

Gender Stereotypes in the Media Content as an Obstacle for Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Republic of Serbia

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Abstract : The main topic of this paper is the analysis of the presence of gender stereotypes in the media content in the Republic of Serbia with respect to the state commitments to eliminate discrimination against women. The research methodology included the analysis of the media content of six daily newspapers and two magazines on the date of 28 December 2015 and the analysis of the reality TV show programs in 2015 from gender perspective. The methods of the research has also included a desk research and a qualitative analysis of the available data, statistics, policy papers, studies, and reports produced by the government, the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, the Press Council, the associations of media professionals, the independent human rights bodies, and civil society organizations (CSOs). As a State Signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Republic of Serbia has adopted numerous measures in this field, including the Law on Equality between Sexes and the national gender equality strategies. Special attention has been paid to eliminating gender stereotypes and prejudices in the media content and portraying of women. This practice has been forbidden by the Law on Electronic Media, the Law on Public Information and Media, the Law on Public Service Broadcasting and the Bylaw on the Protection of Human Rights in the Provision of Media Services. Despite these commitments, there has not been achieved progress regarding eliminating gender stereotypes in the media content. The research indicates that the media perpetuate traditional gender roles and patriarchal patterns. Female politicians, entrepreneurs, academics, scientists, and engineers have been very rarely portrayed in the media. On the other side, women are in their focus as celebrities, singers, and actresses. Women are underrepresented in the pages related to politics and economy, while they are mostly present in the cover stories related to show-business, health care, family and household matters. Women are three times more than men identified on the basis of their family status, as mothers, wives, daughters, etc. Hate speech, misogyny, and violence against women are often present in the reality TV shows. The abuse of women and their bodies in advertising is still widely present. The cases of domestic violence are still presented with sensationalism, although there has been achieved progress in portraying victims of domestic violence with respect and dignity. The issues related to gender equality and the position of the vulnerable groups of women, such as Roma women or rural women, are not visible in the media. This research, as well as warnings of women's CSOs and independent human rights bodies, indicates the necessity to implement legal and policy measures in this field consistently and with due diligence. The aim of the paper is to contribute eliminating gender stereotypes in the media content and advancing gender equality.

Keywords : discrimination against women, gender roles, gender stereotypes, media, misogyny, portraying women in the media, prejudices against women, Republic of Serbia

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