pluralities and to build a comprehensive picture of the world. Those operations performed by the media that are motivated by truth become empowered to bring about

1 See also: *Słownik języka polskiego*, *Petryfikacja*, https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/petryfikacja;2499539.html (access: 16.02.2024).

a unity and to bring people together. Those who present various concepts of truth often forget that they do not produce truth, but only conceptualise it, namely they make certain observations, approach it in certain ways, express their thoughts and their own ideas. So it should be remembered that concepts can be both true and false. Our duty is to follow truth and this concept of truth that resides within it. Then we can talk about concepts as products of conception, as something conceived by truth. A concept understood as a product of intellect is not necessarily something conceived by truth. The media frequently get influenced by opinions and propagate content that stems from somebody's observations, but they should not forget the concept of autonomous truth, which is conceived at source. The source of truth is truth itself, and not concepts of truth. Those concepts can be true if conceived by truth as such. It must be noted that a human person is right whenever he or she is not at fault. The thing that never is at fault is truth. Similarly, the media are correct when they are not at fault. Therefore, as remarked by Pope Benedict XVI, the interest in and popularity of many publications, programmes, and quality films depend on their recognition and appropriate presentation of truth (Benedict XVI, 2008). So there is an urgent need to tell the truth.

True speech and spoken truth

Human cognition, also informative cognition, is getting more and more refined. The means of communication present their arguments in a more and more sytematic and precise way, owing to which users can acquire information that facilitates the development of creative thinking. In the initial phase, while absorbing the offered content, users may not experience a cognitive revelation, because they are led and guided by the provider of the information. But when a personal discovery occurs, a new phase in the cognition process begins, when the intellect is properly applied and contemplates the *speculabile*, thanks to which mankind can better understand the world. This means that the media are carriers of what becomes visible to the human mind due to the ability to think, analyse, and draw conclusions. *Recta ratio speculabile* (Krąpiec, 1974, p. 188). The message of truth is, therefore, crucial for reasoning and discerning basic cognitive content. Also, the ethical principles to which a human person adheres have to be taken into account, because undertaking any action is always a moral decision. Thus, truth can never be

excluded from the domain of axiology, because truth is a basic criterion in assigning value. Nowadays, communication aimed at spreading information requires special competence, language skills, and the ability to use language in social situations (Szalkowska, 2009, p. 372).

There is a fundamental difference between "true speech" and "spoken truth." In the former phrase, whether we want it or not, the main role is played by the noun "speech," whereas truth is only referred to in the modifier. In the latter case, the focus is truth, while the modifier specifies that speech, i.e. language, is the medium. It happens so because truth cannot accept falsehood, it always takes the opposite position. On the other hand, speech (or language), which does not enjoy its own sovereignty and self-determination, unlike truth, may be susceptible to falsehood. Decisions are not made in language, but in man. Hence the importance of the "truth of being." True speech refers to the language of communication which is present in the media. It is revealed in the specific acts of using the language system. It includes signs and rules and fulfils various functions (e.g. communicative, expressive, regulatory), and its purpose is to send and receive messages.

In 1861 the French surgeon and anthropologist Pierre Paul Broca (1824–1880) discovered the seat of speech production in the brain. It has an important role in understanding language and interpreting gestures (Fadiga & Craighero, 2006, p. 488). The latest experiments demonstrate that Broca's area becomes active when sentences are uttered concerning cognition and perception. That is significant, because the word and the gesture are interrelated at the level of purpose and intention (Gentilucci, Bernardis, Crisi, & Dalla Volta, 2006, p. 1063). For language signifies not only through written or spoken messages, but also through gestures and facial expression. Utterances can be produced without words, with other signs exclusively, therefore communication can take on many forms of expression and use various channels. So, true speech in the media is such language of communication (involving signs, gestures, symbols, oral and written utterances) that does not falsify the reality, does not simplify meanings, and does not reduce or distort the sense. It is correspondent with correct thinking and values. Such messages in dialogic communication show positive attitudes of senders and receivers. One should acknowledge the proposition of the Jewish mathematician and philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), one of the founders of phenomenology, that we should distinguish between two types of signs: indications and meaningful speech expressions. Even if one speaks to another person

intending to communicate something, the gestures and the look on one's face do not count as expressions, because they accompany speech unwittingly, without any intention to communicate anything (Husserl, 1970, p. 269).

The author of the book *Komunikacja językowa w Internecie* [Language communication on the internet], linguist Jan Grzenia, observes that the Internet presents all the functions of language that we know from real-world communication, but the relations to both written and spoken language are altered: all internet texts are digital, that is non-spoken, even though they display some features of orality; neither are they identical with written texts, although they are based on writing (Grzenia, 2008, p. 183). However, linguistic changes and diversification should always belong to true speech, that is to correspond with the reality.

