



Portrayal of discrimination in the media.

Media monitoring 2021



Slovak National Center for Human Rights (SNCHR) regularly conducts mapping and evaluating of how human rights are portrayed in the public discourse. In the newest analytic report, SNCHR published results of the media monitoring analysis with the special focus on how the discrimination is portrayed by the media.

The media monitoring on the portrayal of discrimination had an ambition to:

- **Map** the way the issue of discrimination is presented in the media discourse in Slovakia.
- **Map** which cases or forms of discrimination are predominantly reported by media.
- **Analyze and to evaluate** whether media sufficiently and correctly explain this issue to the public.
- **Contribute to the awareness rising** about the necessity of fair public debate about discrimination, as it increases the ability of the wider public to recognize when they become a victim of discriminatory actions.

The analysis is based on 1 563 media items published in 46 media outlets between January 2021 and June 2021, containing the keyword "discrimination".

The key legal regulation in the issue of discrimination is the Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in some Areas and on Protection from Discrimination (the "Anti-discrimination Act"). In § 2 par. 1, Anti-discrimination Act states that **adherence to the principle of equal treatment shall lay in the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital or family status, color, language, political affiliation, or other conviction, national or social origin, property, lineage, or any other status or because of reporting criminality or other anti-social activity.** In § 3 par. 1 it also defines the areas in which the principles apply. According to this provision, **everyone is obliged to adhere to the principle of equal treatment in the field of employment and similar legal relations, social security, and healthcare, the provision of goods and services and education.**

Findings and conclusions

We observed **a critical share of reported incidents marked as discriminatory, which, however, in terms of reasons and areas of discrimination do not fully fit into the scope defined by the anti-discrimination legislation.** It concerned not only the ongoing public debate on anti-pandemic measures, especially regarding vaccination and cases in which the expert discussion has not yet clearly concluded that it is indeed a case of discrimination. It also involved informing about the reasons and areas of discrimination beyond those regulated by the legal framework. Such way of reporting can result in a vague or incorrect perception of discrimination and its legal regulation by the public, and thus also in difficulties in terms of identification of discriminatory actions in everyday life.

Another important finding of the analysis was **the lack of context of the cases.** More than a half of analyzed media items contained information about discrimination that was vague on either medium or even strong level. At the same time, information about the potential victim, perpetrator or other contextual details of the presented cases were often missing. This is another indicator of relatively careless handling of the concept of discrimination in the media discourse.

The low level of visibility of experts in the media debate on discrimination is also crucial observation. This aspect has significant impact on the degree of correctness of the interpretation of discrimination and its forms and prevents any distortions of public discussions on this issue.

The results of the analysis indicate that the media rely more on statements of public officials in comparison with the experts (Figure 1) as well as the fact that the tendency to downplay the issue appeared most often in media items relying on the statements by the public officials (Figure 2).

Who talks about discrimination in the media
Kto v mediách hovorí o diskriminácii

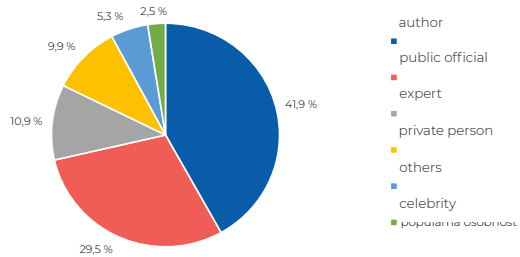


Figure 1 Shares of media items, according to whose statement about discrimination is at the center of the post

Does the media item have a tendency to simplify, trivialize, generalize or relativize the issue?

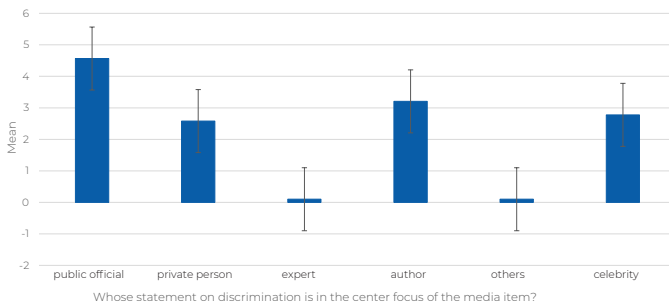


Figure 2 Tendency to downplay the issue of discrimination depending on who brings up the topic of discrimination

The low rate of reference to relevant institutions with the mandate to evaluate discrimination, provide legal assistance or any other effective help to victims (such as the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, the Public Defender of Rights, or courts) was also an important finding.

In Slovak media discourse, the term discrimination is used relatively carelessly and thus does not contribute to a better understanding of this concept by the public. For this reason, it is necessary for the relevant actors to make more targeted efforts to raise the general awareness so that the public can recognize discriminatory actions and are able to use available mechanisms to defend themselves.



The study *Portrayal of discrimination in the media: Media monitoring 2021* (Slovak only) is available for download and read online at <https://bit.ly/3iRnee3>