

Editorial**Jaroslav Belas¹**

A special issue of the journal *Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe)* is dedicated to the diverse attributes of business ethics across the region, addressing specific challenges and cultural contexts that influence corporate sustainability and competitiveness. Establishing and adhering to ethical principles in business cultivates a business environment and has positive impacts not only on business but also on society as a whole. Business ethics is an important component of the social pillar of the Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) concept, which resonates intensely in the business environment of the European Union and whose main goal is to create comprehensive conditions for sustainable growth.

The published articles offer interesting perspectives on various areas of business ethics and introduce a range of new approaches. Twenty authors from nine countries participated in the preparation of the special issue. In the first article, Dorusincova et al. emphasize the growing importance of business ethics, especially in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) segment, as it influences companies' behavior towards their stakeholders (employees, partners, investors, and society). The authors define key attributes of business ethics in the SME segment and examine their impact on perceptions of the ESG concept in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Their findings confirm that business ethics plays a key role in shaping a clear perception of sustainability and that its embedding in corporate culture can contribute to the successful implementation of ESG principles.

Belas Jr. et al. examine selected attributes of business ethics for the implementation of the ESG concept in Poland and Hungary. The research is based on primary data collected through a questionnaire survey of approximately 700 entrepreneurs and company managers in both countries. The results of their research indicate a significant impact of business ethics on ESG implementation in both analyzed countries, though the relative significance of individual factors differs across the two. While in Poland, anti-corruption measures and formal ethical instruments play a key role, in Hungary, the dominant factor is entrepreneurs' ethical attitudes towards the application of business ethics principles. The comparative analysis emphasizes the importance of national and cultural context in shaping the relationship between business ethics and ESG implementation.

Another text (Amoah et al.) examines sustainability strategies in ethical SMEs in the manufacturing sector that deal with the tension between moral imperatives and market pressures. The study findings are systematically compared with empirical evidence from Central European countries. This cross-regional comparison reveals both convergences, such as the primacy of cognitive capabilities over resource abundance in driving sustainability strategies, and divergences, including the dominant role of regulatory pressure in Central Europe compared to moral imperatives in Ghana. The results advance theory by integrating cognitive capabilities as a mediator in the context of emerging markets and identifying institutional contingencies in African and European post-transition economies.

In the following article, Skaloš and Lašáková examine the dual, mutually reinforcing relationship between corporate anti-bribery and corruption (ABC) systems and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks. Based on a synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge, this study proposes an interactive model of sustainable compliance management

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rooted in measurable ethical performance. The authors' findings lead to the construction of an ABC model of sustainable management that links measurable anti-corruption performance to ESG maturity. The authors emphasize that by linking effective compliance with sustainability performance, anti-corruption programs are transformed from reactive management mechanisms to proactive strategic tools for responsible and sustainable corporate behavior.

Nawaz et al. examine the heterogeneous perceptions and drivers shaping individual investors' decisions regarding sustainable investments, particularly in emerging economies. In their research, the authors draw on economic conditions in Pakistan and compare their findings with the situation in Central Europe. According to the authors, sustainable investment decisions are more often made within an ESG framework. The authors present four key heterogeneous preferences: long-term economic outcomes, environmental factors, ethical and religious preferences, and social well-being. The research also demonstrated four drivers: cultural values, religious values, herd effect, and selective perception. The article reveals significant differences in ESG motivations, particularly in the importance of ethical, religious, and social aspects, through a conceptual comparison of value-based investor behavior in emerging economies and Central Europe.

Martin Pazdera's text addresses a particularly topical issue: the growing intensity of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in corporate decision-making processes. The author emphasizes that established frameworks in business ethics and corporate governance face increasing conceptual tension when applied to AI-mediated decisions, especially when opacity, scale, and adaptive behavior limit traceability and challenge accountability. The author proposes a conceptual governance model focused on ethical AI in business that combines explainability, auditability, human oversight, and stakeholder participation as mutually reinforcing elements.

The last article, according to Bochenek, offers a personalist interpretation of sustainable development by examining the tension between "being" and "having". The author argues that modern consumerism distorts human potential, contributes to environmental damage, and undermines social cohesion. Personalism, rooted in the dignity, rationality, and freedom of the human person, offers a way to connect material needs with spiritual and moral growth. The authors emphasize that ownership is legitimate only if it is subordinated to authentic personal development and responsibility towards others. Sustainable development becomes possible when individuals overcome egoistic consumption, cultivate moderation and solidarity, and orient technological progress and economic activity towards the common good.

The articles reflect important aspects that shape the image of business ethics in the real economic space of Central Europe. The right perception and application of business ethics shape companies' perceptions of sustainable growth, an important prerequisite for fulfilling the ideas, needs, and desires of all stakeholders in the system. It is not enough for companies to produce profits; the entire society must progress and cultivate the social and cultural space. The connection between material needs and spiritual and moral growth is a path that should be paved primarily by business ethics.

I believe that the published articles will significantly contribute to discussions on the topic of business ethics, because they not only emphasize important attributes that are already to some extent presented in scientific works (ESG concept factors, corruption, determinants of individual investor decisions), but also bring new topics such as the growing intensity of the use of artificial intelligence in corporate decision-making models in the context of possible ethical failures.