In the context of true speech, the Greek term παρρησία (parrhesia) needs to be discussed. Literally it denotes "speaking everything," speaking freely, candid and lucid speech which is based on truth. Parrhesia is the opposite of artificial rhetoric, it is speaking directly to one's equals, among equals. Nevertheless, it can have a negative aspect when the listener is openly hurt or offended by the speaker telling the truth. On the positive side, parrhesia is an act of courage and an expression of what the speaker believes to be true (PWN, n.d., Parezja).[2] In the agora of today's media, parrhesia characterises a conscientious citizen who demands the truth. So the users ought to be interested not only in surfing the net and scanning various websites, but also, in proportion and parallelly, in parrhesia, which has become a necessity. Practicing parrhesia should be typical of users of the social communication media, treating each other with respect and striving to attain their common aim, that is good.

2 See also *Parezja*, https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parezja and the English version of this entry: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parrhesia (access: 10.02.2024). "Parrhesia is closely tied to having the courage to speak the truth despite potential dangers, including social repercussions, political scandal, or even matters of life and death. Parrhesia involves speaking openly. This involves a distinct connection to truth via honesty, a link to personal life through facing danger, a certain interaction with oneself or others through critique, and a specific relationship with moral principles through freedom and responsibility. Specifically, it's a form of speaking where the speaker shares their personal truth, even risking their life because they believe truth-telling is a duty to help others and themselves. In parrhesia, the speaker opts for honesty over persuasion, truth over falsehood or silence, the risk of death over safety, criticism over flattery, and moral obligation over self-interest or indifference. The *parrhesiastes* speaks without reservation."

The idea of open, candid, and lucid speech in the means of communication can be traced back to Protagoras of Abdera (ca. 480 BC–410 BC), who thought that men should be frank with one another and instruct one another "and not be begrudging [anyone else] this [instruction], as now no one begrudges [teaching others] things just and lawful."[3] Users of the media should be sincere in order to share truth. Whatever has been comprehended by one person should be shared with others, without begrudging or envying, so as to build the unity and brotherhood in the mediasphere. When users are "speaking and listening in their turn in an orderly manner" (Plato, 2010, p. 90–91), a propitious communication milieu is created in which truth is not only uttered (and discovered), but also heard (and discovered too), it is listened to attentively and reflected upon. The phrase "spoken truth" is directly related to the disclosure of truth in the communication space. It is in speech (i.e. language) that truth is expressed and expresses itself.

Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980), a Canadian philosopher and one of the best theorists of mass communication and the media, stressed that speech allows truth to emerge, serves to separate one person from another, and separate man from the animal world (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 77–80). A similar opinion was expressed by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941). In his work *Creative evolution* he said that "without language, intelligence would probably have remained riveted to the material objects which it was interested in considering" (Bergson, 1911, p. 258).[4] The dialogical nature of truth, and especially its correlatedness to values, indicate that truth should be speaking towards good. So from the perspective of a person and the media, true speech and spoken truth are important elements of the message. It is not only the communicated content that is important, but also the way of communicating it. Both support the media message, make it possible to learn the truth, and perform the ordering and integrative function for the person. It is not only speaking the truth, but also listening to the truth that becomes a necessity.

3 Protagoras (Πρωταγόρας ὁ Ἀβδηρίτης) was a Greek philosopher, one of the Sophists. The quotation comes from Plato, 2010, p. 62.

4 Bergson perceived the need of the "language of the understanding" (p. 281): "we must adopt the language of the understanding, since only the understanding has a language."

Listening to truth and being captivated by truth

Colloquial language allows several collocations of the word "truth," such as "objective truth," "empirical truth," "bitter truth," "painful truth," "unpalatable truth," "naked truth;" we can even be tempted to "taste the truth." There is a genuine risk that truth may be viewed as something that can be grasped rationally or sensorially. Such an oversimplification would obviously be wrong. Truth relates to man holistically, including man's reason, soul, and conscience, and its existence is independent of the organs thanks to which it can become known and communicated in the world. It is also to be noted that one should always listen wisely. Any of the senses that facilitate cognition require openness on the part of the individual.[5] Those words that are not heard by anyone are uttered in vain. In media communication it is not only the message and the sender that are important, but also our way of listening to them. Any printed or spoken word, any image and sound leave their indelible trace in man's mind. The above mentioned author of *Understanding media: Extensions of man* (first published in 1964), Marshall McLuhan rightly said that any new content turns the recipient into a new person. Changes in the pace, "scale and form of human association and action" change the participants of the communication process (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9).[6] The truth that a person heard by interacting with the outside world needs to be acknowledged and comprehended innerly. The human auditory pathway has an external part, which leads to the inner ear.[7] Truth is communicated to the whole man, not to his particular body members. The addressee of truth is the whole person,

5 In order to taste something, one needs to open one's mouth, in order to see something, one needs to open one's eyes, in order to smell or hear something, one needs to have open nostrils and ears, and in order to examine something by touching, one needs to open the palms of one's hands.

