



REPORT ON MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH NORMS OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF MINORITIES AND SOCIALLY VULNERABLE PEOPLE

This monitoring took place in the framework of the project "Promoting the rights of minorities and marginalized groups from Transnistrian and Gagauzian regions through the media", implemented by the Independent Journalism Center (IJC), and financially supported by the IJC partner Civil Rights Defenders, Sweden.

1. General Overview

This study has been produced on the basis of a quantitative and qualitative monitoring methodology and it aims to examine the manner in which mass media cover topics concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons. The objective of this study is to analyze the frequency of media coverage concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons, its relevance for the monitored media outlets and the professionalism with which these topics are covered by mass media. Five media outlets from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (ATU Gagauz-Yeri) and five media outlets from the Transnistrian region were monitored for the duration of two months (1 September – 31 October 2014). It is the second monitoring report; the first report covered the period of 28 October – 28 December 2013¹.

Media outlets monitored in ATU Gagauz-Yeri:

- TV Gagauzia (public broadcaster in ATU Gagauz-Yeri, regional coverage) newscast at 19.30 in Russian;
- *Radio Gagauzia* (public broadcaster in ATU Gagauz-Yeri, regional coverage) newscast at 17.00 in Russian;
- *Gagauzinfo.md* (private portal <u>www.gagauzinfo.md</u>) the entire content monitored from Monday to Friday;
- *Vesti Gagauzii* (newspaper founded by the People's Assembly of ATU Gagauz-Yeri) weekly newspaper with a circulation of 3,018 copies;
- *Znamea* (official newspaper of the Ceadir-Lunga administration) weekly newspaper with a circulation of 4,630 copies.

Media outlets monitored in the Transnistrian region:

- *TV Pervy Pridnestrovski* (TV channel of the Transnistrian administration, regional coverage) *Vovremea* newscast at 20.30, in Russian;
- TSV (private TV channel, regional coverage) newscast at 20.00, in Russian;
- *Radio Pridnestrovia (Radio 1)* (radio station of the Transnistrian administration, regional coverage) newscast at 18.00, in Russian;
- *Novosti Pridnestrovia* (<u>http://novostipmr.com</u>) official portal of the Transnistrian administration, the entire content monitored Monday through Friday;
- *Pridnestrovie* daily newspaper of the Tiraspol administration, in Russian, Friday issues with a circulation of 2,700 copies.

The selection of media outlets in the monitored regions was based on the principle of audience and coverage.

Monitoring period: 1 September – 31 October 2014 (two months).

Monitored target groups:

- Ethnic minorities
- Sexual minorities

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Media Coverage of Minorities and Socially Vulnerable People – Monitoring Report [

- Refugees
- Persons with psycho-social disabilities
- Persons with physical disabilities
- Persons with HIV/AIDS
- Persons with tuberculosis

On a daily basis, operators monitored all media materials (news items, reports, interviews, analyses, investigations, etc.) that directly or indirectly concern minorities and socially vulnerable persons. The monitored media materials were analyzed in terms of compliance with general ethical principles, such as:

Objectivity and accuracy. These are fundamental principles in journalism, which require journalists to deliver accurate information about facts, to objectively report on events, avoiding presentation of their own ethnic, religious, cultural and other beliefs or preferences.

Separation of facts from opinions. Journalists must make a clear distinction between facts and opinions and avoid presenting their own opinions as facts. Opinion materials must appear in specialized pages/shows/sections or they should be visually separated from information.

Balance of sources. To be accurate and balanced, materials must present all the parties that they refer to and that are relevant for the topic. Journalists carefully attribute quotations. Quotes must be accurate, and, whenever journalists quote fragments of speeches, they must not distort the message. **Tolerance.** Journalists should show tolerance and non-discrimination towards the representatives of all social groups, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexual preference. Ethnicity, religion, sexual preference and level of education of a person shall be revealed only if relevant in the context. In addition to compliance with general ethical principles, media materials were monitored in terms of compliance with ethical requirements specific to the topics concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons, such as:

Correct terminology. Representatives of minorities and socially vulnerable persons are human beings with the right to a dignified life and attitude, and this dignified attitude must be expressed by mass media by using neutral and non-discriminatory language.

