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# THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA REGULATORY AND SELF-REGULATORY BODIES IN MAINTAINING STANDARDS OF JOURNALISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The UK's media regulation and self-regulation system has evolved over the past 70 years, with major reforms in the last two decades. Since 2003, Ofcom has served as the primary regulator of electronic media, overseeing journalistic standards and ethics. In 2017, its authority expanded to include the BBC. The press sector, following ethical scandals, adopted a self-regulation model led by Impress and IPSO. This article examines the UK's regulatory framework, assessing its structure, procedures, and effectiveness. It analyzes audience complaints, explores regulatory challenges, and includes insights from literature reviews, institutional reports, and interviews with professionals from Ofcom, IPSO, and the BBC. Although focused on the UK, this study contributes to discussions on media regulation in Poland, where systemic reforms are needed. The analysis highlights the strengths and limitations of the British model, offering insights for broader media governance debates.

**Keywords:** media, journalism, ethics, regulator, accountability

**JEL:** K23, K39, L82, L86, L96

## Introduction

Based on the theory of the social responsibility of the press, the trust that society places in the media entails specific obligations. The authors of this concept indicated that the media should therefore be truthful, reliable, fair, objective, and

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adequate; serve as a forum for the exchange of comments and criticism; present a representative image of the groups that compose society; explain social goals and values; and avoid chasing sensationalism (A Free and Responsible Press, 1947). According to this concept, media freedom must be protected, but it cannot be safeguarded more than the freedom and rights of ordinary citizens. The authors of the theory stated: “government remains the residuary legatee of responsibility for an adequate press performance (...). The government should help society to obtain the services it requires for the mass media if a self-regulated press and self-righting features of community life are insufficient to provide them” (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 95). There is always a tension between media freedom and the role of the government, that should intervene only if it’s necessary for the public interest. “The government should not act with a heavy hand. Any agency capable of promoting freedom is also capable of destroying it. Since freedom of expression is the keynote of political liberty, it must be especially protected” (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 95). Over the decades since the theory was proposed, various countries have developed different models of media regulation. Some of these models grant more freedom to media outlets and journalists than others, leaving the control of journalistic content primarily in the hands of self-regulatory bodies such as press councils, news ombudsmen, or journalists’ associations. In contrast, other countries have established state-owned regulatory bodies responsible not only for technical matters like radio and television frequencies but also for exerting some influence over content.

The system of media regulation and self-regulation in the United Kingdom has been developing for more than 70 years and had undergone significant changes over the last two decades. Since 2003, the electronic media market has been controlled by a single regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) – a body with extensive competencies, including handling complaints about breaches of standards and journalistic ethics. Since 2017, Ofcom has also overseen the BBC, which was previously independent of external regulators.

The press market, shaken by a series of scandals revealing the scale of unethical journalistic behavior, has also undergone deep reforms in self-regulation. It is now controlled by two organizations: The Independent Monitor for the Press (Impress) and The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). This tripartite system covers the entire broadcasting sector (radio and television) and nearly the entire press market, providing media consumers with tools to hold journalists accountable for their publications.

This article aims to present the system of media regulation and self-regulation in the United Kingdom. The author addresses issues such as:

- Analyzing the procedures and effectiveness of the system;
- Presenting data on the number of complaints handled by regulators regarding media publications;
- Discussing critical opinions about the existing solutions.

Although this analysis focuses entirely on the British system, it may serve as a basis for discussion about media regulation and self-regulation in Poland, which, by the end of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, requires significant restructuring.

## 1. Methodology

The research for this article employed complementary methods. The primary method was a systematic review of legal aspects and annual reports from the institutions under analysis, namely Ofcom, Impress, IPSO, and BBC First. This approach allowed for the mapping of media regulation and self-regulation instruments in the UK and the identification of their main areas of operation. Analyzing annual reports also helped determine the key challenges faced by regulators.

A supplementary method involved study visits to Ofcom, IPSO, and BBC, as well as interviews conducted in April 2024 with individuals responsible for journalistic standards in these institutions. The study employed semi-structured, anonymous interviews with specialists, as well as mid- and senior-level managers:

- Interview I – Ofcom – Conducted with three individuals, including those responsible for handling audience complaints and international relations.
- Interview II – IPSO – Conducted with two individuals from the department responsible for handling audience complaints and developing new journalistic regulations.
- Interview III – BBC – Conducted with a senior manager responsible for journalistic standards.