6 Similar observations and conclusions were reached by Neil Postman (1931–2003), a philosopher and media theorist, professor of the Chair of Culture and Social Communication at New York University as well as by Robert K. Logan (b. 1939), a well-known physicist, media ecologist, and researcher of the evolution of language. Other proponents of such views were Harold Innis (1894–1952), a Canadian professor of economy and author of pioneering books on the media and communication theory, who investigated the role of the media in shaping culture and civilisation, as well as Elizabeth Eisenstein (1923–2016), a historian researching the media and cultural changes within Western civilisation.

7 The ear is the organ of hearing. It consists of the outer, middle, and inner ear. When sound waves reach the middle ear, they are transformed into vibrations, which in turn are modulated as neural impulses. A concise description of the mammalian auditory passageway is included in Webster, 1994, pp. 1–22.

and not an arm, head or brain. The ear is a human organ, but a human is not an organ of the ear, a human is not an organ of the kidney etc.

Since listening is a transmission of content that comes from the outside, it requires assistance in the critical judgement of the received data. Not all the things heard by a human person are of value. The gossip media, which build up chains of gossip, do not necessarily tell the truth. Those who listen and succumb to tall stories may live an illusory life as one can have an illusory certainty about some content and events, based on listening to untrue and fabricated information.

In order to understand what it means to listen to truth, we should go to the source. The Latin term *audio* (Jougan, 1957, p. 59) has as many as five meanings. The first of them is to "hear, listen, get to know something," so it stresses active hearing. One cannot forget that the contemporary media offer a special place where we can hear and obtain information, get acquainted with something or enquire about something or someone (PWN, n.d., Dowiedzieć się).

The Polish dictionary of synonyms, *Słownik synonimów*, includes an entry for the verb "dowiadywać się," to enquire about something, which even more strongly points towards the engagement of those participating in communication in the process of listening. This process involves collecting, accumulating, and verifying information. The key factor in it is truth. Undoubtedly, learning through listening is more extensive when the senders and recipients are given new data or obtain them on their own, using the media, sometimes randomly (PWN, n.d., Dowiadywać się). The second meaning of *audio* refers to attentive listening and encouraging the listeners to delve into the offered content, interest and attitude of the listener towards the new information. Attentive learning is what really brings man closer to truth. The third meaning of *audio* focuses on hearing out, admitting, acknowledging, that is the result of listening and finding correspondence between what is said and what actually is. So the ultimate goal of listening is to find out what is right. Media communication hones the perception of the listeners when the right thing is truth. The fourth meaning of *audio* is to "be obedient, follow in somebody's footsteps," and indicates the tractability of the listener. Listening means submissiveness or permanent acceptance of the role of a student. It means being constantly willing to yield to guidance of truth. The purpose of listening is to develop the mature attitude of accepting the role of a student. One's life cannot be steered by what one hears, especially if it is lies, fake news, and other

dangerous forms of manipulation. One's life should be steered and set on its proper course by truth. Lastly, the fifth meaning of *audio* is to "be heard, i.e. be important, have an opinion, gain fame," which is particularly significant in the context of the media. Truth should be broadcast, get across to the listeners, resound through the speakers. The stream of truth, reaching media users, makes it possible for them to form an opinion on a given matter. While listening, the recipients can learn how to assess the delivered material, pass judgement on an issue, voice their opinion, or be persuaded by the presented content. "The truth signal" on air should be heard and received by media users attentively, heedfully, alertly.

A crucial aspect is not only listening as an activity, but also the person of the listener. An *auditor* (Latin: hearer, pupil) is a person active in the media, who performs a special function in the mediasphere. For an *auditor* can be a person investigating a case and questioning the witnesses (Jougan, 1957, p. 60). This function is fulfilled by the listeners, viewers, readers, net surfers, and others who analyse the content, compile materials on an event, and seek explanations for particular problems. Then they carry out the function of listeners performing their proper role of students. Being open to truth has a vital impact on the ability to function well in the environment of the new media. Communication founded on truth results in stronger unity and fellowship of the media users and helps them to make choices whenever human freedom is to be executed. Good rapport with other people online, therefore, does not limit one's access to truth; instead, based on the autonomy of truth, it weaves a unique web of interpersonal relations. So for the listeners, truth is a filter that helps to distinguish between the right and wrong in building relations. Especially now, with the developing social media and active matchmaking (McKenna, 2008, p. 236) one needs to remember that listeners who are open to truth are also prone to create accounts that facilitate finding compatible online friends among real people.

