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MEDIA EVALUATION In Terms Of Diversity And Social Inclusion



Summary

Monitoring Report No 2

Monitoring period: September – October 2023

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This media monitoring report is produced by the Association of Independent Press (API), as part of the project "**Engaging Citizens, Empowering Communities – phase II**", component "Journalists for Diversity and Inclusion: Responsibility and Commitment", from the financial resources offered by the Government of Switzerland and Sweden.

Introduction and Methodological Issues

The media has an important role to play in covering diversity and facilitating the social inclusion of groups vulnerable to discrimination. Journalists can highlight the problems, difficulties and injustices faced by these groups and also highlight success stories of vulnerable people.

In order to truly contribute to ensuring inclusion, journalists must completely renounce the promotion of hate speech and the use of terminology that incites discrimination. This is because a word or phrase used inappropriately in a news story or report about disadvantaged groups can be picked up by thousands of people who, in turn, turn them into clichés or stereotypes. At the same time, the media is obliged to monitor and manage consumer comments on journalistic material so as not to allow hate messages.

According to the legislation in force, discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference in rights and freedoms of a person or a group of persons, as well as the support of discriminatory behaviour based on real or presumed criteria (Law on Ensuring Equality¹).

The Journalist's Code of Ethics² also contains clear provisions on the prevention of discrimination in press material. Article 3.18 of the document states that "Journalists shall treat fairly all persons with whom they come into contact in the course of their work and shall not discriminate on grounds of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, social status, sexual orientation, etc." Another article in the Code of Ethics – 3.19 – states, "Journalists shall mention a person's ethnicity, political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other sensitive information only when it is editorially relevant."

1 https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106454&lang=ro

2 <https://consiliuldepresa.md/upload/codul-deontologic-al-jurnalistului-din-republica-moldova-2019pdf-5cdd488de6e4c.pdf>

The aim of this monitoring is to analyze, quantitatively and qualitatively, how the media cover diversity and social inclusion. The monitoring team followed all material directly or tangentially referring to representatives of groups vulnerable to discrimination. Groups were selected on the basis of the criteria set out in the Equality Act: race; colour; ethnic origin; nationality; religion or belief; gender; age; disability; HIV/AIDS status; sexual orientation; language spoken.

In particular it looked at **how the media reports on the following groups:**

1. People with psycho-social and intellectual disabilities;
2. People with physical disabilities;
3. LGBT people;
4. People living with HIV/AIDS;
5. Roma people;
6. People who do not speak Romanian;
7. Ethnic minorities and people of African origin;
8. Religious minorities;
9. People who have been in detention (ex-detainees);
10. Refugees;
11. Elderly;
12. Women.

The object of monitoring was all materials that refer to representatives of groups vulnerable to discrimination, following the issues of inclusion, tolerance and acceptance. In addition to the content produced by journalists, the comments made by consumers in the press were also analyzed (where they existed) to see whether there were elements of discrimination and hate speech: bashing words and expressions, stereotypes, calls for hatred and intolerance, etc.

In terms of quantity, the number of materials on groups vulnerable to discrimination, their place in newscasts, newspaper pages or news portals, journalistic genres, the number of photos used and their quality were analyzed.

In terms of quality, the authors' compliance with the provisions of the Journalist's Code of Ethics and the Audiovisual Services Code (for products broadcast on radio and TV) was analyzed: accuracy of news, objectivity and accuracy of data, presumption of innocence, tolerance and non-discrimination, protection of people in vulnerable situations, context in which representatives of disadvantaged groups appear.

Outlets monitored

The monitoring team followed several media outlets – newspapers, online media, TV and Radio. In the current monitoring phase, which is the second one, the list of newsrooms monitored increased to 15; five more than in the first monitoring phase (September-October 2022). In the last phase of this process (September–October 2024) the list of outlets monitored will be extended by five more newsrooms, bringing the total to 20.

List of TV and Radio stations monitored:

- Moldova 1 (main newscast) – 21.00 hours
- Pro TV (main newscast) – 20.00 hours
- Radio Moldova (newscast) – 18.00 hours
- TV8 (main newscast) – 19.00 hours
- TV GRT (main newscast) – 19.00 hours
- Jurnal TV (main newscast) – 19.00 hours

List of portals and periodicals monitored:

- Ziarul de Gardă
- CII
- Observatorul de Nord
- Newsmaker.md

- Agora.md
- Diez.md
- Tuk.md
- Unimedia.info
- Ziuadeazi.md

Selection criteria for print, radio, TV and online media: Romanian and Russian language media (national and regional) which broadcast news and other informative content every day.

General conclusions

- Some newsrooms monitored do not give enough space to inclusion and diversity issues;
- Women are the group most often featured in press materials;
- Some groups – e.g. people who have been in detention, Roma, LGBT people, appear very rarely in press materials;
- Most of the material on the topic monitored is presented in the form of news, articles; investigative reports and other genres are present in a much smaller number;
- In some cases, the opinions of representatives of the group targeted in the material is missing; journalists prefer to get information from citizens (i.e. other people in the community), representatives of state institutions or the associative sector;
- With some exceptions, in most journalistic material on the topic of inclusion and diversity journalists used balanced, neutral language;
- For the most part the materials did not promote hate speech towards ethnic minorities, disadvantaged groups;
- With some exceptions, journalists followed rules of ethics when writing and editing news about the groups monitored;

- Compared to the previous monitoring period, fewer cases of misuse of terminology related to disadvantaged groups were reported;
- Some portals that allow the publication of comments do not moderate their content.

Recommendations

- Newsrooms which choose to report on adults and/or child-victims of any vulnerable situations with negative connotations should follow the provisions of the Journalist's Code of Ethics and take into account best practice guides, guidelines or other publications produced by specialists for journalists (**see Useful resources**).
- Journalists writing about violence should approach it in a social context, not as an individual case. Authors of material on this topic will highlight the reaction of the authorities, intervention mechanisms, possible solutions and, where appropriate, contact details of social services to which women can turn.
- Journalists should treat interviews with children or adults who have experienced recent violence with the utmost care and accuracy. In general, experts recommend avoiding interviewing victims of violence to protect them from revictimization and further negative emotions.
- Journalists, wherever possible, will present the views of representatives of vulnerable groups on decisions affecting or likely to affect their daily lives.
- The terminology used by journalists in relation to vulnerable groups must comply with ethical standards so that journalistic content does not violate the rights of individuals and does not discriminate.

Useful resources:

- Ghid pentru jurnaliști – **Abordarea în presă a violenței în bază de gen și a violenței împotriva copiilor** / Guide for Journalists – **Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Children in Media**
- Tutorial with Ana Gherciu – **Cum trebuie să procedeze redacțiile cu mesajele de ură?** / **How Should Newsrooms Deal with Hate Messages?** **ROM**
- Tutorial with Natalia Porubin – **Terminologia corectă în cazul grupurilor marginalizate** / **Correct Terminology for Marginalized Groups** – **ROM, RUS**
- Tutorial with Alina Radu – **Cum pot fi scrise materialele jurnalistice despre incluziune** / **How to write Media Reports on Inclusion** – **ROM, RUS**