Due to the nature of the interviews, the small sample size, and the fact that interviewees represented the interests of their respective institutions, the findings were treated collectively as supplementary to the research process. Despite certain limitations, the interviews provided insights into the main challenges facing regulators, as well as critical opinions highlighting inefficient elements of the system. These observations are noted in the conclusions.

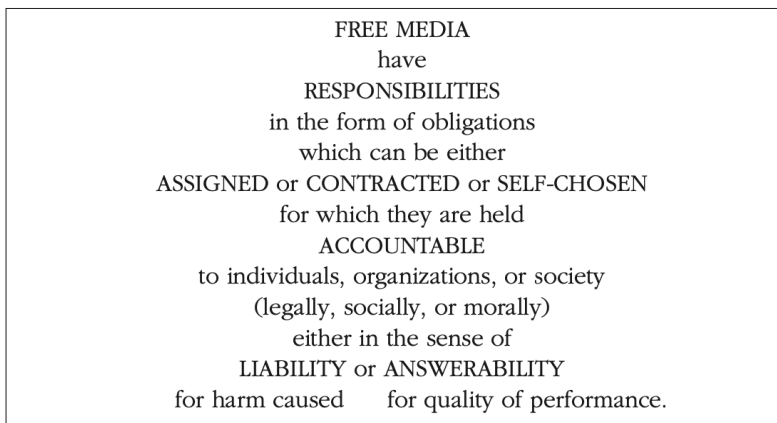
Regarding research limitations, it is important to mention that Impress did not respond to the request for a meeting and interview. Consequently, the author relied solely on publicly available annual reports and analyses from online sources for this part of the study.

## 2. Responsibility, accountability, regulation and self-regulation

The primary framework for the discussions in this article is the paradigm of social responsibility of the media, as introduced in the opening section. In defining the concept of responsibility, it is useful to explore its ontological foundations. Roman Ingarden identifies three such dimensions:

1. Somebody bears responsibility – is responsible for something;
2. Somebody takes responsibility onto themselves;
3. Somebody is held accountable for something (Ingarden, 2004).

This distinction between responsibility and accountability, which does not appear in the original Polish text, is important from the point of view of analyzing the responsibility of the media.<sup>2</sup> Professor Louis Hodges (2004) explained that “The issue of responsibility is: To what social needs should we expect journalists to respond ably? The issue of accountability is: How might society call on journalists to explain and justify the ways they perform the responsibilities given to them? Responsibility has to do with defining proper conduct, accountability with compelling it”. Denis McQuail develops that concept and explains that the responsibilities of the media can be assigned, contracted, or self-chosen. He opts for “accountability via social and moral answerability, which, he finds, ‘meets criteria of voluntariness, normative richness, wide range and participative value’” (Krogh, 2008). In his book *Media Accountability and Freedom of Publication* he presented an interesting and practical model of understanding the relation between media responsibility, accountability, liability, and answerability.



### Model of Media Accountability by Denis McQuail

Source: illustration by T. von Krogh, “Media Accountability. A 60-year-old Compromise that Still Holds Promise for the Future”. In: T. von Krogh (ed.), *Media Accountability Today... and Tomorrow Updating the Concept in Theory and Practice*. Göteborg: Livréna AB, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> In Polish, the term ‘odpowiedzialność’ used by R. Ingarden means both ‘responsibility’ and ‘accountability’.

Claude-Jean Bertrand (2000, p. 107) defined media accountability as “any non-state means of making the media responsible towards the public”. His thought is usually recalled when describing self-regulatory bodies such as press councils or ombudsmen. But nowadays the broader concept of *media governance* receives attention, “as it implies that a diverse set of actors from across society, the economy, and politics participate in the process of holding media to account” (Fengler et al., 2022, p. 6). This reflects also regulatory bodies established by state authorities. The key factor – which Bertrand also likely had in mind when proposing his definition – is ensuring that these institutions remain independent from political influence so that they do not jeopardize freedom of expression. Both regulatory bodies analysed in this research paper play a significant role in holding British and Polish media accountable for their actions. On one hand, they face criticism for being influenced by political interests or for making decisions that are often viewed as threats to media freedom. On the other hand, these institutions were established to serve society and to help ensure that the public receives the quality of media they expect. With this in mind, the author aims to examine the theoretical and legal framework of these institutions and assess how their operations align with the needs of contemporary societies.