The uniqueness of internet relations is true for any media users and their online activity. Notably, intelligent listening affects personal development and increases the effectiveness of communication, because listening to truth empowers one's thinking, improving one's ability to argue, justify, motivate, infer etc. It has to be underlined that as speech knows elliptical statements, so listening can be disturbed by imperfect reception. Such imperfections can stem from linguistic limitations and inaccuracies, but also from hastiness when media users do not listen to or read the presented information in full

and so deprive themselves of the final reward, namely the tagline. The Jewish philosopher and physician Maimonides (1135–1204) said that words are indispensable in the cognitive process, but they are absolutely necessary only when we want to communicate our ideas to others or to demonstrate that we understood those ideas (Maimonides, 1885, p. 10). Listening to truth should lead a human being to conversion.

Media converted to truth

Professor Leszek Kołakowski (1927–2009), Polish philosopher, observes that discovering the truth takes place during the process of conversion. It involves absolute certainty which is a product of detailed convictions and is not susceptible to any argumentation. Conversion gives answers to vital questions of human existence, moreover, it provides practical guidelines how to see the difference between good and evil and between proper and improper conduct (Kolakowski et al., 1991, pp. 121–122).

> Through conversion one gains not simply truth, but total truth—at least in respect to all questions that are important, interesting, and significant to life. One gains not only criteria to distinguish right and wrong, but criteria that are beyond any doubt, that are not afflicted by any argument, that grant moral certitude to the convert (Kolakowski et al., 1991, p. 122).

Indifference, lack of zeal, and disloyalty towards truth cannot be called conversion, they are its reverse. Conversion starts from an individual encounter with truth "where truth is not just known but lived in; or, better, where one becomes truth" (Kolakowski et al., 1991, p. 124).

The term "conversion" needs to be applied in the environment of the media. In reference to truth, we need to talk about converted senders and recipients. Actually, the category of converted addressee is essential in the mass media of communication. The knowledge and interpretation of facts in regard to truth are to strengthen the voice of the public opinion and encourage social integration, improving human thinking, and shaping human conscience. Truth is not a weapon against man, only a weapon against falsehood and evil. To a great extent, the users' individual activity in the media depends on their personal conversion. The mediasphere is the right place for one's metanoia

(μετάνοια), a transformative change of mind, for a community of active media users becomes a guardian of truth and within it truth can crystallise. Media users all over the world experience the variety of information, so its common denominator ought to be truth.

Dwight Macdonald (1906–1982), an American writer and journalist, theorist and critic of mass culture, warned the general public against its threats. He said that mass culture is responsible for the greater and greater passivity of recipients in digital society. They are easily satisfied with any content, standards, and entertainment, which can be imposed on them (Macdonald, 1958, p. 264). Such an attitude does not inspire the effort of conversion, but instead fosters an indifferent stand (*neutrum*) towards truth. Ubiquitous variety is conducive to syncretism, in which truth has to sidestep and make way to the consumer's satisfaction. Low-brow entertainment provided by images, sounds, speech, and writing reduces man's existential quest to pleasure and has nothing to do with seeking the truth (Morin, 2005, p. 574).

Rev. Prof. Józef Tischner (1931–2000), in his sermon delivered on 15 April 1990, referred to the fact that people easily succumb to various misconceptions and illusions. He said that "[v]arious fallacies, prejudices, and lies are so deeply rooted in man that man is prevented from seeing things as they really are" (Tischner, 2009, p. 256).[8] "So much effort and so much power is needed to cut through those illusions, prejudices, and lies—just to get at simple truth" (Tischner, 2009, p. 253). Tischner is aware of the difficulty of conversion, that is man's resistance to truth. Even though things may appear self-evident and the light of truth can reach every eye, and the sound of truth can reach every ear, people stick to their misconceptions and illusions (Tischner, 2009, p. 256). So there are illusions which the recipients are accustomed to and which bring profit to the broadcasters. They make up a sad picture of a reality in which mass communication is bereft of truth. Then a person becomes just a guinea pig to be experimented on using various means of communication. Using the media is like entering a cage in which the surfers' data are gathered and analysed. Tischner says that such practices, characterised by egoism and self-absorption, turn the creators of illusions oblivious to the cost and scale of those illusions. Conversion is a turn towards truth. "We depart from some untruth to turn towards truth" (Tischner, 2009, p. 258). Using the means

8 All the quotations from this book are given in my translation.

of social communication is a great asset of mankind provided that it serves truth and leads to truth. Therefore a person participating in communication should be sure that whatever is provided by the media is true. A sound critical assessment is a prerequisite (Tischner, 2011, p. 218) then "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32) (New Revised Standard Version—Catholic Edition).