Stereotyping and stigma. Journalists must refrain from labeling representatives of minorities and socially vulnerable persons. They shall not stigmatize minorities and socially vulnerable persons, instigate to hatred, discrimination or neglect of representatives of ethnic or sexual minorities, who must be treated as persons with equal rights in society.

Reporting beyond sensationalism. Representatives of minorities and socially vulnerable persons are human beings with their own opinions, values and concerns. Journalists are encouraged to seek the opinions of minorities and socially vulnerable persons not only on matters related to their specific status, but also on matters of common interest, such as economy, society, politics, global warming, etc.

2. Key Trends

The interest of media outlets for topics concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons has grown somewhat, and the number of such media materials has increased. Thus, between 1 September and 31 October, the ten monitored media outlets published/broadcast 71 media materials, i.e. six materials more than in the previous monitoring period (28 October–28 December 2013), when the monitored topic was covered in 65 journalistic materials. Gagauz mass media have increased the portfolio of materials dedicated to minorities and socially vulnerable groups, reaching 32 materials in this monitoring period. Transnistrian mass media produced 41 materials in the monitoring period. Out of all monitored topics, the only one non-covered in the media of the two regions is sexual minorities. This

trend was also identified in the previous reporting period, when only one story about this target group was produced, which had been taken from international mass media.





In the Transnistrian region, the most relevant materials were produced by the *Pervy Pridnestrovski* television (12), which was followed by the *Pridnestrovie* newspaper (10), the *Novosti Pridnestrovia* portal (9), the *TSV* television (8) and *Radio 1* (2 materials).

In ATU Gagauz-Yeri, the trend is as follows: *Gagauzinfo.md* (13), *TV Gagauzia* (10), *Radio Gagauzia* (6), *Vesti Gagauzii* newspaper (2) and *Znamea* newspaper (1).

In ATU Gagauz-Yeri, monitored print media produced the least number of materials about minorities and socially vulnerable persons, while *gagauzinfo.md*, *TV Gagauzia* and *Radio Gagauzia* had the most materials on the topic. As for Transnistrian mass media, the outlets subordinated to authorities had the largest share of materials on the monitored topic (31 out of 43 total).





The insignificant increase in the number of materials on minorities and socially vulnerable persons is indicative of the journalists' smaller interest for these issues. The materials produced during the monitoring period were, with small exceptions, the result of information issued at public events or through press releases by public institutions, and they only rarely represented the journalist's initiative.

During the two months of monitoring, the monitored outlets covered the following topics:

- Transnistrian mass media the festival of children with limited abilities; the victory of paraathletes in various championships; purchase of diagnostic and treatment equipment for visually impaired people; provision of glasses and visual aid devices for the visually impaired; fundraising campaigns for persons with special needs; access to higher education for persons with limited abilities; visits of officials to educational institutions for children with special needs; etc.
- Gagauz mass media access ramps for persons with special needs; forum of ethnic minorities in Taraclia; the status of ethnic minorities in Comrat; rehabilitation centers in Ceadir-Lunga and Comrat; statistics on persons with tuberculosis; assistance for HIV-positive people; visually impaired people; access to education for persons with special needs; social aid for persons with limited abilities; a new building in Comrat for the Polish community; difficulties of the Roma people in the region.

The range of topics in Gagauz mass media has been more varied than in the Transnistrian region.

Topics

During the monitoring period, Transnistrian mass media produced 41 journalistic materials, i.e. two less than in the previous monitoring period. The examination of the monitored materials shows the following situation in terms of topics:

Transnistrian media:

Pervy Prindestrovski television is the media outlet with the most varied and most numerous materials on minorities and socially vulnerable persons. In the 45 monitored newscasts, 12 relevant materials were broadcast, covering a broad range of topics, such as: Transnistrian authorities' actions aimed at combating tuberculosis in penitentiaries; the number of victims of fascism that live in the Transnistrian region; fundraising campaigns to help children in need; access to higher education for persons with limited abilities. The covered topics also include the ones related to some local events or international days, such as the day of the persons with hearing impairment, art festival for children with special needs, aid offered to visually impaired children, sports competitions between persons with musculoskeletal disorders, etc.