### 3. The media system in the United Kingdom – characteristics

The contemporary media system in the United Kingdom is the result of many intersecting factors, including aspects related to the state’s political system, history, and transformations in the political, economic, and cultural order, as well as socio-political divisions and technological development (Konarska, 2007). The shape of modern media system in most countries is closely linked to the history of the press. The origins of British newspapers can be traced back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, titles that are still known today (such as *The Times* and *The Observer*) began to appear. Press freedom in the United Kingdom was achieved progressively, but relatively early compared to other European countries – official censorship was abolished in 1695 (Ślupek, 2004).

The strong tradition of a two-party political system has also significantly influenced the character of today’s press. As early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British press was highly politicized, reflecting the division of society between supporters of the two then-dominant parties: the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. Today, although no newspaper claims to be an official party paper, the British press has maintained its clearly defined political preferences (Konarska, 2007). This strong tradition of politically engaged press is one reason why, despite numerous attempts to strengthen media self-regulation and journalistic standards, and despite scandals shaking the press market, newspaper and magazine publishers remain reluctant to submit to self-regulation.

In the context of contemporary radio and television, academic literature points to a characteristic regulatory duopoly in the UK, in which the monarch holds the privilege of appointing and shaping public media (through the Royal Charter), while Parliament has the power to regulate and oversee the private media sector. However, these regulations are increasingly being standardized across all broadcasters. Electronic media, particularly public radio and television, are considered – unlike the press – to be a model example of independent, impartial media that serve the public interest and maintain high quality standards (Ociepka, Ratajczak, 2000). The foundations of modern ethical principles in electronic media were laid by the first Director-General of the BBC, John Reith, who based his vision of public broadcasting on four pillars:

- A secure and stable source of funding;
- BBC's monopoly;
- The public character of the broadcaster;
- A moral and ethical dimension (Konarska, 2007).

Although the BBC's monopoly was quickly broken up, the principles established by the public broadcaster became the stepping stone for all broadcasters. Today, they are overseen by Ofcom, which in recent years has been increasingly criticized for failing to adequately protect the electronic media market from the decline of impartiality and accuracy standards.

#### 4. Ofcom – 'super-regulator'

The first institution responsible for regulating the radio and television market in the United Kingdom was the Independent Television Authority, established in 1954 following the launch of ITV, the country's first independent television channel (Sendall, 1982). Subsequent regulatory bodies that shared oversight of different parts of the media market included the Independent Broadcasting Authority, the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority, and the Broadcasting Standards Commission, which was responsible for journalistic standards. In the early 2000s, the British Parliament established the Office of Communications, commonly known as Ofcom, under the Communications Act 2002 (Office of Public Sector Information, n.d.). This move consolidated responsibilities across radio, television, telecommunications, postal services, and later, certain online platforms (including VOD services), creating a single authority. By combining the former competencies of multiple agencies, Ofcom earned the title of a 'super-regulator' (BBC, 2003).

Ofcom is accountable to the UK Parliament but remains formally independent from the British government. The organization is primarily funded through licensing fees, payments for radio frequency usage, and financial penalties imposed on broadcasters. The main decision-making body is the Board, with most of its

members appointed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Ofcom, 2023). The guarantee of political independence largely stems from the UK's political culture, the appointment procedures for public positions, and adherence to the Nolan Principles. Board members are obliged by the rules to avoid conflicts of interest with the government, political parties, and industry. After the term of office, there are rules to prevent board members from being employed by the organisations regulated by the authority for a period of time (Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research et al., 2011).

Currently, Ofcom operates under several legal acts and performs numerous tasks, which are summarized as follows in the annual report of the institution:

Our main legal duties guide the direction of our work and include making sure that:

- the UK has a wide range of electronic communications services;
- optimal use is made of the radio spectrum;
- a wide range of high-quality television and radio programmes are provided by different organisations, appealing to a variety of tastes and interests;
- people are protected from harmful or offensive material, unfair treatment, and unwarranted invasion of privacy on television and radio;
- the BBC is held to account for its compliance with appropriate content standards, its performance against its Mission and Public Purposes, and the impact of its activities on fair and effective competition;
- the universal service obligation on postal services is secured in the UK; and
- digital infrastructure across the UK is strong, secure, and resilient (Ofcom, 2023).