In his encyclical *Redemptor hominis* of 4 March 1979, Pope John Paul II notes that these words contain a fundamental requirement as well as a warning, because only integrity in the face of truth can guarantee true freedom (John Paul II, 1979, section no. 12). There is no freedom in being liberated from the value of truth. No truth can become a person's truth if it is not acknowledged so by this person's freedom (John Paul II, 1979, section no. 19). An honest relationship with regard to truth in any domain is a crucial prerequisite of being present in the media when justice and social responsibility are taken into account. In his encyclical of 6 August 1993 which bears a telling title *Veritatis splendor* [The splendor of truth], John Paul II said that the conversion of the media largely depends not only on the good intentions of the publishers and receivers which are targeted at man's real good, but also on acts. If a human act is in conflict with the good of truth and is not ordered to truth, it is unworthy of a human person. Fidelity to truth is binding *semper et pro semper*, which means that no exceptions are allowed (John Paul II, 1993, section no. 82).

Conclusion

The media are important instruments of social communication and the basic criterion in their operations is truth, not politeness or compromise. When the borderlines of values become blurred, more space is given to subjectivistic and relativistic concepts. Looking at values in the light of universalism and objectivism makes it possible for us to perceive the difficulty of correct interpretation. Faced with important issues regarding truth, it is to be assumed that in an environment dominated by fragmentary cognition the whole becomes the main point of reference. Though we experience a plurality of truths, there is only one truth. The media that are subjected to the operation of truth have the power to integrate and lead to truth. A spiker of truth is any person who not only shares some content, but does so responsibly. An integral

outlook on the message of truth is closely linked to the dignity of a human person. The Latin term *audio*, which directly relates to gathering, accumulating, and verifying information, points to the important role of truth in the means of communication. A precious experience among media users should be conversion to truth. Both in the cultural and religious dimension, this conversion is tantamount to abandoning illusions and helps media users to make a distinction between good and evil. The media conversion, however, cannot affect intellectual cognition exclusively; it ought to involve all human life integrally, including human conscience. Truth speaks to the whole man, therefore only truthful messages can absolutely guarantee that media users are as respected as they should be. A turn towards truth is always a media conversion.

References

Benedict XVI (2008). Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI for the 42nd World Communications Day. *The media: At the crossroads between self-promotion and service. Searching for the truth in order to share it with others*. Vatican.

Bergson, H. (1911). *Creative evolution* (A. Mitchell, Trans). Holt.

Dictionary Cambridge. (n.d.). https://dictionary.cambridge.org (access: 24.06.2024).

Fadiga, L. & Craighero, L. (2006). Hand actions and speech representation in Broca's area. *Cortex. A Journal devoted to the Study of the Nervous System and Behavior*, *42*, 4, 486–490.

Gentilucci, M., Bernardis, P., Crisi, G., & Dalla Volta, R. (2006). Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation of Broca's area affects verbal responses to gesture observation. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, *18*, 7, 1059–1074.

Grzenia, J. (2008). *Komunikacja językowa w Internecie*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Heschel, A. (1951). *Man is not alone. A philosophy of religion*. Farrar, Straus & Young.

Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigations* (J.N. Findlay, Trans). Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

John Paul II (1979). *Redemptor hominis*. Vatican.

John Paul II (1993). *Veritatis splendor*. Vatican.

Jougan, A. (1957). *Słownik kościelny łacińsko-polski*, 3rd edition. Księgarnia św. Wojciecha.