Pridnestrovie newspaper in its 28 issues during the monitoring period published ten materials concerning the status of socially vulnerable persons and minorities in such areas as access to healthcare, education, culture, etc. Journalists wrote about the help provided by an international charity for children in a residential institution; a meeting dedicated to the victims of fascism; arts festival for children with special needs; the work of the union of veterans and persons with disabilities; anniversary of the department of Ukrainian philology.

Novosti Pridnestrovia portal published, within the 49 monitored days, nine stories on relevant topics. The materials concerned the participation of the region's para-athletes in sports competitions; healthcare services for persons with tuberculosis; the meeting of the region's authorities with disabled war veterans; meeting of young people with representatives of the association of the visually impaired; intercultural communication events; the festival of Russian culture in Tiraspol; creation of two polling places for the Ukrainian minority.

TSV television broadcast 40 newscasts in the monitoring period, and eight stories in them referred to minorities and socially vulnerable persons. Journalists covered the following topics: the need to modify legislation in order to prevent and combat tuberculosis; ensuring the right to vote for the Ukrainian minority; provision of glasses and visual aid devices for the visually impaired people; the victories of para-athletes in regional championships.

Radio 1 had the fewest relevant materials among the ten monitored media outlets. In the 40 monitored newscasts, only two stories referred to the topic of the monitoring, and they covered public events organized in the region: provision of special equipment for visually impaired children and the 45th anniversary of the correctional residential school in Bender.

Gagauz media:

In the 49 monitored days, the **Gagauzinfo.md portal** posted 13 stories on relevant topics, doubling its portfolio when compared with the previous monitoring period. The portal covered the following topics: access ramps for persons with special needs; persons with tuberculosis; visually impaired persons; the aid provided to HIV-positive persons; the status of ethnic minorities in Comrat; the forum of ethnic minorities in Taraclia; the aid provided by the Turkish government to the residents of the village of Congaz; community integration of minorities; 14th anniversary of the rehabilitation center in Ceadir-Lunga; and the rehabilitation center for children with limited abilities.

TV Gagauzia in the 47 monitored newscasts had ten stories concerning minorities or socially vulnerable persons. The channel produced materials on the following topics: the problems of the Roma people; the leading place of Moldova in terms of the number of people with tuberculosis and the tuberculosis treatment rate; compensations granted to persons with disabilities during the cold months; the forum of ethnic minorities; construction of a new building for the Polish community in the region. The more complex materials (which go beyond the information provided by authorities) include the story of two

visually impaired people: the journalist spent one day with them and spoke about their everyday challenges in public spaces (10.10.2014).

Radio Gagauzia broadcast six relevant stories in the 47 monitored newscasts, and they all repeated the news delivered by the above TV channel. The topics thus covered include: the 14th anniversary of the rehabilitation center in Ceadir-Lunga; the difficulties of the Roma people in ATU Gagauz-Yeri; Moldova's place among the countries with the smallest tuberculosis treatment rate; and organization of the forum of ethnic minorities.

Vesti Gagauzii newspaper had nine issues and three relevant stories: about the discrimination of the Roma population; about the funds provided by Turkey for the study of the Gagauz language; and about the construction of a new building for the Polish community in Comrat. We shall mention that this publication has had a positive change in terms of the analyzed topics, since in the previous monitoring period it had no materials on minorities and socially vulnerable persons.

Znamea newspaper had eight issues and published a single relevant article, dedicated to the 14th anniversary of the rehabilitation center in Ceadir-Lunga.

3. Data analysis

Journalistic genre: Materials about minorities and socially vulnerable persons are in the majority of cases presented in the form of news items (49%) or reportages (46). The period of October-November showed an 8% increase of the number of reportages and, implicitly, the number of stories presented in greater detail. At the same time, there are still few investigations/analyses (three, all in ATU Gagauz-Yeri) and interviews (only one, in the Transnistrian region).



This situation is largely due to the format of the monitored outlets (televisions, radio stations and web portals), which mainly promote summarizing genres of presentation. A larger variety of journalistic genres has been found in print media.