From the perspective of the issues analysed in this article, Ofcom's key responsibility is monitoring media content to ensure compliance with appropriate standards, including those applied to journalists. 'By protecting audiences from harmful content and upholding due impartiality, we maintain trust in our broadcast media and ensure high standards for viewers and listeners' – the Ofcom Annual Report says. Under the Communications Act 2003 and the Broadcasting Act 1996 Ofcom is obligated to establish a code for television and radio that addresses standards in programming, sponsorship, product placement in TV shows, and issues of fairness and privacy. The Broadcasting Code consists of 10 sections:

1. Protecting the under-eighteens
2. Harm and offence
3. Crime, disorder, hatred and abuse
4. Religion
5. Due impartiality and due accuracy
6. Elections and referendums
7. Fairness
8. Privacy
9. Commercial references on TV
10. Commercial communications on the radio (Ofcom, n.d.).

Additionally, the code contains also the rules about cross-promotion and for the on-demand program services.

Not all rules within the Code are directly applicable to journalism. Sections addressing the protection of minors, protection from harmful and/or offensive material, and broadcasters' responsibilities concerning religious content primarily relate to entertainment or documentary programming, rather than to journalistic practices. The principles relevant to what is traditionally considered journalistic ethics are primarily located in sections five, six, and seven. The core principle of section five is 'to ensure that news, in whatever form, is reported with due accuracy and presented with due impartiality.' However, what constitutes 'due accuracy' and 'due impartiality'? The ambiguity of these terms is frequently highlighted by both journalists and audiences. Ofcom clarifies:

'Due' is an important qualification to the concept of impartiality. Impartiality itself means not favouring one side over another. 'Due' means adequate or appropriate to the subject and nature of the programme. So 'due impartiality' does not mean an equal division of time has to be given to every view, or that every argument and every facet of every argument has to be represented. The approach to due impartiality may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, the likely expectation of the audience as to content, and the extent to which the content and approach is signalled to the audience (Ofcom, 2021a).

Despite this clarification, the term remains contentious and (as is demonstrated later in this article) contributes to the perception of Ofcom as occasionally ineffective.

Section six of the Broadcasting Code "covers the special impartiality requirements and other legislation that must be applied during elections and referendums," focusing primarily on ensuring impartiality and allocating appropriate airtime to parties and independent candidates with significant views and perspectives (Ofcom, 2024).

Section seven requires broadcasters to avoid unjust or unfair treatment of individuals or organizations in programs. This includes the fundamental journalistic principle of giving those concerned a proper opportunity to respond when a program alleges wrongdoing, incompetence, or makes other significant accusations (Ofcom, 2021).

Since 2017, under the Royal Charter, the BBC has also been subject to Ofcom's oversight, whereas previously it handled all audience complaints independently through the BBC Trust process. Currently, complaints are first addressed by the BBC (under the "BBC First" procedure). However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the BBC's response, the matter is escalated to Ofcom, which conducts an independent investigation to determine whether the BBC has breached the standards outlined in the Broadcasting Code. This marks the first time in history that control over the quality of BBC programs has been transferred to an external body (Konarska, 2018).

The primary tool available to the audience of media outlets regulated by Ofcom is the complaint procedure. Individual complaints are assigned to cases. A case is opened when Ofcom is assessing a specific programme or issue and may consist of one or more complaints. These are the figures for the last 6 years:

**Table 1.** Complaints and cases assessed by year

Year	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
<b>Complaints</b>	69,807	36,908	99,562	142,660	34,545	55,801
<b>Cases</b>	9,960	8,725	11,932	11,778	7,829	6,206

Source: Ofcom (2023). Annual Report and Accounts 2022–2023: For the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Available at: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/264136/22-23-annual-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/264136/22-23-annual-report.pdf) (accessed: 20.08.2024).

**Table 2.** Complaints, cases, and investigations outcomes by main Broadcasting Code issue within 2022/2

Type	Complaints	Cases	Investigations	Breaches
<b>Offence</b>	27,707	5,184	25	20
<b>Harm</b>	4,687	1,076	10	7
<b>Due impartiality</b>	2,578	1,086	35	33
<b>Protection of minors</b>	1,392	784	24	19
<b>Other</b>	1,341	1,086	12	10
<b>Total</b>	37,705	9,216	106	89

Source: Ofcom (2023). Annual Report and Accounts 2022–2023: For the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Available at: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0022/264136/22-23-annual-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/264136/22-23-annual-report.pdf) (accessed: 20.08.2024).