Kolakowski, L. et al. (1991). *Modernity on endless trial*. Chicago University Press.
Krąpiec, A. M. (1974). *Ja-człowiek. Zarys antropologii filozoficznej*. Wydawnictwo KUL.
Macdonald, D. (1958). A theory of mass culture. In L. Fiedler (Ed.), *The art of the essay* (pp. 263–278). Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
Maimonides (1885). *The guide of the perplexed* (M. Friedländer, Trans). Trübner & Co.
McKenna, K.Y.A. (2008). MySpace or your place: Relationship initiation and development in the wired and wireless world. In S. Sprecher, A. Wenzel, & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Handbook of relationship initiation* (pp. 235–248). Routledge.
McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: Extensions of man*. McGraw Hill Book Company.
Morin, E. (2005). Masowy odbiorca. In M. Hopfinger (Ed.). *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku* (pp. 573–582). Oficyna Naukowa.
New revised standard version—Catholic edition. https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-Catholic-Edition-NRSVCE-Bible (access: 21.06.2024).
Plato (2010). *Protagoras* (J.A. Arieti, & R.M. Barru, Trans., Eds.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
PWN (n.d.). Dowiadywać się. In *Słownik synonimów*. https://sjp.pwn.pl/slownik-synonimow/dowiadywa%C4%87%20si%C4%99.html (access: 29.02.2024).
PWN (n.d.). Dowiedzieć się. In *Słownik języka polskiego*. https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/dowiedzie%C4%87-si%C4%99;2453851.html (access: 29.02.2024).
PWN (n.d.). Parezja. In *Słownik języka polskiego*. https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/parezja.html (access: 29.02.2024).
Szalkowska, A. (2009). Mowa. In E. Giglewicz et al. (Eds.), *Encyklopedia katolicka*, Vol. 13 (pp. 371–375). Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II.
Tischner, J. (2009). *Wiara ze słuchania. Kazania starosądeckie 1980–1992* (W. Bonowicz, Ed.). Znak.
Tischner, J. (2011). *Myślenie według wartości*. Znak.
Webster, D.B. (1994). An overview of mammalian auditory pathways with an emphasis on humans. In D.B. Webster, A.N. Popper, & R.R. Fay (Eds.), *The Mammalian Auditory Pathway: Neuroanatomy*. Vol. 1 (pp. 1–22). Springer-Verlag.

Social Communication Ethics volume 2 • issue 1 • 2026 • pages 87–94 REVIEW

Monika Przybysz

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9794-4010
m.przybysz@uksw.edu.pl

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw
https://ror.org/05sdyjv16

Crisis principles

https://doi.org/10.15633/sce.02105

Review of the monograph: P. Guzik (2025), *Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church: Key lessons and new perspectives from a crisis communications standpoint*. Wydawnictwo Petrus

Article history • Received: 29 Mar 2026 • Accepted: 30 Mar 2026 • Published: 31 Mar 2026
ISSN 3071-9836 (online) • Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Paulina Guzik's *Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church: Key lessons and new perspectives from a crisis communications standpoint* is an exceptionally ambitious and timely monograph that makes a substantial contribution to media and communication studies. Its principal merit lies in bringing together crisis communication theory, institutional analysis, media framing, and safeguarding practice in a single, globally oriented study.

Scope and contribution

The book is impressive in both scale and intellectual reach, spanning more than 900 pages and combining theoretical, historical, empirical, and normative dimensions. It addresses a major lacuna in scholarship by analyzing the Catholic Church's child sexual abuse crisis specifically through the lens of crisis communication, rather than treating abuse only as a legal, moral, or ecclesial problem. This framing is original and valuable, because it shifts attention from isolated scandal coverage toward communication as part of institutional governance and recovery.

The monograph's contribution is also practical. It does not merely diagnose failure; it proposes communication principles, best practices, and a structured path toward restoring trust, making it highly relevant for both scholars and practitioners.

Research design

Methodologically, the work is unusually rich and triangulated, combining in-depth interviews, surveys, document analysis, and media case studies. The author conducted 30 in-depth interviews and three survey instruments targeting safeguarding delegates and Vatican-accredited journalists, which gives the study empirical depth and an unusual international breadth. The use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches is appropriate for a subject in which institutional narratives, victim experience, and communicative practice intersect.

The author grounds her research in theories of crisis, crisis management, institutional communication, crisis communication and trust management, incorporating elements of leadership, whilst drawing on the classic definitions

of Barton, Fink and Elizalde, as well as the more recent approaches of Coombs and Holladay. In the theoretical section of the monograph (Chapter 1), she distinguishes between a crisis and a scandal, analyses leadership crises, the role of stakeholders (particularly those who have been wronged) and corporate apologies, and presents the stages of rebuilding trust within an organisation following a scandal.

A key element of the theoretical framework is the use of mass media theories: agenda setting, framing and gatekeeping, which serve to analyse media narratives about the Church's abuse crisis. The specific research objectives, described in the abstract and in Chapter 2 of the monograph, include: (C1) an assessment of the global status quo of the Church's crisis communication (with a comparison to the USA), (C2) the identification of best communication practices (with particular reference to the experience of the United States) and (C3) a comparison of media perceptions with the facts and changes within the Church.