During the monitoring period, with a few exceptions, there were no journalistic investigations, analyses, case studies concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons – journalistic genres that allow a complex presentation of the issues, identification of gaps in legislation or in its implementation, verification of correct use of funds intended for the monitored target groups, the de facto situation with the exercise of the rights and freedoms of socially vulnerable persons and minorities. An exception is the reportage broadcast by *TV Gagauzia* about a day of a family of visually impaired people (10.10.2014), a

series of analyses produced by *Gagauzinfo.md* about access ramps for persons with special needs, social integration of the visually impaired, access of the visually impaired to education and to employment.



Placement and size of materials: Gagauz mass media provided more space for the materials on minorities and socially vulnerable persons than Transnistrian mass media. Monitored materials in ATU Gagauz-Yeri were large (12 items) and medium (17 items), in contrast with the Transnistrian region, where only 1 item (posted on *Novosti Pridnestrovia*) was large, while the majority of materials were medium. The smallest materials in Gagauz mass media include the stories about the aid provided by Turkey for the study of the Gagauz language, aid for the HIV-positive persons, the place of Moldova among the countries with the smallest rate of tuberculosis treatment. Transnistrian mass media provided minimum space for the materials on the work of the association of veterans and persons with disabilities, the competition of para-athletes organized on occasion of Tiraspol Day, a conference dedicated to intercultural communication.

The only large material produced in the Transnistrian region during the monitoring period is the article dedicated to the situation of persons with tuberculosis and medical care provided for such people in penitentiaries (*"Verification of the services that treat persons with tuberculosis in penitentiaries"* [*В пенитенциарных учреждениях проверяют работу служб, лечащих больных туберкулёзом*], Novosti Pridnestrovia, 17.09.2014). As for Gagauz mass media, the most space on radio and television was provided for materials about official visits in the region, such as the participation of the president of the Moldovan Parliament Igor Corman and of the head of the ethnic minorities department Elena Beleakova in the forum of ethnic minorities, or the visit of US Ambassador William Moser, Health Minister Andrei Usatii and Governor Mihail Formuzal to the rehabilitation center for children in Ceadir-Lunga", 03.10.2014).

Like in the previous report, it has been found that the media materials relevant for this study are not usually placed on the first pages of the monitored newspapers or presented among the first news in TV and radio newscasts. In print media, articles about minorities and socially vulnerable persons were most often placed on page 2 to 4, while news items on radio and TV appeared in the second half of newscasts.

TV Pridnestrovie and *TSV* included all stories about minorities and socially vulnerable persons into the second half of newscasts, beginning with story no. 6.

The *Pridnestrovie* newspaper published three articles on the monitored topics on page 2, while the rest of them appeared on further pages. The only article on a relevant topic in the *Znamea* newspaper, about the visit of foreign, national and local officials to the rehabilitation center for children in Ceadir-Lunga, appeared on page 1.





Target groups covered by mass media: Persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities are the target groups that had the most appearances in the media, 51% and 35%, accordingly. Persons with tuberculosis appeared in only 11% of such materials, and HIV-positive persons – in 3% of the total number. During the monitoring period, no material was found about sexual minorities. In both monitoring periods, Transnistrian and Gagauz mass media had no materials on sexual minorities (during the previous monitoring period, *Gagauzinfo.md* republished an external news story about the divorce of the first couple of homosexuals in France).



Sources: This monitoring period showed an increase in the number of sources used in materials on minorities and persons with disabilities. Average number per material is two-three sources, in contrast with the average of two sources identified during the monitoring in 2013.

The majority of materials are informative, and their sources are the persons attending the event, who are usually representatives of authorities, civil society and the target group covered by the story. Numbers are as follows: representatives of national authorities are quoted in 46 cases, experts – 31 cases, and representatives of minorities and socially vulnerable persons – 25 cases.

We have also found that *Gagauzinfo.md* is leading in terms of the sources used: in its 13 materials, opinions and information are sought from 34 sources. It is followed by *TV Gagauzia*, with 29 sources in 10 materials, and *TV Pridnestrovie*, with 26 sources in 12 materials.





Objectivity and accuracy: The majority of materials are the results of public information provided by public institutions or organizations specialized in the areas covered by the monitoring report. Information is clear and comes from a credible source. Journalists presented such information in an informative, neutral and objective manner. Materials do not show the authors' opinions.