Table 2 shows the complaints and cases concluded in the year 2022/23, categorized by key Broadcasting Code issues. The data indicates that 33 percent of all investigations and 37 percent of all breaches were related to the rule of ‘due impartiality’. A year later, these numbers dropped to 15 and 16 percent, respectively.

**Table 3.** Complaints, cases and investigations outcomes by main Broadcasting Code issue within 2023/24

Type	Complaints	Cases	Investigations	Breaches
<b>Offence</b>	46,394	4,555	20	19
<b>Harm</b>	9,642	1,061	7	3
<b>Due impartiality</b>	10,693	1,821	10	9
<b>Protection of minors</b>	3,700	642	18	17
<b>Other</b>	1,177	888	9	6
<b>Total</b>	71,606	8,967	65	54

Source: Ofcom (2024a). *Annual Report and Accounts 2023–2024: For the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024*. Available at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/about-ofcom/how-ofcom-is-run/annual-reports/plans-and-financial-reporting/annual-reports/annual-report-2023-24/ofcom-annual-report-and-accounts-2023-2024.pdf?v=384868> (accessed: 20.08.2024).

Complaints about BBC programs are handled through the BBC First procedure. This means that viewers who believe a BBC broadcast has violated standards must first file a complaint with the editorial team. The process consists of several stages. Initially, the complainant receives a general response from the BBC. If this response is unsatisfactory, the case is reviewed by the editorial team responsible for the program. If the response remains inadequate, the case is escalated to a specialized unit (Executive Complaints Unit), which has the authority to conduct an internal investigation within the editorial team and provide a final response on behalf of the BBC. If the complainant is still dissatisfied with any of the BBC's responses, only then is the case referred to Ofcom.

This complex procedure results from the sheer volume of complaints submitted to the BBC, many of which involve minor issues or matters unrelated to journalistic standards. In the 2022–23 reporting period, the BBC received a significant number of 229,123 complaints from viewers (Ofcom, 2023b). Of these, 1,834 complaints proceeded further in the process and were submitted to Ofcom. Based on these complaints, the regulator initiated only one investigation, concerning the coverage of elections in Northern Ireland (Ofcom, 2023c).

Considering the size of the British media market, the overall number of investigations launched by Ofcom is relatively small. Each year, only a few investigations address the issue of due impartiality. These numbers may suggest that media outlets in the UK generally adhere well to journalistic standards. The concept of impartiality has been integral to UK regulatory bodies since their inception, and some may believe that it still holds strong. However, all experts from Ofcom, the BBC, and self-regulatory bodies interviewed for this research agreed that impartiality is now the most significant challenge for UK media.

The emergence of opinion-driven channels and streaming services like GB News and TalkTV has reshaped the previously impartial news media landscape. Interestingly, in 2021, just after the launch of GB News, two British professors

warned in an article titled *Why Ofcom Must Find Its Backbone?* That impartiality would become the biggest challenge for Ofcom in the coming years. They emphasized that the concept of ‘due impartiality’, where ‘due’ implies that it “may vary according to the nature of the subject, the type of programme and channel, and the likely expectations of the audience regarding content,” could lead to significant difficulties for the regulator (Barnett, Petley, 2021).

On the one hand, such discretion allows Ofcom to license channels that originate from outside the UK – such as Al Jazeera, RT, and even Fox News until 2017 – on the reasonable assumption that viewers appreciate the different cultural origins of such channels (Barnett, Petley, 2021).

On the other hand, this rule is the reason why Ofcom has such a problem in forcing ‘opinion-orientated media’ to adhere to the Broadcasting Code.

After a few years of operation, it is clear that Ofcom has not yet ‘found its backbone’ regarding GB News and TalkTV. Since 2021, Ofcom has found GB News in breach of the Broadcasting Code 12 times, including 9 instances related to the due impartiality rule (Ofcom, n.d.). Despite these breaches, no sanctions have been imposed, even when GB News allowed Conservative Mps to serve as news presenters. This decision drew significant criticism, notably from former senior officers and journalists Stewart Purvis and Chris Banatvala (2024), who argued in their article titled *Ofcom’s Approach to GB News Will Dilute Trust in Media – Just When We Need It Most:*

Ofcom has repeatedly failed to quickly conclude many of its investigations and appears unwilling to uphold impartiality – all in the name of freedom of expression and audience expectations. These failures seem to be compromising its statutory duty to act as an independent regulator and ensure a bias-free broadcast environment.