In the qualitative section, the author describes the selection of the sample and the conceptualisation of the in-depth interviews conducted with key stakeholders: victims, representatives of church structures, experts and journalists. The process of conducting the interviews, transcribing them and analysing the data is presented transparently, whilst maintaining a high degree of ethical sensitivity to the subject of trauma. The author conducted 30 in-depth interviews with seven categories of respondents (victims, victims involved in institutional activities, cardinals and bishops, directors of child and youth protection offices, victim liaison coordinators, directors and communications specialists, academics—experts), carried out in the USA and Europe between 2020 and 2023.

In the quantitative section, the author describes the sample selection, questionnaire design, method of distribution and analysis of responses, and then presents the results in a comprehensive Chapter 13.

In the quantitative section, three surveys were developed: for national (episcopal) child protection delegates from over 100 episcopal conferences (30% complete responses, all continents), for diocesan child protection delegates in the USA, for journalists accredited to the Holy See. The questionnaires enabled an assessment of the phase of the crisis, communication practices in use, protection structures, the extent to which bishops met with victims, the communication channels utilised, and journalists' expectations.

The source material also includes: state and Church reports (including the John Jay Report, the MHG Report, CIASE, and the Portuguese and Spanish

reports), Church documents (including legislation from the pontificates of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis—such as Vos Estis Lux Mundi, the abolition of papal secrecy, the Vademecum), media reports and case studies (Maciel, McCarrick, Pell, Vanier, Rupnik, UN 2014, national cases), as well as the narratives of victims and perpetrators as an element of academic storytelling.

The selection of methods and material is appropriate, ambitious and well-founded—it allows for the combination of global, comparative and local (including Polish) perspectives, and captures both the systemic dimension and the experiences of individuals. At the same time, this selection is also extremely valuable from a media studies perspective—these are the most 'high-profile' cases covered by the media worldwide and widely known. The author has carried out painstaking work in compiling both the case studies and possesses expertise in the selection of sources, covering both media documentation and church documents.

Analytical strengths

One of the work's strongest assets is its sustained attention to victims' and survivors' perspectives, which anchors the book ethically as well as analytically. The author's insistence that communication should be victim-centered and truth-based gives the monograph a distinctive normative coherence. Likewise, the analysis of media narratives through agenda-setting, framing, and gatekeeping is highly relevant to the study of how public understanding of clerical abuse is formed.

The chapters on the United States, Poland, and the Vatican summit of 2019 are particularly valuable because they connect global theory to concrete institutional contexts. The final section, which synthesizes the findings into communication principles and best practices, is likely to be the most widely cited part of the book in applied research and professional training.

The ten crisis principles

A particularly valuable contribution of Guzik's monograph is the formulation of ten crisis communication principles, which the author presents as a normative and practical framework for institutions confronting the crisis

of child sexual abuse. Their importance lies in the fact that they do not reduce communication to image management; instead, they situate it within truth, responsibility, repair, and institutional conversion. Read together, these principles create a coherent ethics of crisis communication that is both victim-centered and governance-oriented.

The first principle, to own the problem, is foundational because no credible communication can emerge from denial, minimization, or deflection. In crises of abuse, institutions often try to fragment responsibility, but Paulina Guzik rightly argues that only explicit acknowledgment of the problem opens the possibility of reform. This principle is not only rhetorical but structural: it requires leaders to recognize the crisis as their own institutional failure, not as an external reputational inconvenience.

The second principle, to put victims first, gives the monograph its strongest moral direction. It means that the primary reference point for every decision should be the dignity, safety, and voice of those harmed. In practical terms, this requires that communication be measured not by how well it protects institutional prestige, but by whether it helps survivors, prevents further harm, and avoids re-traumatization.

The third principle, to listen, listen, listen, reflects the book's insistence that effective crisis response begins with receptivity rather than messaging. Listening here is not a symbolic gesture but an organizational discipline: institutions must create channels through which victims, families, experts, and communities can speak and be heard. Without this, communication remains one-way and defensive, which deepens mistrust rather than restoring it.

The fourth principle, to tune in emotionally, broadens the notion of institutional communication beyond procedural correctness. Guzik emphasizes that abuse crises are not managed through facts alone, because trauma, shame, fear, anger, and grief are integral to the crisis environment. Communicators who fail to recognize this emotional dimension risk producing statements that are technically accurate but humanly inadequate.

The fifth principle, to speak from the audience's point of view, is especially important for institutions that are accustomed to speaking in their own internal language. Crisis communication becomes effective only when it is translated into the categories, concerns, and expectations of those who are actually receiving the message. In this sense, the principle demands empathy, clarity, and a rejection of clerical or bureaucratic self-reference.