Tolerance and non-discrimination: Overall, materials were produced in a neutral or positive tone. In contrast with the previous monitoring period, the approach to topics concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons changed, and journalists treated them in a more complex manner, allowing the voice of these people to be heard and presenting their opinions, ideas, aspirations and potential, which they have just like other people.

Unlike in the previous monitoring period, when the media used titles and phrases that perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices, such as "AIDS – the plague of the 21st century", in this monitoring period phrases promoting discrimination or stereotypes were not found. Journalists showed tolerance in the monitored materials. For example, *Gagauzinfo.md* titled the article about the challenges of the visually impaired "World is invisible for them, they are invisible for the world?" ["Мир невидим для них, они - для мира?"] (27.10.2014), while *Pervy Pridnestrovski* used the neutral term "children with disabilities" instead of the discriminatory "invalid" in the news item "Republican art festival for children with disabilities took place in Dubasari" ["В Дубоссарах прошел республиканский фестиваль творчества детей с ограниченными возможностями"] (01.10.2014).

Neutral terminology: In the majority of monitored materials, journalists used neutral, nondiscriminatory terminology when referring to socially vulnerable persons and minorities. During the monitoring period, only seven relevant materials, the majority of which in the Transnistrian region, used discriminatory terminology to refer to the monitored target groups. We shall remind that in the previous monitoring period, 26 media materials used notions that discriminated against the monitored groups and favored their stigmatization. All discriminatory notions concerned persons with physical disabilities, who were called "invalids". The term "invalid" is used in the *Pridnestrovie* newspaper in the article titled "Fifth anniversary" ["Пятый Юбилейный"] (16.11.2014), where the reporter used this notion as a synonym to "paraathletes" or "athletes with musculoskeletal disorders" – terms that are also used in the article. The *Novosti Pridnestrovia* portal calls para-athletes "invalids of sports" in the article "Transnistrian youth met representatives of the association of the visually impaired" ["Приднестровская молодежь встретилась с представителями общества незрячих"] (16.10.2014).

During the monitoring period, there was a case when the word "deaf" was used, which has a discriminatory connotation. It was noticed in a report of the *Pervy Pridnestrovski* television, titled "Day of the deaf celebrated in the residential school in Tiraspol" ["В тираспольской школе-интернате отметили День глухих"] (29.09.2014), where the word "deaf" is used instead of the recommended "person with hearing impairment".

It should be mentioned, however, that the majority of materials used neutral terminology when referring to minorities and socially vulnerable persons. For example, in the series of articles dedicated to the visually impaired, which appeared in October 2014, journalists of *Gagauzinfo.md* used "visually impaired" instead of the discriminatory "blind", and "person with developmental differences" instead of the often used "person with disabilities" or "invalid".

Pervy Pridnestrovski television also used the term "partially sighted" in the material titled "Partially sighted children received special glasses" ["Слабовидящие дети получили в подарок специальные очки"] (07.10.2014). This channel also used the neutral term "children with disabilities" instead of the discriminatory "invalid" ("Republican arts festival of children with disabilities in Dubasari" ["В Дубоссарах прошел республиканский фестиваль творчества детей с ограниченными возможностями"], 01.10.2014).

The term "children with disabilities" was also used in the article on the same topic in the *Pridnestrovie* newspaper ("Celebration of wishes" ["Праздник желаний"], 02.10.2014).

Original or clichéd approach

This report indicates at the growth of the quality of materials about minorities and socially vulnerable persons, which present information in a more complex manner, by focusing on the target group and on the representatives of the institutions that are to ensure the rights of the monitored groups. A convincing example in this sense is the series of articles dedicated to visually impaired persons, which had been launched on Gagauzinfo.md on the occasion of the World Sight Day. Articles were produced by a team of two journalists representing ATU Gagauz-Yeri and the Transnistrian region, who covered various challenges of the visually impaired people in the two regions: (1) Integration of visually impaired children into kindergartens and schools and their discrimination through placement into specialized residential institutions; lack of access to higher education due to non-existence of study programs for the visually impaired ("Where to study?" ["Куда пойти учиться?"], 27.10.2014); (2) obstacles to the social integration of the visually impaired ("The world is invisible for them, they are invisible for the world?" ["Мир невидим для них, они - для мира?"], 27.10.2014); (3) employment difficulties of the visually impaired ("I'd become a worker" ["Я б в рабочие пошел"], 27.10.2014); (4) small number of employed visually impaired persons ("Only 7% of the 400 visually impaired residents of Gagauzia could find a job" ["Только 7% из 400 слабовидящих жителей Гагаузии смогли найти себе работу"], 28.10.2014). In addition to the information on the reasons why the legislation on the minimum requirements for the employment of the visually impaired is not complied with, the latter article