If the breach of the Code is confirmed, Ofcom can use a range of sanctions, including issuing a direction not to repeat a programme or advertisement, broadcasting a correction or a statement of Ofcom’s findings, imposing a financial penalty, shortening, suspending or revoking a licence. The statistics show that Ofcom makes use of these penalties very rarely, with only 2 statutory sanctions in 2023/24 and 3 in 2022/23. Ofcom has only revoked a broadcasting license a few times in its history. The most recent and significant case was the decision to revoke the license of the pro-Kremlin channel RT following its coverage of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Ofcom, 2022).

## 5. IPSO and IMPRESS – regulation of the press

Following the News of the World phone-hacking scandal, the UK experienced a significant debate on the quality of the press and journalistic standards. On one side, arguments were made for stricter regulation, even licensing of the press, while on the other, there was support for maintaining broad press freedom while improving self-regulation mechanisms (Czapnik, 2013). Ultimately, following the Leveson Inquiry, a compromise solution was adopted: the creation of a new self-regulatory institution formally recognized by the state through the Press Recognition Panel. This led to the establishment of Impress: The Independent Monitor for the Press, which successfully passed verification.

However, most media outlets opposed this form of oversight and instead joined a competing organization, IPSO – the Independent Press Standards Organization. As a result, two independent, non-cooperating organizations now regulate the press industry at different scales, as shown in the table below:

**Table 4.** Comparison of IPSO and Impress (IPSO, 2023; Impress, 2023)

Organization	IPSO	Impress
Members	~2600	~190
Complaints	38568	35
Investigations	358	1

Impress primarily regulates small, local, or specialized industry publications. No major national newspaper has chosen to collaborate with Impress. IPSO oversees around 95% of the UK press market, though three prominent newspapers – *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, and *The Financial Times* – have declined to join either organization, instead developing their own self-regulation systems.

Both organizations operate in a similar manner. Editorial teams under IPSO or Impress regulation commit to adhering to their respective ethical codes, which are publicly available. Websites of regulated publications display information about their respective regulators. Readers of newspapers, magazines, or online publications under these organizations can submit complaints about specific publications.

Upon receiving a complaint, the organization first contacts the editorial team for clarification. A significant number of cases are resolved at this stage, as editorial teams often issue corrections or remove content that violates ethical codes. If a dispute arises between the complainant and the editorial team, the organization offers arbitration. If no resolution is reached and there is a suspected violation of the ethical code, an investigation is launched, which may result in sanctions, such as requiring a correction or a public ruling on the matter.

## 6. Conclusions and discussion

In summary, the UK has a comprehensive system of media regulation and self-regulation. While not without flaws, the current model covers nearly all media in the country. Media audiences can easily find the appropriate body to submit complaints about publications they believe violate journalistic ethics. They can also be assured that their complaint will be reviewed by a competent and independent organization. A key feature of this system is that each regulatory body has its own ethical code, allowing audiences to assess whether a given publication adheres to the established standards. All regulatory decisions are published on their websites, and each institution releases an annual activity report, ensuring transparency.

However, the system is imperfect and faces criticism, including from insiders, as revealed in the interviews conducted for this study.

Firstly, all interviewees pointed out that having three different regulators results in three different ethical codes. The BBC's code is a lengthy document detailing journalistic and ethical guidelines. Ofcom's Broadcasting Code covers only select ethical aspects, such as impartiality, truthfulness, and accuracy. Meanwhile, IPSO and Impress have similar press codes, but these do not fully align with the more detailed BBC guidelines. As a result, there is no unified set of ethical principles for all journalists.

Secondly, representatives of all regulatory bodies acknowledged that they do not cooperate or share experiences, which could otherwise strengthen journalistic quality in the UK.

Another challenge is the inefficiency of the system. Ofcom, as a government body, has broad enforcement powers but rarely uses them. Statistics and interview responses indicate that Ofcom is reluctant to impose penalties on broadcasters who fail to uphold impartiality standards in radio and television. BBC and IPSO representatives strongly criticized Ofcom's slow decision-making and lenient sanctions. Ofcom representatives, on the other hand, defended their approach, arguing that their caution is meant to protect media freedom from excessive regulatory interference.

At the same time, Ofcom officials acknowledged that the rise of identity-based media presents new challenges that were not previously encountered. They are also aware of the potential consequences of this trend for the broader UK media market.

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