The sixth principle, transparency is the only way, is central to the entire argument of the monograph. Transparency is presented not as a public-relations tactic but as a precondition of credibility and trust recovery. Guzik shows that when institutions attempt concealment, partial disclosure, or strategic ambiguity, they may gain short-term control but lose long-term legitimacy.

The seventh principle, remember who you are: a loving mother, is one of the most distinctive and theologically loaded formulations in the book. It suggests that the Church must communicate not as a self-protecting bureaucracy but according to its own identity as a pastoral and maternal institution. This principle is powerful because it connects communication strategy with institutional self-understanding, implying that authentic messaging must emerge from the institution's deepest values.

The eighth principle, perceptions are as important as facts, captures a core insight of modern crisis communication. Even when an institution believes it has handled a situation correctly, public perception may tell a different story, especially if previous conduct created distrust. Guzik's point is not that facts are irrelevant, but that facts alone do not control meaning; publics interpret institutions through narratives shaped by history, media, and emotion.

The ninth principle, distinguish the court of law from the court of public opinion, is a crucial corrective to institutional defensiveness. Legal processes and communicative processes operate according to different logics and confusing them often leads organizations to hide behind procedural formalism. The monograph convincingly shows that a strictly legalistic response may satisfy internal compliance while failing to address moral responsibility, public concern, and survivor expectations.

The tenth principle, treat media seriously and fairly, reflects the author's dual identity as scholar and journalist. Rather than viewing the media as an enemy, Paulina Guzik treats journalistic scrutiny as a legitimate part of the crisis environment and as a possible ally in accountability. This principle is especially important because it calls institutions to move from confrontation to professional engagement, recognizing that the media can expose abuse, amplify survivors' voices, and pressure organizations toward reform.

Taken together, these ten principles function as more than a list of recommendations. They amount to a comprehensive model of crisis communication grounded in responsibility, empathy, transparency, and institutional conversion. Their strength lies in the fact that they are not merely reactive; they

imply that communication itself must become part of the solution, not an instrument of concealment or self-defense. In that respect, Guzik's framework is one of the most original and practically useful elements of the monograph, and it substantially increases the book's value for both communication scholars and institutional practitioners.

Overall assessment

Overall, Guzik's monograph is a major scholarly achievement that significantly advances research in media and communication studies. The work is especially strong in its empirical ambition, international perspective, and practical relevance for institutions facing high-stakes crises. This monograph is of very high academic value and is distinctly original in nature.

Firstly, it combines in a single work: a systematic presentation of current knowledge on the sexual abuse of minors; an in-depth analysis of the Catholic Church's case from both global and local perspectives; extensive empirical data from the author's own research; and the author's own proposal for communication principles and procedures. Such a comprehensive yet coherent study at the intersection of crisis communication and the issue of abuse within the Church has been lacking in the global literature to date—most works focus either on narrow case studies or on general public relations, failing to achieve a similar level of integration of theory, empirical research and practical recommendations.

Secondly, the way in which the author weaves the perspective of victims into the communication analysis is particularly valuable: numerous examples of victims' narratives, carefully selected case studies and the grounding of communication principles in the experiences of survivors ensure that the study is not merely 'technical', but deeply ethical.

Thirdly, the communication proposal is not a simple 'PR handbook', but is embedded in a reflection on trust, abuse of power, organisational culture and the role of communication as part of governance, rather than a tool for 'quelling a scandal'. The author clearly demonstrates that without linking communication to genuine reform, justice for victims and structural change, there can be no talk of rebuilding credibility.

Fourthly, the chapter devoted to Poland is one of the most authoritative, comprehensive and well-documented studies on the subject: it highlights the

specific nature of the Polish case against the backdrop of other countries, taking into account historical and political contexts, the role of the media, church documents and key issues, as well as best practices that have emerged in recent years.

Dr Paulina Guzik's main academic achievement in the form of this monograph is mature, original and makes a significant contribution to the development of the social communication and media sciences, particularly in the areas of crisis communication, the mediatisation of religion and research into the Church's institutional communication.

The monograph also demonstrates the author's ability to construct a complex research project, make critical use of the literature, work with sensitive empirical material to high ethical standards, and formulate generalisations of theoretical and practical significance.

For a journal in media studies, this would be an appropriate conclusion: the book is not only a study of a crisis, but also a model of how communication research can engage moral urgency without abandoning analytical rigor.

Uniwersytet Papieski
Jana Pawła II
w Krakowie

ISSN 3071-9836