presents the story of a visually impaired person who created his own footwear repair shop, which, besides a guaranteed income, also provides access to socialization.

Radio Gagauzia broadcast on 09.09.2014 a complex material dedicated to the problems of the Roma people in the region: poverty, reduced access to education, illiteracy and unemployment. This material was also posted on *gagauzinfo.md* on 10.10.2014.

Transnistrian mass media had fewer complex materials, beyond statistics and summary presentations, than Gagauz mass media. The majority of media materials broadcast or published in Transnistrian mass media were news items or minimalistic reports, which mainly focused on the presentation, at times somewhat complex, of public events concerning the target groups relevant for this study. These materials include the article about the treatment of persons with tuberculosis in penitentiaries ("The work of the services treating patients with tuberculosis in penitentiaries is being checked" ["B пенитенциарных учреждениях проверяют работу служб, лечащих больных туберкулёзом"], *Novosti Pridnestrovia*, 17.09.2014); access of the visually impaired to higher education, discussed at a round table ("Higher education for persons with disabilities" ["Высшее образование для людей с ограниченными возможностями"], *TSV*, 31.09.2014); para-athletes visiting a residential institution for children with physical disabilities ("Renowned Transnistrian para-athletes at correctional school in Tiraspol" ["Именитые приднестровские параспортсмены в Тираспольской коррекционной школе"], 16.10.2014).

CONCLUSIONS:

The analysis of the coverage of issues concerning minorities and socially vulnerable groups led to the following conclusions:

- Mass media interest in the issues concerning minorities and persons with disabilities has been constant, with a 10% increase of the number of mass media materials on such topics.
- There has been a surge in the quality and depth of coverage of topics about minorities and persons with disabilities, especially in Gagauz mass media. The general trend for Transnistrian mass media consisted in a summary presentation of issues, in the form of news items or reportages mainly inspired by public events.
- The number of materials with discriminatory phrases has decreased by nearly four times, but the tendency of using the word "invalid" for persons with disabilities has still been maintained.
- The media materials produced during the monitoring period were mostly the result of the information presented publicly during events or by means of press releases issued by public institutions.
- As a rule, the media materials relevant for this study were not placed on the first pages of newspapers or broadcast among the first news in TV or radio newscasts. In print media, articles about minorities and vulnerable persons were most often placed on pages 2 to 4, while news items on radio and television were broadcast in the second half of newscasts.
- There has been a minority of original materials, which were not based on the information made public during events or through press releases but required additional efforts from journalists, such as people's stories, complex materials, with different voices and perspectives on various situations faced by minorities or socially vulnerable persons. Exceptions included a series of materials about the social integration of the visually impaired, their access to education and employment, and the victories of para-athletes in regional and international competitions.
- The small number of complex materials in Transnistrian mass media is limiting people's vision on the rights of persons in difficulty and on the possibility of their social inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to encourage professional and balanced approach to issues concerning minorities and socially vulnerable groups, the following recommendations have been developed:

- Mass media professionals are suggested to review their editorial policies, so that issues concerning minorities and socially vulnerable persons become topics of general interest, which shall be carefully researched.
- They are also suggested to find a complex and correct approach to the topics about minorities and socially vulnerable persons.
- It would be absolutely feasible to produce materials about social, economic and cultural inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups or other materials about the freedoms and responsibilities of target groups, their opinions on the topic of general interest, such as economy, society, politics or culture.

- Journalists are required to be more careful with terminology in materials about minorities and socially vulnerable groups.
- It is necessary that the voice/opinion of minorities and socially vulnerable persons be present in materials about them or about the decisions concerning them or affecting their lives.